

DREAMS of Civil Society Two DECADES LATER:

Civic Advocacy in the CZECH REPUBLIC

JIRÍ NAVRÁTIL
MIROSLAV POSPÍŠIL



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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the key aspects of Czech civil society two decades after the revolution of 1989. More particularly, we explore a particular function of civil society – the political, representative, contentious, or advocacy function – and deliberately leave aside the others¹. In other words, we stress the “political” sense of the concept of civil society that was proposed and developed by many thinkers (for overview see Keane 1998; Cohen, Arato 1999; Kaldor 2003). This study acknowledges that the concept is inextricably linked to the notion of political order or democracy and that its political dimension is a key aspect that distinguishes this social sphere from the state, family, or economy. Some of the contemporary normative perspectives on civil society propose an ideal type of civil sphere that prevents the powers of the state and the market from invading the lives of citizens (e.g., Habermas, Skocpol, Ehrenberg). The political – or advocacy – function of civil society may be further described as the representation of “the non-commercial collective interests of the general public as opposed to the special economic interests of particular segments of society” or the commitment “to the public interest defined in terms of noneconomic, collective or indivisible interests that have the general public as their intended beneficiary” (Jenkins 1987: 296).

The reasons for the focus of our study are closely interconnected and related to the questions we ask. First, we understand the political function of a civil society as the key indicator of the “maturity” of the Czech civil sphere, as primarily the political layer of non-state nonprofit activities was suspended during the non-democratic regime, and its renewal might therefore be considered as an indicator of the country’s transition towards a fully consolidated democracy (cf. Diamond 1994; Linz, Stepan 1996). A large proportion of the service-provision and community-building activities existed even under the pre-1989 authoritarian rule (at least in the Czech Republic), even if they were subject to control from the state bureaucracy, security services, and political elite (Carmin, Jehlička 2005). On the other

¹ For an overview of the functions of a civil society, see (DiMaggio, Anheier 1990; Salamon, Anheier 1998; Salamon et al. 2000; Edwards, Foley 2001; Kendall 2003).

hand, the political – and for obvious reasons particularly the organized – dimension of civic engagement was largely controlled and/or suppressed by the regime (Lorentzen 2010). The dreams of key Czech dissidents therefore mostly concerned the notion of politics and its relation to the civil sphere. Every effort to consider the vitality of contemporary Czech civil society should therefore primarily aim at the inspection of this layer. As was previously illustrated in many post-communist societies, political discourse and the imagination of dissent played important roles in the political transition and consolidation (Ost 1990; Linz, Stepan 1996; Tucker et al. 2000; Renwick 2006). Therefore we ask: to what extent do the original dreams of a civil society by key dissident thinkers fit the contemporary state? Are there any parallels, and what do they mean?

Second, many analyses of post-communist civil societies, including those by critics of their development, have been driven by the more or less implicit expectations of a connection between the fall of authoritarian political regimes and the renaissance of politically active citizens defending their rights and liberties, organizing in groups and associations, and actively seeking to express and pursue their preferences and views on a broader political scale (Gellner 1991; Ekiert, Kubik 1998; Kaldor 2003; Bernhard, Kaya 2012). Therefore, we ask, what is the state of the political function of Czech civil society two decades after the regime change? Are there any obstacles for the evolution of the advocacy function of Czech civil society?

Third, through an analysis of the state of civic advocacy, we want to engage in the discussions on the presumed weakness of civil society in Central-Eastern European (CEE) countries reported earlier by some observers (Dahrendorf 1990; Arato 1991; Ekiert 1991; Bernhard 1996; Rose 1999; Rose, Mishler, Haerpfer 1996; Howard 2003; Howard 2011; Ekiert, Foa 2012) two decades after the regime change of 1989. Many of the key analyses and evaluations of the post-communist civil societies as weak seem to focus on the level of participation of citizens in advocacy-oriented civil society organizations and social movements, and this weakness is often assessed due to the low membership of citizens in these organizations (Greskovits 1998; Howard 2003). These analyses often aim at the political dimension of civil society and are usually supported by the reported evidence of sparse organizational

civic infrastructure, low membership in civil society organizations, insufficient community activism, and privatism of citizens in these countries. Here we ask: in what sense can we speak about the weakness of Czech civil society? What does this weakness mean empirically?

Our study consists of three main parts. First, we explore the original dreams of civil society and its role as formulated by Czech dissent elites before 1989. This part focuses on three key thinkers – Jan Tesař, Václav Benda, and Václav Havel – who dominated the discourse on civil society and its role in the non-democratic regime, analyzing their conceptions of civil society: to what extent could these concepts be understood as long-term political programs that could actually be accomplished?

Second, we look at the broader evolution of civil society patterns and its context after 1989. This helps us understand both the dynamics and the contemporary state of civic advocacy two decades after 1989, and its situation within Czech civil society at large. We focus on mapping the political context, on describing the character of Czech civil society in general and its evolution, and on exploring key institutions of civil society and their financial environment.

Third, we turn to an empirical exploration of Czech civic advocacy. We show in what sense this dimension of Czech civil society may be considered “weak”. We assess the mutual relations between individual and organized levels of civic advocacy, looking for the motives and reasons for the low level of trust and disconnection between citizens and CSOs.

The conclusion summarizes all three parts and interprets them in a single framework: how close is the political thinking of former dissent to the contemporary situation of Czech civic advocacy? How was this conceptual message translated into the reality of civil society over the last two decades?

1 THE DREAM: THINKING ABOUT CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE CZECH LANDS BEFORE 1989

Many authors (e.g., Keane 1998, Deakin 2001) attribute the renaissance of the concept of civil society to the deliberations of East European dissidents and the political activity of Latin American reformers in the 1970s and 1980s. It was believed that the dissident civic activists in the late non-democratic regimes of the Soviet bloc and their theoretical leaders rediscovered and rethought an idea that could be used both as a possible solution to the situation of people under non-democratic rule in the East and as a way out of the political crisis of traditional liberal democracy in the West. The latter particularly appealed to many (mainly left-oriented) thinkers and politicians in Western Europe because it seemed to offer a possible answer to the question of how to transform the hopes and promises of the social movements of the 1960s and to use them to remedy the ailing Western-style representative democracy. After some hesitation, the idea appealed to right-oriented thinkers and politicians, too, as an answer to the crisis of the welfare state and their need and desire to cut back the oversized “socialist” state.

It is largely presumed that the civil society concept underpinned the political thinking and the practical activity of both the intellectual leaders and the activists in opposition to the non-democratic regime in Czechoslovakia and in other countries under Soviet domination or occupation. As Keane (1998: 21) put it, “despite the state’s permanent efforts to crush independent centers of power, the language of civil society functioned as an effective moral and political utopia in central and eastern Europe.” Initiatives like KOR, Charter 77, and WiP² “understood well that totalitarian state power could survive only if the (potential) civil society was forced underground, shackled by apathy and fear, and thereby reduced to ‘the safety of the mousehole’ (György Konrád)” (Keane 1998: 22).

² KOR – Komitet obrony robotników (*Workers Defense Committee*), the first major anti-communist civic group in Eastern Europe and in Poland, born of outrage at the government crackdown in June 1976; WiP - Wolność i Pokój (*Freedom and Peace*), independent pacifist movement, founded 1985.

Is this (Western) interpretation justified? What did the dissidents have in mind? What were their strategies for the day and their plans for tomorrow in the 1980s? Had they developed well thought-out strategies by the late 1980s, or were they only daydreaming?

To answer these questions, at least in the case of Czechoslovakia, is not as easy as it may seem. The Czech³ dissident groups were small, isolated from one another (and from the Slovaks), and almost completely marginalized from society at large; contact and discussion were difficult; typewritten carbon copies of *samizdat* reached very limited audiences. The net result was that individual thinkers and activists produced and published interesting and thought-provoking essays, which were as a rule smuggled out of the country and published in the West, but they had a very limited circulation in their country of origin. Discussions were limited to small circles of people within and around Charter 77, the clandestine seminars of the “underground university,”⁴ the independent artistic and cultural initiatives,⁵ and the underground church.⁶ The sum total of Czech dissident activities looks fairly impressive, and the individual achievements of the best dissident thinkers were internationally recognized and admired, yet the fragmented groups never networked or collaborated to such a degree as to establish significant opposition to the regime. Nor were these groups able to engage in the solid and prolonged discussions that would have led to the much-needed testing of the proposed theories and hypotheses through rigorous scrutiny.

The first thing that strikes a student of the dissident debates in the 1970s and 1980s in the Czech Lands is that the term “civil society” is hardly ever used. Instead, the most influential concepts introduced by various authors were “living in truth” and “non-political politics” (Havel) and “parallel polis” (Benda). This is even more surprising in light of the fact that one of the earliest criticisms of the despotic state power that had control over the Central-Eastern part of Europe was in fact a radical defense of civil society as an indispensable part of any

³ We examine here only the Czech dissident activity and debate because the developments in the Slovak Republic were largely isolated from those in the Czech Republic (in federal Czechoslovakia) and thus followed a different dynamic.

⁴ For an account of the “underground university” in Czechoslovakia, see Day 1999.

⁵ For a comprehensive history of the “alternative culture”, see Alan 2001.

⁶ See e.g., Fiala, Hanuš 1999.

democratic political and social order. (Tesař 1977) A simplified sketch outline of the three main concepts follows.

1.1 Three Concepts

It would be wrong to conclude from the remarks above that there was no debate in the dissident circles or that the thinking of the leading intellectuals was uninformed by what others were doing and thinking. When the main concepts are examined, it becomes clear that there is a substantial common core, much shared reference, and a good degree of cross-fertilization. What seems equally apparent, however, is the lack of criticism and scrutiny that would have engaged more intellects in a debate to develop the concepts further, refine them, put them in a wider context, and, above all, begin the process of translating them into political programs and political action. The various concepts did not cross-fertilize enough. They were all born in the small community of Charter 77 and that is where they were published and discussed. They were all written at or around the time when Charter 77 was established, and they were not systematically further developed in later years, remaining thus unchallenged until near the end of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. However impressive as individual creations, they failed to function as a shared basis for a realistic and feasible action plan seeking a political solution to the crisis of the non-democratic regime in Czechoslovakia in the 1980s.

1.1.1 Tesař (1977): Civil Society as an Antidote to Non-democratic Regimes

Jan Tesař, an unemployed historian, one of the initial signatories of Charter 77, and a co-founder of the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS), was the first to use the concept of civil society in his analysis of non-democratic regimes, a theme to which he turned his attention soon after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

After his release from six years of imprisonment for “subversive activities”, Tesař published a samizdat essay entitled “Totalitarian Dictatorships as a Phenomenon of the Twentieth Century and the Possibilities of Overcoming Them”. (Tesař 1977) John Keane, one of the

most prominent theoreticians of civil society, believes the essay to be one of the seminal and ground-breaking texts that contributed to the revival of interest in civil society and greatly influenced his own thinking. (Keane 1998: 19) According to Tesař, in Keane's interpretation (Keane 1998: 20),

The various twentieth-century forms of totalitarian dictatorship (Stalinism, Nazism) were born of political instability and "the underdeveloped structure of civil society". The origins of these party-dominated regimes show that democracy and totalitarianism are not opposites, for under crisis conditions, when the so-called "broad masses" suddenly enter political life under conditions of a weakly developed civil society, totalitarian movements and parties feed parasitically upon such bowdlerized democratic slogans as "all power to the soviets" and "from the masses to the masses". Totalitarian regimes are always born of "a revolutionary crisis in society".

That is why (again in Keane's interpretation) the protracted struggle for civil society, rather than sudden revolutions from above or below, is the strongest weapon against non-democratic regime. In Tesař's own words (cited by Keane 1998: 20),

if the totalitarian systems, as a reversion to absolutism in the twentieth century, arise more easily in an environment where the structure of "civil society" is not sufficiently well formed, then the most reliable means of preventing their genesis is to encourage the development of that civil society.

Tesař's arguments for civil society were clearly prompted by the evident failure of all the attempts by the reform communists (most notably in the Prague Spring) to liberalize the one-party Soviet-type systems. At the same time, however, Tesař foresaw what the current language of civil society has since taken for granted: that civil society is the best antidote to dictatorship and the demagoguery of mass ideologies.

1.1.2 Benda (1978): Parallel Polis

While Tesař's essay was grounded in historical analysis, Václav Benda's famous essay was nurtured by the early debates among Charter 77 signatories about the practical solutions to living in a non-democratic regime. It was written in response to the first crisis that the Charter 77 group underwent in the face of the feeble public response to the initiative and after a year of all-around harsh prosecution of the signatories and their families and friends. While the intellectual fathers of Charter 77, Jan Patočka and Václav Havel, insisted that Charter 77 was a moral and civic, not political, project, Benda argued that the purely moral strategy of anti-politics had left Charter 77 in a "blind alley" of impotence and decline, making it unpalatable to society at large. (Benda 1978: 35–36) He offered a practical response to the waning momentum of the group's mission and the confusion among the members as to its purpose and direction.

Havel's emphasis on "living in truth" as the prerequisite of any societal change in the communist states focused on the individual and on diffuse, non-institutionalized communities. Benda's idea of the "parallel polis" proposed a more institutional goal. To rejuvenate the Charter 77 movement, he proposed that "we join forces in creating, slowly but surely, parallel structures that are capable, to a limited degree at least, of supplementing the generally beneficial and necessary functions that are missing in the existing (state) structures." (Benda 1978: 36) Such structures would follow the model of the "parallel culture" – notably pop culture⁷ – that already existed in Czechoslovakia. They would encompass a parallel education system, parallel information networks, parallel political discussion fora, parallel international contacts, and a parallel economy. (Benda 1978: 38–40)

Unlike some others (most notably Jirous 1975), Benda did not go so far as to subscribe to the anti-political desire to build a societal structure separate from the state and completely ignoring the state. As a highly subtle thinker and as a much more practical political animal than Havel, he demanded that his polis should, as a matter of course, influence and gradually change what the state did. He argued that "even if such structures were only partially successful, they would

⁷ Benda refers to Jirous's "Second Culture" as "the most developed and dynamic parallel structure. It should serve as model for other areas." (Benda 1978: 38)

bring pressure to bear on the official structures, which would either collapse or regenerate themselves in a useful way.” (Benda 1978: 37)

Benda’s idea of the parallel polis was developed as an answer by a practical political thinker to the radical ethical demands that underpinned the policy and tactics of Charter 77 at its inception. Benda believed that in a situation where any dialogue with the non-democratic state power about human rights and economic and political freedoms was impossible, there was no other way for society to succeed but to turn to “self help” and start developing structures of a parallel polis that would at least to a small degree substitute for those functions that the state did not fulfill. He understood that this was a necessarily temporary solution, which, however, through the pressure that the alternative polis would bring to bear on the state structures, had the potential to influence and, ultimately, to undermine the despotic state.

1.1.3 Havel (1978): Living in Truth and Non-Political Politics

Václav Havel was a writer, playwright, thinker, activist, and eventually politician so complex that to reduce his ideas to a sketch is both inexcusable and impossible. On the other hand, his thinking and his public engagement, both pre- and post-1989, are so well known that it may suffice here to only highlight those ideas of his that appear most relevant for our discussion and those in which he differs from other Czech opposition leaders.

Havel had always been a public figure, but what made him into an icon of the dissident opposition movement were his activities and his writings after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Starting with his famous letter to President Gustáv Husák in 1975, in which he ruthlessly analyzed the marasmus of Czechoslovak society under the Communist Party’s policy of post-invasion “normalization”, he developed his thinking in a series of essays, manifestos, letters, and interviews, of which the most significant were “The Power of the Powerless” (1978), “Letters to Olga” (written 1979–1982, first published 1983), “Politics and Conscience” (1984), “The Anatomy of a Reticence” (1985), and “The Meaning of Charter 77” (1986).

Havel’s most important text is undoubtedly “The Power of the Powerless” (Havel 1978: 55–133), which amounts to his political

manifesto and which was the strongest influence on Czechoslovak opposition initiatives throughout the 1980s. Written early on in the life of the Charter 77 movement, it introduces Havel's two fundamental concepts, namely "living in truth" and "non-political (or anti-political) politics", which he later commented upon, explained, and exemplified in later essays and texts, but never significantly amended or modified.

In the essay, he described the state of the "post-totalitarian" society in Czechoslovakia in the era of "normalization", when it was no longer necessary for the state power to use brutal coercive action to subdue the population. Instead, it used the "soft" threat of the removal of employment and consumer and social securities to extort conformity with the regime from people. However insincere and formal that conformity may be (however much one "lives in lies"), it supports the regime, making each person an accomplice in sustaining it. Each person in such a system is both manipulated and manipulator, governed and governor, at the same time. Ideology serves to hold the regime together through a system of rituals and slogans ("lies"), which both the manipulators and the manipulated mechanically perform. Havel's analysis does not stop there: the specific situation of post-totalitarian societies that he describes is only one manifestation of a more general crisis of our contemporary technological civilization as a whole. Even in the Western democracies, all the natural relations of people to the world, to their social, physical, and working environments and to one another, are equally corrupted, albeit through subtler and less perceptible manipulation than in the Eastern dictatorships which rely on bureaucracy, propaganda, politicking, business, advertising, consumer manipulation, etc. The West, therefore, does not provide a viable alternative. The way out must be sought through people reclaiming their natural identities and relations so that they can return to their authentic selves: what is needed is an "existential revolution". (Havel 1978: 126)

In his essay "Politics and Conscience", (Havel 1989: 33–51) Havel explicitly calls his vision anti-political politics, a radical alternative to political politics. Anti-political politics is not politics as "the technology of power and manipulation, of cybernetic management of people, or as the art of the ends justifying the means, the art of intrigue and behind the scenes maneuvering." Rather, it is one of the ways "to seek

and to achieve meaning in life, to protect it and to serve it.” Havel continued, “Authentic politics (...), the only politics that I am willing to engage in, is simply a service to thy neighbor. Service to the community. Service to the next generations even. Its original source is moral, because it is nothing other than a materialization of one’s responsibility to the universe and for the universe.” (Havel 1989: 49) An anti-political politician, like the greengrocer in “The Power of the Powerless”, is required to “live in truth”, i.e., to act responsibly and authentically, not to seek power for power’s sake, and to defend the “natural world”, “natural language”, and “authentic human identity”.

Such politics is best achieved not through routinized institutions, formal elections, and established political parties, but rather through the ongoing civic engagement of citizens and their organizations and representatives (“anti-political politicians”). Such structures should be “open, dynamic, and small” since

beyond a certain point, human ties like personal trust and personal responsibility cannot work. (...) They would be structures not in the sense of organizations or institutions, but like a community. Their authority certainly cannot be based on long-empty traditions, like the tradition of mass political parties, but rather on how, in concrete terms, they enter into a given situation. Rather than a strategic agglomeration of formalized organizations, it is better to have organizations springing up ad hoc, infused with enthusiasm for a particular purpose and disappearing when that purpose has been achieved. (...) These structures should naturally arise from below as a consequence of authentic social self-organization; they should derive vital energy from a living dialogue with the genuine needs from which they arise, and when these needs are gone, the structures should also disappear. (Havel 1978: 129–130)

Unlike Benda, Havel extends his analysis to cover the crisis of the whole Western civilization, not only of what he calls the post-totalitarian regimes of the Soviet bloc. Even though the degree of the crisis may differ in the West and the East, even though its symptoms and manifestations seem very different on the surface, the root causes

are the same or very similar. That is why the only solution is an existential revolution in each individual, requiring them to reject the “life of lies” and embrace a “life in truth”. In extending the principle of “living in truth” into the realm of public life and politics, Havel wanted politics to be about people, not institutions: “I see a renewed focus of politics on real people as something far more profound than merely returning to the everyday mechanisms of western democracy; (...) No ‘dry’ organizational measures in themselves can provide that guarantee.” (Havel 1978: 92)

1.2 Conclusion: Dream or Program?

If we are to answer the question of the degree to which the Czech dissidents developed a viable political program that could be used after the anti-regime struggle had been won, three questions need to be asked of each of the three concepts introduced in this chapter:

(1) Was the concept a mere response to, and defense against, the non-democratic regime and therefore limited in time to the duration of that regime?

(2) Was the concept an idealistic dream or a realistic political program?

(3) Was it a feasible project for the transition period after the non-democratic regime had been removed? In other words, did the post-1989 political and social development prove or disprove its feasibility?

The following chart shows the score for each concept:

	<i>Civil Society</i>	<i>Parallel Polis</i>	<i>Non-political Politics</i>
<i>Long-term validity</i>	+	-	+
<i>Realistic program</i>	+	+	-
<i>Feasible project</i>	-	-	-

The concept of a civil society as an antidote to non-democratic state power and, conversely, as a prerequisite for, and a necessary condition of, a functioning democracy, as represented by Jan Tesař, appears to be the most valid, realistic program, and a suitable action plan for the post-1989 transition to a market economy and parliamentary democracy. Unfortunately, nobody developed the concept after its outline was first published in 1977. Even though the leaders of the 1989 Velvet Revolution realized the importance of a robust civil society for the establishment of a stable democracy, nobody had developed a feasible action plan by the end of the 1980s through which to support the re-birth and new development of an independent, strong, and free civil society after 1989.

The parallel polis concept was obviously meant to resolve the situation of a besieged society under non-democratic rule. It was never intended to become a political option after the renewal of democracy. It appeared realistic and viable for its intended purpose, and the independent activists of the 1970s and 1980s used it to establish numerous institutions and initiatives of the parallel polis, including *samizdat* publishing, independent cultural initiatives, private galleries, underground musical productions and publishing, the underground university, clandestine international contacts, and, towards the end of the 1980s, parallel media. Even though these institutions of the parallel polis did irritate and gradually begin to undermine the regime, by the end of the 1980s they had not developed a force capable of making the state introduce the necessary changes. The Czechoslovak communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s was quite effective in obliterating all opposition and it did not leave any (semi-legal, “gray”) space open for such alternative initiatives – and Czechoslovakia did not have a strong Catholic Church, like the Polish Roman Catholic Church, that would have been able to create such a space in direct confrontation with the state power. By the latter half of the 1980s, Václav Benda himself had abandoned the concept when he realized that the communist regime was on its last legs and that it was time to start acting politically and to develop a political agenda for the anticipated end of the non-democratic regime and the time afterward.

Václav Havel’s moral imperative of living in truth and his concept of anti-political politics as authentic service to the community through

open, ad hoc, non-institutionalized civic structures was both intended and perceived as a long term, universal concept for an existential revolution that would not only undermine the non-democratic regimes in the East but also lead to a reform of the petrified traditional democratic systems in the West. As a realistic political program, however, it was soon criticized as being too utopian and ignoring the reality of *realpolitik*⁸ and as being politically uninformed and naive⁹; it was even ridiculed as political kitsch.¹⁰

As repeatedly mentioned above, Havel's concept was not further elaborated, developed, or refined after it was first published in 1979. Havel did not respond in a persuasive way to the critiques that his concept received. Most importantly, however, his concept was never translated into any meaningful practical action plan or policy that could be implemented after the communist regime broke down.

Havel's position in the Czech opposition circles, however, remained so dominant that in November 1989 he emerged as the undisputed leader of the Velvet Revolution and its institutional face, the Civic Forum. Unfortunately, his leadership also meant that anti-politics informed the first statements and the first acts of the anti-communist front. The Civic Forum was celebrated in the streets by the enthusiastic nation as the victor over communist regime, but its leaders were refusing to take over the state power that presented itself to them on a silver platter, where it remained, deserted by the disoriented and temporarily paralyzed Communist Party leadership. For several long revolutionary days and weeks in November and December 1989, the leadership of the Civic Forum insisted that it would only play the role of a civic movement representing citizens vis-à-vis the reformed government. Under Havel's influence, the early stance of the Civic Forum (December 1, 1989) was that they "did not want to form the new government" nor did they "want to form a political party". They "were there to control state power, to guarantee that the state power would implement the social ideals, including free election." (Suk 2009: 69) It was only under the

⁸ See e.g., Bělohradský 1992.

⁹ For instance, his criticisms of political parties clearly lacked understanding of the function of parties in representing different views or interests.

¹⁰ See especially Rezek 1991.

enormous pressure of the masses in the streets, who simply wanted to kick the members of the Communist Party out, that the Civic Forum reluctantly took on full political responsibility, forming the government and having Havel elected president.

But Havel persisted in his emphasis on authentic anti-political personalities and in his mistrust of political parties even as president, which created enormous complications not only for him but also for the transfer of power and the beginning of the political, economic, and societal transformation. He refused to assume the leadership of a political party of his own or to join the political battle for the future directly, a decision that compromised his position on the political scene and led to the rapid disintegration of the Civic Forum and to the rise of the well-organized Civic Democratic Party and its leader Václav Klaus¹¹. It also definitively confirmed that his concept of non-political politics was a naive political utopia.

To sum up: the Czech situation by the end of 1989 was characterized by outstanding intellectual achievements by individuals but at the same time by the fragmented opposition's inability to arrive at a shared realistic political stance and, finally – though not surprisingly – by an inability to implement successful political action when it was badly needed. At the time of political change in late 1989, the Czech dissidents were still caught up in dreaming of an existential revolution, but empty-handed in terms of facing the new situation. They had no political plan, to say nothing of an action plan. We may conclude that the Czechs dreamed well but acted poorly before 1989; however, the conceptions and discourse of the elites of Czech dissent became part of the mainstream perspective on the role and nature of a civil society and played an immensely important practical role after 1989.

¹¹ In the 1970s and 1980s, Václav Klaus held various positions at the Czechoslovak State Bank. In 1987, he joined the Prognostics Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. At both places, he and a group of other young economists met regularly to study current trends in western economics and to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia. They were soon convinced that no third ways, in the form of “socialism with a human face” (slogan of the 1968 Prague Spring), would be able to reform the ailing communist regime, and that a return to capitalist market economy and standard parliamentary democracy was necessary. At the moment of the Velvet Revolution, they were thus better prepared to act energetically than the hesitant dissidents. But there was no place for civil society in Klaus's concept of the new societal organization.

2 CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: A STORY OF SLOW EMANCIPATION

2.1 Introduction and Historical Background

This chapter presents an overview of the development of Czech civil society after 1989. After providing a short historical outline of the developments before 1989, the chapter focuses on the evolution of political context, on important turn-overs after the Velvet Revolution, on an overview of basic data on civil society institutions and organizations, and on the institutional development of the civic sphere. The chapter goes beyond the advocacy layer of Czech civil society, while providing the broader understanding of its background that is necessary for more detailed empirical analysis.

2.1.1 Development before 1989 and Some Consequences

The tradition of charity and voluntary associations in the “Lands of the Czech Crown” is rich, and dates back to the beginning of the Czech state in the 9th and 10th centuries. Its long evolution continued through the latter half the 19th century and in the first Czechoslovak Republic in the 1920s and 1930s, after which it was disrupted by fifty years of non-democratic rule (1939–1989).

In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution transformed the Czech Lands into the most industrial and urbanized part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, dramatically changed their economic, social, and demographic map, and replaced the medieval society of estates with a civil society of burghers and later industrial and agricultural workers. The new wealth and power of the bourgeoisie gave rise to many new scientific, scholarly, literary, cultural, and social institutions; poverty and social upheavals led to the establishment of workers’ self-defense and mutual aid organizations. In addition, a very important process that contributed to an unprecedented “associational boom” was the Czech National Revival (approx. 1770s through the 1860s), joined by similar emancipation efforts in the German population.

In the twenty years between the two world wars, the Czech Lands became part of a new Czechoslovak Republic. Czechoslovakia was one of the world’s most advanced industrial-agrarian countries and

also one of the few states in Europe to have a genuine parliamentary democracy. Consequently, dynamic civil society developed and charitable and voluntary organizations flourished.

Their development, however, came to an abrupt end with Hitler's occupation of the country in 1939, which marked the beginning of fifty years of non-democratic rule under the conditions of the Second World War and the Cold War. Both under the German occupation (1939–1945) and the subsequent communist regime (1948–1989), independent citizen action became impossible; most associations were banned and others were reorganized in order to serve the ideological purposes of the communist state.

After the Communist Party took power in 1948, the assets of churches as well as of foundations and associations were confiscated and most of them were dissolved. The remaining associations were amalgamated into several "mass social organizations" (*masové společenenské organizace*) and unified with the new ones created by the communist regime under the umbrella of the infamous "National Front", controlled by the Communist Party. The state monopolized the provision of public services such as education, health, and social care. These services were provided by governmental organizations. No voluntary organizations were permitted to exist outside the National Front; membership in the National Front was considered to be an expression of loyalty to the state (Frič, Goulli 2001). Strikes, demonstrations, petitioning, and any other form of public civic engagement were outlawed.

In spite of harsh repression, some independent citizen initiatives as well as organized opposition to the regime did exist, but remained fragmented and weak. Both the early scattered opposition of the 1950s and the mightier reform movement of the Prague Spring in the 1960s were put down by force. After the 1968 occupation of the country by the Soviet Union, cultural activists and civic leaders had to find new ways of independent existence and opposition to the regime. They found it in the "parallel polis" of independent cultural initiatives, samizdat publishing, the underground church, (Fiala, Hanuš 1999) and the underground university (see Day 1999), and in the defense of

human and civil rights initiated and inspired by Charter 77¹². This practical solution was reflected in an impressive body of theoretical work in which a number of authors developed the ideas of a “natural world/life” (Patočka; see Patočka 1996), “parallel polis” (Benda) and, above all, “civil society” (Tesař, Havel) and “anti-political politics” (Havel). At the same time, a smaller but significant group of authors (Bratinka, Doležal, Mandler¹³) rejected all alternative, third, or new ways and advocated in their writing for a return to a standard multi-party democracy and free market economy as a future path for post-communist Czechoslovakia.

In spite of the admirable work of the cultural activists and the opposition leaders, their groups remained small and their activities isolated from the rest of the society. It was not until the second half of the 1980s, after Gorbachev had started his reforms in Moscow, that people started to re-awaken. The isolated opposition groups intensified their dialogue with the rest of society, a new generation of young people began to speak up, and the Catholic Church finally turned around to confront the regime. In 1989, the people’s long-suppressed frustration finally overflowed, and the communist regime collapsed within one week. The “Velvet Revolution” was triggered and mobilized by students and trade unions; the leadership gradually shifted to dissidents and civic activists from Charter 77 and other groups and organizations.

Civil society organizations, including those that engaged in advocacy activities, began their new lives as soon as the communist regime had collapsed. Two types of actors soon made themselves visible on the political stage. As a consequence of the disintegration of the National Front, newly independent but already instituted organizations – the “old” CSOs – were able to preserve or to quickly re-establish their close connections with members of parliament and even with top executive branches. (Frič 2005: 20) They were able to preserve the old informal cooperative networks among themselves and with their old friends in public administration, developing an effective way of pursuing their political and economic interests. (Frič 2004: 10-11)

¹² For basic information on Charter 77 see e.g., (Cisařovská, Prečan 2007).

¹³ Bohumil Doležal and Emanuel Mandler founded Democratic Initiative (*Demokratická iniciativa*), a political party, in 1987.

Apart from their specific member interests, the old CSOs basically pursued two general goals. The first was to maintain their privileged position in communication with the political elite: derived from their position in the previous political/social system, these actors were viewed as a kind of socially representative organization (one of their key attributes was the mass membership). The second was to maintain their privileged access to sources of public funding, i.e., to continue obtaining funding from the state, and/or to sustain existing legislative conditions and incentives for preserving their membership-based income. (Frič 2004: 14, 16) As these actors (represented especially by trade unions, recreation and sports associations, hunting communities etc.) were not principally critical of state policies and prioritized lobbying over protesting, they easily became preferred partners for the state administrative and political elite.

The other type of actors that were involved in the political process (albeit much more slowly and gradually) were newly established independent grassroots groups and the successors of former anti-regime initiatives, such as the Civic Forum platform¹⁴. Despite the initial lack of material resources (in contrast to the “old” CSOs), some of these new actors did eventually manage to make connections with the new political elite, especially before and after Klaus’s central-right governments (i.e., 1989–1993 and after 1997), and to exert influence on both the media and the political process. (Frič 2004: 5; Frič et al. 2004: 618–622)

2.1.2 Crucial Moments and Political Turn-Overs after 1989

No analysis of the evolution of the Czech civil society and its actors can ignore the groundbreaking events of 1989. The change of the regime was largely perceived by citizens as an opportunity for founding new organizations and getting involved in the civil society sector (for details, see chapter 2.2). The key condition – at least formally – for this process was the restoration of standard political rights and freedoms and their inclusion in the new Constitution and

¹⁴ As the heterogeneous coalition of Civic Forum finally disintegrated in 1991, some of its former members transformed themselves either into political parties or into various civil society organizations and groups.

the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms, adopted in 1992.

At the same time, two opposing ideological schemes suggesting the “proper” relationship between political processes and institutions (namely the state) and civil society actors entered Czech public discourse (Císař, Vráblíková 2008; Hyánek et al. 2007). One idea was represented by President Václav Havel: it argued for the uniqueness of the civil sphere in which, in contrast to the market and the state, citizens associate, self-organize, and discuss with each other, thus forming the necessary democratic corrective to bureaucratic and capitalist imperatives. In Havel’s view, the everyday involvement of citizens and their groupings in the political process was highly desirable and healthy for the proper functioning of political society. (DeHoog, Racanska 2001: 7, 11, 14) The other perspective on civil society was a pluralist or neo-liberal one, represented by Prime Minister Václav Klaus: civil society was regarded as a sum of individuals or groups competing with each other and acting in accordance with their particular (economic) interests; it is therefore unreasonable to involve these groups in the political process or to fund them from public budgets, by necessity selectively favoring some of them. (DeHoog, Racanska 2001: 4–5, 14; Frič 2004: 10; Frič 2005: 28) Furthermore, Klaus’s concept of “NGO-ism” explicitly warned against the influence of civil society actors on the political process, particularly in the area of environmental policy.

These two ideological positions symbolize the clashes over the role of civil society and its representatives in the political system (and society at large) that were fought in the Czech public debate in the 1990s. After 1989, it is possible to identify several key moments that are believed to have had a large impact on the evolution of civil society and its actors. The first were the parliamentary elections in 1992. The period between 1989 and 1992 is sometimes called a “warm period”. (Frič 2005: 34) As the first post-authoritarian government was dominated by former dissidents, they were generally supportive of the initial civil society “boom”. This government took three important measures (Pospíšil 2006; Frič 2005: 34–35): first, it established the Foundation Investment Fund (*Nadační investiční fond*, NIF) to support the development of charitable foundations and other

nonprofit organizations. The fund was incorporated in 1993 and its management was put under the supervision of a newly established Governmental Council for Foundations (see below). The idea of NIF was to divert one percent of the proceeds from the second wave of privatization into a fund from which the development of foundations would be financially supported. However, the plan found little favor with the governments of Václav Klaus 1992–1996 and 1996–1998, and so it was not until 1999 that the NIF funds were distributed amongst selected Czech foundations, contributing to the financial consolidation of Czech civil society. (Müller 2002; Rada 2002–2006; Císař 2008)

The second important measure was the decision about the transformation of “old” (i.e., governmental) quasi nonprofit organizations and institutions and their property into new nonprofit organizations. Finally, the third decision of the government to open the way for CSOs to participate in the political process was the establishment of the Council for Foundations. The Council was an advisory and coordinating body of the government in the area of cooperation with non-governmental organizations: its first task was to oversee the distribution of the NIF funds to selected foundations (hence its name); in 1998, its official task was broadened to include all issues concerning non-governmental organizations and civil society (and it was duly renamed as the Government Council for Non-State Non-Profit Organizations). (Müller 2002; Císař 2008)

This enthusiastic attitude of the government towards civil society changed after the 1992 elections. The new liberal-conservative government led by Václav Klaus saw civil society and its role differently than the former dissidents in the first post-1989 government. The new government was primarily occupied with the economic transformation of the country. Civil society was seen as a private sphere, in which individuals and pressure groups were free to act according to their own economic and other interests and which therefore should not interfere in the public sphere; the only actors that were entitled to enter the political arena were the political parties (as the only transparent representatives of citizens). This attitude was reflected both in the stalling of the process through which the proceeds from NIF were to be distributed to civil society actors (see

above) and in the closed structure of political opportunities for advocacy CSOs (see below). (Frič 2005: 35) At the same time, the first attempts were made to denounce, surveil, or even criminalize some radical CSO activities on the part of the Czech police and intelligence.

The second important moment in the evolution of the Czech CSO sector was again a parliamentary election, this time in 1996. The same political right-of-center coalition remained in power; however, the position of Klaus's party was weakened, which brought about a change in the government's attitude towards the civil society sector. One of the first signs was the re-activation of the Council for Foundations and the decision to finally implement the distribution of the financial resources from the proceeds of privatization to CSOs. The second key event, which influenced civil society indirectly, was the completion of the application process for EU membership by the end of 1996 – the entry of the country into the EU in 2004 was not as significant for Czech CSOs as the process of its preparation (harmonization of law, pre-accession instruments such as the Phare program, etc.).

The third, and probably most significant, (Frič 2005: 35) change took place during the next parliamentary election in 1998, when the first left-wing coalition government after the fall of the communist regime took office. Both the political discourse and practical measures started to change, and despite some political distance from the nonprofit sector, the government took both direct and indirect practical steps to improve the position of the third sector in Czech society. One of the most important steps was the introduction of regional self-government, which multiplied the access points for CSOs to enter the policy-making processes, to get funding from public budgets, and to deal more effectively with more regional/local and community-related issues. The government also signaled its willingness to lead an improved dialogue with CSOs by transforming the temporary Council for Foundations into a permanent Government Council for Non-State Non-Profit Organizations (see below). (cf. Frič 2005: 35) The latest important development occurred in 2006, and it was once again connected with a change of government after a parliamentary election. As a consequence of the narrow defeat of the left, the central-right-wing

parties invited the Green Party into the Cabinet for the first time. This was the first time that a political party brought into the executive branch a network of personal and inter-organizational relations with the civil society sector as well as a large number of issues that directly originated with civil society organizations. This had several mutually related consequences. First, the process of establishing the third sector as a source of alternative expertise for the state executive was accomplished. Second, a major part of advocacy CSOs – the environmental CSOs – tamed its critique of government activities and replaced it with systematic cooperation. Third, the visible presence of the green program and policies both in politics and in mainstream media discourse provoked a counter reaction in the shape of a wave of renewed discord towards the activities of the environmental CSOs on the part of public that was inspired and supported by Klaus – this time as president of the country.

After the parliamentary elections in 2010, the Green Party left the cabinet. Since then, Czech civil society seems to be witnessing a “cooling down” of state-civil society relations in most areas, meaning a return to the rather cautious attitudes of the two spheres. This is also a result of growing societal discontent related to the impact of recent austerity measures in times of economic recession and widespread anxiety about political corruption and scandals in Czech politics.

2.2 Characteristics of Civil Society: Basic Data

Until recently, there were no reliable statistical data on civil society organizations (CSOs) beyond the bare numbers of entities in public registers of the individual legal persons that constitute the Czech nonprofit sector. The situation has been gradually improving since 2004, when the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) started introducing the Satellite Account of Non-Profit Institutions (NPIs) and the first one or two academic institutions began to research the field. Some problems remain, however: the public registers are not very useful because they only show the number of registrations, not the number of active organizations, and they provide very little other information

about the actual activities and finances of the organizations. The satellite account (SA) has thus far only been implemented in its “short form”, which means that it can provide aggregate data on the economic measures that are recorded in the national accounts, such as income, expenditure, production, and paid and volunteer labor, but it cannot yet provide data that are detailed enough for analysis of, for example, field of activity (because the SA uses industrial classifications that are not suitable for the nonprofit sector), type of funding, or function. In spite of these deficiencies, however, public registers and databases, the satellite account and other statistical surveys, and academic research have by now provided at least some basic information on Czech nonprofit organizations even though not on all the other entities, formal or informal, that make up Czech civil society. For informal groups, networks, and initiatives, or for movements, activities, and actions, one has to rely on research, which to date has been rather sporadic.

One important measure of the development of Czech civil society is the growth of its organized part. Czech NPIs can choose from thirteen legal forms that Czech legislation provides for non-profit firms. The numbers of all the thirteen types of NPI are shown in Table 1, which records only those NPIs that were active in a given year.

In the media and much of the popular public discourse, a reference to “nonprofit organizations” (CSOs) very often means only the most frequent legal forms of NPI: associations and their branches, public benefit companies, funds and foundations, and often, but not always, churches and religious societies and the organizations that they establish.

Table 2 shows figures for the registered CSOs of these selected four legal forms only. The numbers of CSOs there differ from those in Table 1 because, unlike Table 1, they show the number of registrations, without deducting defunct organizations, but they have the advantage of showing a longer time series.

Whether one looks at the number of registrations or the number of active organizations, the tables clearly testify to the continuous increase in the number of the most frequent legal form of CSO (i.e., association) since 1990, with the most explosive growth in the first five years after the fall of the Communist regime in 1989.

Table 1: Numbers of economically active NPIs 2003–2010

nonprofit legal person	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Foundation	227	250	293	302	302	379	413	434
Charitable fund	534	573	725	649	697	966	1 061	1 129
Public benefit company	499	634	550	679	940	1 110	1 612	1 785
Public university	24	25	25	26	26	26	26	26
School corporation	-	-	-	56	121	130	140	159
Political party/movement	152	55	46	59	65	78	137	134
Association	37 794	34 424	37 794	39 825	43 940	45 927	62 187	66 527
Branch of association	21 315	20 377	24 114	22 104	21 916	26 601	29 152	29 609
Church organization	3 078	3 295	3 428	3 214	3 323	4 015	4 216	4 251
Professional organization/chamber	70	71	17	17	17	17	17	20
Other chamber (excl professional)	99	99	109	104	109	118	168	178
Association of legal persons	393	404	520	493	514	715	725	943
Hunting community	2 497	2 432	2 716	2 899	3 133	3 952	4 014	4 014
TOTAL	62 241	62 639	70 337	70 427	75 103	83 034	103 868	109 209

Source: Czech Statistical Office, NPI Satellite Account

Table 2: The numbers of selected types of registered Czech CSOs (1989–2012)

	<i>Associations</i>	<i>Foundations (legally defined in 1992, definition changed in 1998)</i>	<i>Funds (legally defined in 1998)</i>	<i>Public Benefit Companies (legally defined in 1996)</i>
1989	537	-	-	-
1990	3 879	-	-	-
1991	9 366	-	-	-
1992	15 393	1 551	-	-
1993	21 694	2 768	-	-
1994	24 978	3 800	-	-
1995	26 814	4 253	-	-
1996	27 807	4 392	-	1
1997	30 297	5 238	-	52
1998	36 046	55	71	129
1999	38 072	272	695	560
2000	42 302	282	735	557
2001	47 101	299	784	701
2002	49 108	330	825	762
2003	50 997	350	859	884
2004	53 306	362	898	1 038
2005	54 963	368	925	1 158
2006	58 347	380	992	1 317
2007	61 802	390	1 048	1 486
2008	65 386	411	1 095	1 658
2009	68 631	429	1 168	1 813
2010	72 111	449	1 205	1 958
2011	75 627	455	1 269	2 126
2012	77 801	468	1 278	2 183

Source: Czech Statistical Office, Neziskovsky.cz, Frič et al. 2004: 608

As mentioned above, besides the different legal forms of CSO, there are also many informal organizations, groups, or networks of activists that are not registered (i.e., they operate outside the legal requirements for CSO activities – e.g., anarchist or Trotskyite groups), or which even operate in secret (e.g., right-wing extremists, radical environmental or anti-fascist groups, etc.).

While statistics and research can give us an idea of the total number of CSOs and the numbers of individual legal forms, it is much more difficult to find how many organizations operate in the various fields of nonprofit activity. The CZSO uses a Czech version of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (CZ-NACE), which is designed to describe industrial production in the system of national accounts but is not suitable for classifying the activities of CSOs. The International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO), which is recommended for use in NPI satellite accounts by the UN Statistics Division, will be introduced in the Czech NPI satellite account in the future, but in the meantime the task of describing and analyzing the activities of advocacy CSOs (like any other CSO activity) is quite difficult; one has to rely on research into the behavior and activities of these organizations rather than making use of systematic economic data provided by official statistics.

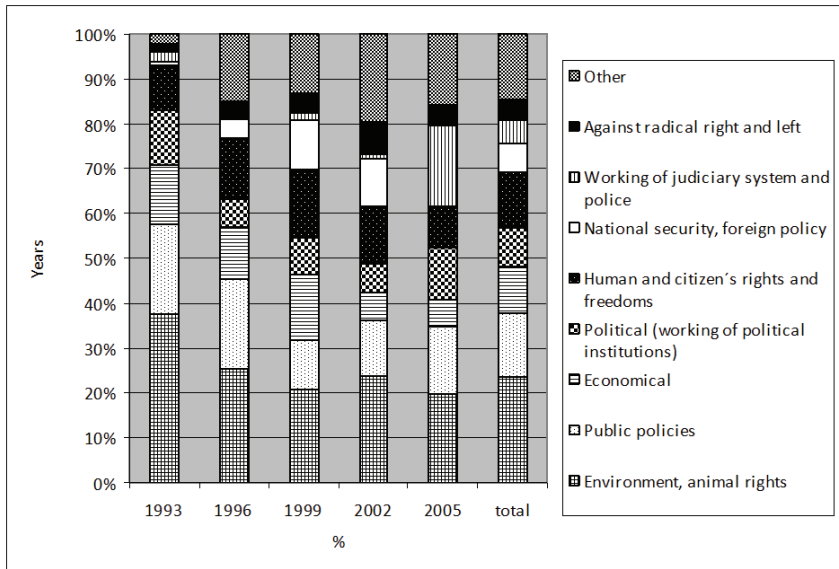
The official statistics of the CZSO put the number of nonprofit institutions active in the area of advocacy at 2,861 in 2008. That number, however, includes political parties, business and professional associations and chambers, trade unions, religious organizations, and various associations of businesses, municipalities, and other legal persons. There were also 193 foundations that claimed to support advocacy activities but did not implement them. Aside from these, there remained 1,764 organizations that declared themselves to be an “association of citizens with the purpose of promoting shared interests” and which we can, with a degree of uncertainty about the reliability of the number, classify as CSOs active in the area of advocacy.¹⁵

¹⁵

The set of CSOs will no doubt include a number of organizations that pursue very limited, selfish interests as well as organizations that are registered but not active.

The activities of both formal and informal Czech CSOs cover a broad area. The statistical data on the areas of their interest are not available, but some basic structures and the relative importance and trends of their development may be deduced by analyzing the publicly raised and therefore visible (protest) claims of Czech civil society actors. (Císař 2008) Quite surprisingly, the most important claims were not economic, or, in other words, materialist, as could be expected in a country in a state of transition from a command to a free-market economy. Although the share of post-materialist claims varied through the years under study (Figure 1), environmental issues remained the most important claims that were publicly raised during the studied years (1993, 1996, 1999, 2002, 2005).

Figure 1: Structure of public claims of civil society actors in selected years



Source: Císař 2008: 58

In terms of publicly-expressed claims, environmental demands are the most numerous, the most publicly visible, and also the most widely embraced by Czech citizens and the media. This may seem surprising since one might expect the economic issues to dominate;

however, one has to realize that environmental activism had been solidly established long before the fall of the Communist regime (at least in terms of membership) and it also gained extensive legitimacy immediately after 1989, as environmental issues were among the important points of critique directed towards the previous regime. (cf. Jehlička 2001) But other important post-materialist issues also appear in the public debate, including gender issues and issues of the rights of ethnic (namely Roma) groups, immigrants, gay/lesbian minorities, and disabled people.

Political demands connected with public economic or social policies are second in importance after the group of post-materialist claims. The principal civil society actors in this area are trade unions and professional associations, church-based organizations and charities, and various social service providers. In the Czech Republic, a dense network of professional associations, chambers, and trade unions have always been both partner and opponent to the state administration. (Hyánek et al. 2007: 9)

Trade unions and employer associations play a special role within the sector of Czech advocacy organizations, as they have privileged access to institutional politics via the Council for Economic and Social Agreement (*Rada hospodářské a sociální dohody*), popularly known as “*Tripartita*” (see below) and, informally, through their close ties to political parties. Other materialistically oriented protest activities deal with security and foreign policy issues and with law enforcement and police activities.

A small but visible activity area is that of radical political action. Unlike the sub-sector of mainstream political parties, it is inhabited by highly ideologically profiled organizations and groups, even though they often present themselves to the public as “apolitical” movements and think tanks. These include anti-war groups, anarchists, anti-fascists, Marxists, radical Communists, or, at the other end, right-wing extremists (nationalists or neo-Nazis, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, etc.).

Interestingly, individual participation in, and individual support for, various types of CSO activity has a different distribution than the publicly raised claims (which brings in the question of the embeddedness of advocacy activities). The most attractive types of CSOs are sports and cultural organizations, with environmental CSOs

in the middle; and peace, third world development, and human rights group at the bottom (see Table 3).

Table 3: Structure of individual participation in civil society organizations and groups

	<i>belonging to an organization</i>					<i>unpaid work for an organization</i>				
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>sports/recreation</i>	19.0	76.9	0.2	3.8	100.0	10.5	85.6	3.4	0.5	100.0
<i>cultural activities</i>	10.0	85.4	0.3	4.3	100.0	5.7	90.2	3.5	0.5	100.0
<i>religious organization</i>	6.6	88.8	0.4	4.2	100.0	4.0	91.4	4.0	0.6	100.0
<i>welfare organization</i>	6.0	89.1	0.5	4.4	100.0	3.5	91.8	4.2	0.4	100.0
<i>trade unions</i>	5.6	89.4	0.3	4.7	100.0	3.1	92.3	4.0	0.6	100.0
<i>environment</i>	5.5	90.0	0.3	4.2	100.0	3.8	91.8	3.7	0.6	100.0
<i>youth work</i>	4.4	90.8	0.3	4.4	100.0	3.6	92.0	3.7	0.7	100.0
<i>professional associations</i>	4.2	91.0	0.3	4.5	100.0	2.3	93.3	4.0	0.4	100.0
<i>voluntary health organizations</i>	3.6	91.8	0.3	4.3	100.0	2.4	93.5	3.6	0.5	100.0
<i>women's groups</i>	3.4	91.6	0.3	4.7	100.0	2.5	92.9	4.1	0.5	100.0
<i>political parties/groups</i>	3.0	92.0	0.3	4.7	100.0	1.9	93.6	4.0	0.5	100.0
<i>local community action</i>	2.3	92.9	0.4	4.4	100.0	1.6	93.8	4.0	0.6	100.0
<i>peace movement</i>	1.0	93.9	0.4	4.7	100.0	0.7	94.5	4.1	0.7	100.0
<i>third world development/human rights</i>	1.0	94.1	0.3	4.6	100.0	0.9	94.7	4.0	0.5	100.0
<i>other groups</i>	5.2	89.3	0.5	4.9	100.0	4.7	90.8	4.2	0.4	100.0
<i>none</i>	48.9	49.8	0.0	1.3	100.0	57.3	41.2	1.4	0.1	100.0

Source: European Value Study, 2008

Quite apparently, membership in non-advocacy CSOs is much higher than any kind of “political” engagement – be it labor unions or environment groups. Although belonging to, or volunteering for, a political party or group is not the absolutely least preferred type of active involvement, an unwillingness to identify with any classic political or ideological position or program (to say nothing of associating with a specific political party) is very characteristic of most Czech non-political and non-advocacy CSOs, because “politics” has remained as dirty a word for many people as it was in the Communist regime. For this reason, advocacy CSOs were long seen as distinct from the rest of the nonprofit sector and often even regarded with a degree of suspicion. This has been slowly changing, but – as we demonstrate in the last chapter – environmentalists, civil rights

activists, and other advocacy organizations have not yet overcome this negative public attitude. The attitude remains unchanged towards political parties. They are seen as part of the state, as “them”, rather than as representatives of citizen interests, as “us”, with all the negative consequences for citizen identification with the state and for citizen engagement (see also preceding section).

This pattern is clearly visible in the degree of citizen trust in various political and social subjects and institutions (see Table 4). While the international and some of the domestic institutions are the most trusted, environmental CSOs are less trusted, and the political institutions and political parties keep their bottom position.

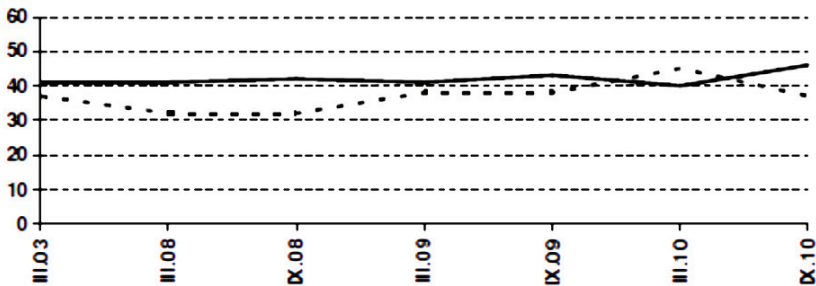
Table 4: Citizen trust in social and political institutions

<i>Confidence in</i>	<i>a great deal or quite a lot</i>	<i>not very much or not at all</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>education system</i>	52.9	43.3	1.5	2.3	100.0
<i>the police</i>	41.5	55.8	1.8	.9	100.0
<i>healthcare system</i>	41.1	55.8	2.0	1.0	100.0
<i>United Nations Organization</i>	39.9	47.8	3.1	9.2	100.0
<i>European Union</i>	38.9	52.8	2.6	5.7	100.0
<i>NATO</i>	37.0	51.2	3.3	8.6	100.0
<i>social security system</i>	35.9	59.4	1.9	2.8	100.0
<i>environmental organizations</i>	35.6	56.6	2.6	5.2	100.0
<i>justice system</i>	33.4	62.1	1.9	2.6	100.0
<i>the press</i>	32.5	64.2	1.6	1.8	100.0
<i>civil service</i>	32.3	63.0	2.0	2.7	100.0
<i>armed forces</i>	31.4	62.9	2.0	3.8	100.0
<i>major companies</i>	31.4	58.2	2.9	7.6	100.0
<i>trade unions</i>	26.6	63.0	2.5	7.9	100.0
<i>government</i>	20.2	75.1	2.6	2.0	100.0
<i>church</i>	19.8	75.1	3.3	1.9	100.0
<i>parliament</i>	16.1	79.0	2.4	2.4	100.0
<i>political parties</i>	15.3	79.0	2.7	3.0	100.0

Source: European Value Study, 2008

We find a very similar pattern regarding the trust of citizens towards non-profit organizations in a longitudinal perspective, even though the negative and positive attitudes are more balanced: about 40% of citizens display confidence in CSOs, while a slightly lower proportion of citizens take the opposite stance (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Citizen trust in non-profit organizations (2003–2010)



Note: The solid line shows trust and the dashed line shows distrust towards non-profit organizations, scale as percentage.

Source: Červenka 2010 (CVVM)

2.3 Institutional Background of Civil Society

2.3.1 The Legal Environment of CSOs

Despite the fact that CSOs constitute the very core of civil society in the Czech Republic, Czech legislation does not define non-governmental or nonprofit organizations. Instead, the Constitution of 1992 and other related legislation (above all the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, 1992, and other laws specifying the rights of association, petition, etc.) guarantee the basic rights and freedoms on which the life of a free civil society depends; further specific legislation (the Civil Code, the Law on Citizen Assembly, the Law on Churches and Religious Congregations, the Law on Public Benefit Companies, the Law on Foundations and Funds, etc.) regulates the civil sphere and the sector of nonprofit organizations. The Czech Statistical Office currently includes thirteen legal forms of nonprofit

organizations in its definition of nonprofit institutions (see Table 1), and, as a rule, each legal form is defined in, and regulated by, a specific law. This situation was seen as untenable by many for a long time. A new regulation of private nonprofit firms will be instituted in the new Civil Code that will replace the current Civil Code of 1964. The work on the new code took years; in 2013, the new Civil Code was approved by Parliament and signed into law by the President, with implementation to start on January 1, 2014. The new Civil Code enables new comprehensive and systematic regulation of all private law, including the legislation on associations and foundations as the two basic legal forms for nonprofit organizations.

Besides the basic legislation that regulates the thirteen legal forms, there are other laws that are relevant for CSOs, especially those dealing with taxation, fiscal regulation, accounting, volunteering, labor, and social regulation, etc. (see, e.g., Hladká 2009) This legislation has remained fairly stable since the 1990s, when it was instituted.

What is irritating for a student of Czech civil society and nonprofit organizations is not only the maze of thirteen nonprofit legal forms, but also the confused usage of the basic terms. (cf. Hyánek et al. 2007: 12) “Nonprofit institution” (*nezisková instituce*) is the technical term used by the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) to refer to the thirteen nonprofit legal forms included in the NPI Satellite Account. It is used in statistics and economic research of the third (nonprofit) sector. “Nonprofit organization” (*nezisková organizace*) is a term used by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Research Project and the most authoritative technical term used in nonprofit sector research; at the same time, it (or its shorthand “nonprofit”, *neziskovka*) is the most common word used in everyday speech and in the media where it loosely and hazily refers to four of the five most common types of civil society organizations, but excludes the others. Finally, “nonprofit non-state organization” (*nestátní nezisková organizace*) is a term that was introduced by the Government Council for Non-State Non-Profit Organisations in the early 1990s and that includes only associations, public benefit companies, church-based service-providing organizations, foundations, and funds as those organizations whose development the Government wanted to support after 1989.

Most of the thirteen Czech types of nonprofit organization are familiar from other countries (association, foundation) or are self-explanatory (hunting community, school corporation). Two, however, are particular to Czech legislation and require a brief explanation. A charitable fund (*nadační fond*) is an asset-based non-membership legal person, like a foundation, whose purpose is to support charitable causes, but, unlike a foundation, it does not have to have an income-generating endowment. A public benefit company (*obecně prospěšná společnost*) is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to offer public-benefit services to all members of the public (typical examples include hospitals, shelters, and museums).

2.3.2 The Legal Environment of Advocacy

When considering the legal environment of advocacy, we should first distinguish among different basic types of advocacy. There are more direct methods, when CSOs engage in direct communication with politicians and public institutions – e.g., lobbying, consultations, and high-level expertise negotiations. There are public or extra-institutional means of achieving particular goals, when advocacy groups try to influence the political system and its elite “from the street” – i.e., through the mobilization of public opinion and the media. Generally, the extra-institutional tactics of Czech CSOs are non-violent and non-confrontational, as Czech citizens prefer and endorse peaceful means of participation (see Table 5).

Table 5: Citizens’ preferences in extra-institutional political action repertoire

	<i>have done</i>	<i>might do</i>	<i>would never do</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>total</i>
<i>signing a petition</i>	30.1	31.0	30.1	2.7	6.0	100.0
<i>attending lawful demonstrations</i>	10.7	36.0	42.3	3.0	8.0	100.0
<i>joining in boycotts</i>	4.3	24.9	56.8	3.1	10.9	100.0
<i>joining unofficial strikes</i>	3.7	20.3	60.9	3.6	11.5	100.0
<i>occupying buildings/factories</i>	1.2	10.2	74.7	3.5	10.4	100.0

Source: European Value Study, 2008

As in other (but not only) post-communist countries, the operating environment for CSO advocacy activities within political institutions and processes is not defined in much detail by legislation or administrative practice. The structures, relations, mechanisms, and processes are rather hazy and fluid, leaving a lot of room for personal ties, informal negotiations, and hidden dealings instead of transparent exchanges and communication between CSOs and the political elite. As was mentioned above, there are several key political institutions and codified processes that are relevant for advocacy activities of Czech CSOs. One of the most important is the Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations (*Rada vlády pro nestátní neziskové organizace*, RVNNO – see also chapter 2.2). (Hyánek et al. 2007: 9) This is the advisory, consultative, and coordinating body of the government dealing with the issues of the nonprofit sector. It was established in 1992 and transformed in 1998, when its position was strengthened. The number of its members varies, but 50% represent the nonprofit sector and 50% the executive, and the Council is chaired by a Cabinet Minister. This platform enables selected civil society representatives to participate in and comment on legislative drafts and legal regulations, to take part in the discourse on the coordination of public policies and to assess them, to get information about the government's future steps, to inform the government about the state and needs of the CSOs, to influence and monitor the measures of the state's administration relating to CSOs, to ensure a symmetric flow of information, to monitor the flow of funding from the state towards the nonprofit sector, etc.

Another crucial institution is the Council for Economic and Social Agreement (*Rada hospodářské a sociální dohody ČR*, RHSD), or “*Tripartita*”. It was founded in 1990 as an important feature of the European social model. It may be generally described as a mechanism for preventing upheavals by channeling the dialogue between the government, the trade unions, and the employers as their coordinating and consultative body. In 1997, the statute of the Tripartita was redefined; since 1999, it has played an even more influential role. (Frič 2005: 21; Hyánek et al. 2007: 9) The trade unions, as employee representatives, the chambers of commerce, the various employer

associations, and the representatives of government deal here with social and economic policies and legislation and exchange their expertise, often including other relevant actors in the Tripartita negotiations. Tripartita-like structures have also been established in the regions and various sectors of the economy. The supreme body of the Tripartita is the general meeting, where seven representatives of government, seven of trade unions, and seven of employers meet and make decisions.

Apart from the institutional framework, there are also some legally established mechanisms that may be used by CSOs for effective advocacy activities. Foremost of these is the very process of instituting legislation. (Hyánek et al. 2007: 9) Strictly speaking, CSOs have no direct access to this mechanism: in contrast to various elected bodies they are not allowed to raise or amend any legislative initiative or directly participate in its passage through Parliament. Nonetheless, there are certain instruments that allow civil society actors to enter the preliminary phase, either through the standard review procedure or through a special consultation process. If the law is submitted by the government (as it usually is), the standard review procedure applies automatically to trade unions, employer associations, or professional chambers, if the bill relates to their area of activity. The special consultation process is implemented by invitation: an CSO, like any other organization, is invited to review a bill and to make comments. Even this area is gradually becoming institutionalized: since 2006, there has been a “Database of Consulting Organizations” listing more than three hundred civil society organizations from various sectors (trade unions and employer associations as well as many other associations) that are willing to take part in the process of reviewing proposed legislation. This list is prepared for, and used by, central state administration during the process of preparing both legislative and non-legislative drafts. (ibid.) In some cases, the invitation to the consultation is mandatory: if an organization would be directly affected by the proposed new legislation, or if the issue is environmental or subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), then any registered association that defines its mission as environmental may take part in the process. (Hyánek et al. 2007: 10; Frič et al. 2004: 618–619, 622–624) Finally, public consultation is an important

institution, and the most important legislative proposals are offered to the public for consultation, in which any individual, group, or organization can take part.

There are more indirect forms of advocacy activities that aim at the political process through public opinion and the media. The basic instruments are public meetings, demonstrations, strikes, and protests as typical expressions of the freedom of assembly. This freedom is guaranteed in Article 19 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms (and in some international treaties signed by the Czech Republic) and in the Civil Code (Act no. 84/1990), which also lists the conditions for its denial. The right of assembly is not conditioned by nationality, age, or permission granted by public authorities or institutions, but at the same time this freedom applies only to peaceful gatherings. (cf. Černý 2008: 140–141; Filip 1999: 96–97) It may be restricted only by law, and must not be conditioned from public authorities. However, if the event is to be held in a public space, the organizers are required to notify the appropriate local authority. The authority may prohibit the assembly as unlawful under the conditions specified by the law (e.g., when restricting the freedoms and rights of other people, disseminating hate, pursuing violence, or interfering with another event in the same place, etc.). If such a banned assembly still takes place, it may be dissolved by the police. Furthermore, in the case of a spontaneously mobilized assembly or when an assembly takes place without notification to the authorities, the organizers may be penalized; however, it may be dissolved only under legally-specified conditions. (Černý 2008: 144–145)

Another important extra-institutional means for advocacy activities is the petition. The right to petition is not included in international treaties obligatory to the Czech Republic; however, it basically stems from freedom of speech and therefore is guaranteed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms (Article 18) and specified in the Civil Code (Law no. 85/1990). The law further regulates that the receiving authority is to forward the petition to a different authority appropriate for dealing with it within 5 days, or to respond to the petition within 30 days itself. Of course, this does not imply the acceptance of the demands included in the petition. Joining a petition is not restricted by the nationality or age of participants. The Charter does

restrict the right to petition in that it must not interfere with the independence of the courts and must not call for a violation of the basic rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Charter (Filip 1999: 95–96).

There is a transnational (mainly European) dimension to the advocacy activities of Czech CSOs, through which they often try to achieve a “boomerang effect”. (Keck, Sikkink 1998) This area of activities is not regulated by the Czech legal order, as these activities take place beyond Czech national borders. These activities manifest themselves in either of the two main modes of advocacy repertoires that were outlined above. The most professional and efficient transnational organizations and representatives of interests (most often the “old” actors with sufficient resources as trade unions, employer associations, and professional chambers) work within well-established cross-border networks that are also represented in EU structures. Even some “new” CSOs have succeeded in this type of advocacy – e.g., Czech women’s organizations, and some human rights and environmental (umbrella) groups. (Císař 2008: 128–153) Protest and public activities that are aimed at Czech political authorities from abroad are most often used by the Czech radical left, peace, and green groups; however, there has not yet been much measurable impact.

2.3.3 Financial Environment

Recent research (Císař 2008) has shown that we can distinguish three funding models for Czech civil society organizations and groups. (Císař 2008: 81–87) First, some CSOs – especially the “old” ones, which were founded before 1989 and are based on mass membership (e.g., trade unions and churches, community, culture, and sports organizations, and some feminist and environmental organizations (cf. Frič, et al. 2004: 609) use revenue from assets/property and/or membership fees. The second model is typical particularly of radical and explicitly political organizations that neither own any property nor have mass memberships; they tend to combine individual support, voluntary work, and occasional fund-raising events. The third main model is typical especially of advocacy CSOs: unlike the preceding two models, these organizations are dependent on external funding. They usually lack mass personnel or material resources and have therefore focused on funding from the Czech state (ministries, public agencies),

international organizations (UN and EU funds), foreign governments (USAID, Norwegian or Dutch government grants), private Czech and international foundations (Civil Society Development Foundation, Open Society Fund, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, German Marshall Fund of the United States), and corporate funding schemes (Philip Morris, Henkel, Škoda Auto, etc.).

The structure of the funding of Czech CSOs has changed over time: at the very beginning of the post-communist era, the traditional (“old”) organizations and their successors continued to be funded from the state (with some income from property and for-profit activities) while newly-established (“new”) organizations had minimal access to state funding; both raised very little from individual and corporate donations. An important additional source of finances was the massive flow of financial and technical assistance from European and US governments, foundations, and other organizations. In the early 1990s, however, when this assistance was at its highest, most organizations did not have the capacity to absorb it. As the nonprofit sector grew, its organizations became stronger, more mature, and more confident, and their ability to negotiate with partners about funding, to raise funds, and to absorb those funds gradually improved. On the other side of the equation, the attitude of the state and the other partners, as well as the general public, also gradually evolved towards a better understanding of, and increased support for, the activities of CSOs.

Císař’s models are revealing, but unfortunately there is not reliable financial data to support them with hard evidence. The structure of CSO funding thus remains largely unknown. All that can be said is that in aggregate figures the amounts of both financial and professional personnel resources available to Czech nonprofit organizations steadily rose until the impact of the global economic downturn manifested itself through a slight drop in revenues in 2008, after which, however, the total income started to increase again (see Figure 3). The rising number of FTE employees seems to have remained unaffected by the crisis over the past five years, while the number of volunteers fluctuates, depending on external circumstances such as emergency situations or waves of civic unrest and protest. On the other hand, there is an apparent steady decline in the numbers of volunteers, despite the peak in 2007. The question remains whether this

decline is a result of the “professionalization” of CSO personnel or a rising alienation between non-members and CSOs. We focus on this problem within the sphere of civic advocacy in the last chapter.

Figure 3: Evolution of resources in nonprofit institutions 2005–2010



Source: Czech Statistical Office, NPI Satellite Account¹⁶

As far as we can tell from incomplete evidence (Rada vlády) and patchy research (Fórum dárců, Hestia, CVNS), the income of CSOs has been rising in aggregate figures and from all relevant sources: from fees (earned income, sales of goods and services, membership fees), from public budgets (central government, regional government, and municipalities), and from philanthropy (individual giving, corporate giving, and contributions from foundations). However, there is still a lack of good research on the shares of the individual funding sources and the causes that the various funders support. Research for the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP), based on (rather unreliable) data from 1995, suggested that the Czech nonprofit sector was generally “fee income dominant”, with income from fees estimated at 47%, from public budgets at 39% and from philanthropy at 14%. (Frič et al. 1999: 296; Brhlíková 2004: 26) These data are of course outdated now and the CNP has not published more recent findings based on 2004 data. It is likely, however, that public funding

¹⁶ EUR exchange rate of EUR1 = CZK25.

and fees have remained the main sources of CSO finances in spite of increased income from individual and corporate giving.

The system of public (state) funding is operated by public institutions and is a major source of external funding for Czech CSOs (cf. Frič et al. 2004: 614) Public funding takes the form of grants, public supply contracts, mandatory annual funding (e.g., of church organizations or public universities), one-off or occasional state contributions (e.g., from the Foundation Investment Fund created from the proceeds from the privatization of state-owned property; see also above), EU funding distributed by the Czech state or directly from Brussels, and foreign government funding. Most of the public funding is distributed by central departments and agencies; regional and local bodies only allocate approximately one sixth of the total sum. (Frič et al. 2004: 614; Hyánek et al. 2007: 8)

The state prefers supporting areas of activity defined by the Constitution and related legislation as public services: education, culture, transportation, defense and security, the judicial system, prison services, pension schemes, and other functions. The state considers civil society actors as merely supplementary to its own public policies, while the state itself remains the only guarantor and the principal provider of these services. The state nominally declares its State Grant Policy (*Státní dotační politika*, SDP) and annually announces its priorities for CSO support, but in fact a large share of the funding for CSOs is distributed outside these priority areas. According to various non-longitudinal data analyses, the largest amounts of funding are traditionally allocated to the areas of sport and recreation, social services, health, and culture. (cf. Frič et al. 1999; Císař 2008: 107–108; Hyánek et al. 2007: 8)

Table 6 illustrates this with figures for the total amounts of funding from governmental agencies to three selected types of CSOs (associations, public benefit companies, and church-based service providers) in the decade 1999–2008.

There are many problems related to the system of state funding of civil society. The most burning issues are the short-term nature of funding (finances are provided for one-year periods), its strong centralization at the expense of regional and municipal grants, a lack of

transparent public policies and transparent procedures, and the strong preference for arbitrarily selected CSOs and fields of activity.

Table 6: Funding from central governmental agencies to selected types of CSOs (1999–2008)

<i>Governmental agency</i>	<i>Total sum (EURO million)</i>
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	29 089.44
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	5 211.41
Ministry of Agriculture	3 976.90
Ministry of Transport	2 833.16
Ministry of Industry and Trade	2 674.89
Academy of Sciences CR	563.39
Ministry of Culture	402.60
The Czech Science Foundation	311.79
Ministry of Health	250.83
Ministry of the Environment	154.77
Ministry for Regional Development	145.03
State Agricultural Intervention Fund	143.63
Ministry of Defense	93.54
Ministry of the Interior	64.91
The Office of the Government	39.43
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	30.39
State Fund for Czech Cinematography	14.73
State Office for Nuclear Safety	6.61
Ministry of Informatics	0.73
State Cultural Fund	0.67
Ministry of Justice	0.66

Source: Ministry of Finance

In addition to direct funding, the state also supports CSOs through tax exemption and tax relief: grants and donations, membership fees, inheritance, and revenues from registered endowments are tax exempt, and there is a system of tax deductions for both individual and corporate donors. (Hyánek et al. 2007: 13–14)

The most important private external sources of funding for Czech CSOs are grants from charitable foundations and funds, and individual and corporate giving. Some foundations and funds also operate as the distributors of funding from foreign foundations and donors and

sometimes even from foreign governments. Foundations sometimes claim that they support minority projects and cutting-edge innovations that nobody else would support. They believe that this support is their main contribution to society, rather than the financial pay-out, which will always be minute in comparison with public funding. The facts, however, show that Czech foundations tend to support the same causes as the state and so they play the same subsidiary role as the rest of the CSOs (see Table 7).

Table 7: Numbers of foundations operating in particular areas (January 2009)

<i>Field of activity</i>	<i>Number of foundations active in the field</i>
Culture	46
Education	38
Social affairs	38
Communal and regional development	37
<i>Field of activity</i>	<i>Number of foundations active in the field</i>
Health	34
Other	31
Children and youth	27
Environment	19
Civil society	19
Sport	14
International cooperation	9
Human rights	5
Social pathologies	4
Minorities	3

Source: Youth Information Centre

After 1989, a boom of foreign foundations came from the USA and some Western European countries (see also chapter 2.1). In the early 1990s, they significantly contributed to the change and development of the Czech nonprofit sector, particularly by supporting its “new” actors (think tanks, watchdogs, foundations, etc.) and its infrastructure and capacity building (umbrella organizations, training, and consultancy). They also distributed support in a non-bureaucratic way and independently of the interests of the Czech state. (cf. Mareš et al.

2006) At the end of the 1990s, however, the foundations started withdrawing from the country and so Czech CSOs had to look for new sources that would replace them: they were able to win some limited funding from the more strict and demanding funding programs of the European Union (distributed mostly by the Czech state, however), but they realized that they would have to learn to win support from domestic sources, public and private, individual and corporate.

This path is particularly difficult for advocacy organizations (Císař's third model of funding mentioned above), many of which were established and financed with international funding: their access to public funding is often limited as a result of their work in areas that the state does not see as a priority, and to raise enough funding from private donors is a difficult task, especially if their mission is seen as controversial by businesses or the public or both. (cf. Císař 2008: 122–126)

2.4 Perspectives

We may conclude with some remarks and a brief outlook. As we have seen, the history of the modern Czech state has been one of much turmoil in the development of the civil society and its actors. After the initial blossoming of the bourgeois public sphere in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the state gradually assumed control of this area of social and political activity in the mid-20th century. Its grip was somewhat relaxed after 1989, when two new competing visions of the relation between civil society and the state emerged – the neo-liberal and the participatory.

When reviewing the development of Czech civil society after 1989, considerable and constant quantitative growth is clearly noticeable, both of its collective members and their resources. However, it seems that none of the visions formulated in the early 1990s has prevailed: neither the mushrooming of economically independent and self-sustainable actors competing with each other and with the state nor the politically and economically emancipated sphere of “citizen wisdom” that would permanently control and tame the exclusive political process and the instrumentality of the market economy are to be seen. It seems that

instead of these distinct ideals of the relationship between civil society actors and political institutions, the situation inclines towards the corporatist heritage of Czech society, Central-European political culture, and ideas of state socialism. According to these ideals, the (welfare) state should be responsible for most public services; it should involve “irresponsible” non-state actors only on the condition that they maintain high and enduring quality standards – which necessitates the state’s political and economic control in the particular service areas (cf. Hyánek et al. 2007: 8–9).

Since 1989, both the strategies of the state towards civil society – and also to the advocacy activities of the CSOs – have corresponded most closely with the corporatist model: the government treats CSOs as supplemental to its own policies, keeps certain areas strictly under its control (education, justice, health care, etc.), and tries to establish its own agents, tools (e.g., via grants), and standards in others (social policy, leisure, and sport). (Frič 2005: 26–27, 30) There has been little effort on the part of the civil society actors to make better and more frequent use of confrontational tactics and to better identify and represent the real interests of the citizens. Most CSOs focus on service provision in the areas of culture, sport, and social services. Even though there are a number of influential advocacy actors, they are often grant-seeking and peer-oriented players that are not very well connected with the views and needs of their fellow citizens. Nonetheless, it is exactly the rare bridging efforts between these professionalized activist elites and the isolated and loosely organized networks of radical grassroots activists (not yet thoroughly explored) that represent the real emancipation potential of the contemporary Czech civil sphere.

3 EMBEDDEDNESS OF CIVIC ADVOCACY CSOs IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

This chapter is an empirical exploration of the current situation of selected aspects of Czech civil society. It contributes to recent discussions on the situation of civil societies in Central and Eastern European countries, drawing on previous normative considerations and historical outlines of the evolution of basic civil society institutions, contexts, and actors.

As mentioned in the introduction, we focus on a particular function of civil society, advocacy, as we understand it to be the key indicator of the “maturity” of the Czech civil sphere, as primarily the political layer of non-state nonprofit activities was suspended during the Communist regime. Through an analysis of the state of civic advocacy, we want to engage in the discussions on the presumed weakness of civil society in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries reported by some observers (Rose 1999; Rose et al. 1996; Howard 2003; Howard 2011, for overview see Dvořáková 2008) two decades after the regime change of 1989. The assessment of civil societies in CEE countries as weak is usually evidenced by sparse organizational civic infrastructure, low membership in civil society organizations, insufficient community activism, and privatism of citizens in these countries. In the previous chapters, we presented an overall picture of Czech civil society and its evolution, showing that there are a relatively high number of active civil society organizations (CSOs) and also that a considerable share of citizens contribute individually to civic advocacy activities and/or support civic campaigns. On the other hand, there are also indicators of low citizen interest in membership in advocacy-oriented CSOs as well as an overall decline in the number of volunteers between 2005 and 2010. In what sense, then, may we speak of weak civil society? Or, what does it mean to speak about a weak (Czech) civil society?

Discussions on the (presumed) weakness of post-communist civil societies often seem to mention low citizen activity within CSOs, focusing on the low membership in CSOs in post-communist countries. The connection between individual and organized levels of civic advocacy is implicitly criticized as weak, or, in other words, it is

the connection between citizens and CSOs that is understood to be insufficient and poor. In the following pages, we take three steps. First, we show that the claims of weakness of civil societies in post-communist countries are often implicitly based on a specific tradition of civil society theory that privileges organized, mass-mobilizing bodies in a civic sphere and disregards the importance of individual and only loosely and indirectly coordinated civic engagement. Second, we conceptualize this disconnection between the individual and organized layers of civil society as a problem of the embeddedness of civil society actors. Third, we empirically explore this disconnection between organizations and citizens within the sphere of civic advocacy.

3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Background: Four Ideal Types of Civil Society Development

As most critiques of the quality of civil societies in Eastern Europe seem to point at the inadequacy of the collective or organized level of civic advocacy, we focus here on contextualizing this perspective within the broad tradition of thinking on civil society. We suggest that it is useful to make a distinction between the organized and individual levels of civic engagement, or, in other words, between different types of coordinating individuals within the civil sphere, and between the possible types of this coordination. This distinction may be traced from the philosophical to the theoretical and even to the research layer of civil society inquiry.

Generally speaking, different perspectives of civil society, stemming from different traditions of civil society theory and research, emphasize different levels of engagement for civil society actors. In political-philosophical terms, one key tradition seems to build upon the tradition of civil society conceptualization, referring to the work of Tocqueville, and underlines the civic collective bodies themselves as the core civil infrastructure rather than the involvement of individual members. Another classical tradition of civil society theory comes from the “Rousseau-to-Habermas” tradition. In this perspective, it is primarily the involvement of free and equal individuals that makes

civil society something distinct and valuable in relation to the hierarchy of the family, the anonymity of the market, and the instrumentality of the political system. These two conceptions describing which type of actors primarily constitute civil society may be identified as the main ways of looking at how civil society is theorized, conceptualized, and studied empirically.

Both of the aforementioned political-theoretical perspectives find their more empirically oriented advocates among social science theorists and researchers. The first strand of empirical research is focused at the meso-level and maps the organizational behavior and the collective processes outside the areas of the state and of the market. Following Tocquevillian tradition, these theorists conceive civil society primarily as a civil sector and describe it through the concepts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), some more broadly as civil society organizations (CSOs), some as social movements and their organizations (SMOs), some as local and grassroots associations, and some as social enterprises. A more complex definition describes civil society as being populated by “community or grassroots associations, social movements, labor unions, professional groups, advocacy and development NGOs, formally registered nonprofits, social enterprises, and many others” (Edwards 2011: 7; see also Edwards et al. 2001; Zald, McCarthy 2003; Davis et al. 2005). Typically, these organizations are considered primarily as the spaces in which the individual involvement of citizens is collectively coordinated and through which the citizens are given autonomy, voice, and power (e.g., Moore 1978; Piven, Cloward 1979; della Porta 2009).

Another research perspective emphasizes citizen active involvement in extra-institutional activities and focuses on the individual attitudes and contributions to civil society events, structures, and processes (Barnes, Kaase 1989; Brady et al. 1995). This perspective stresses the role of temporal and loose interpersonal networks, platforms, campaigns, and temporary events and – probably most importantly – the individual engagement in the form of volunteering, event participation, financial support for groups, campaigns, or advocacy projects and active citizenship (ethical consumerism, charity giving, writing letters to public officials, etc.). According to this perspective, the increasing new means of communication, the widening

repertoire of political participation, and the arrival of the digital age seem to have changed profoundly the usual methods of citizen coordination within the realm of civil activities and to offer new opportunities for the individual engagement of citizens. (Norris 2001; Zukin et al. 2005; Shirky 2008; van Deth 2012)

Apart from the various types of civic engagement that are considered in these traditions of civil society research and theorizing, we may also consider another dimension, which is the level of collective coordination of this engagement and which may enable us to assess the important character of civil society. In other words, while focusing on the individual or collective engagement in a particular (period of evolution of) civil society, it is also important to assess the extent to which this engagement is coordinated with other actors and thus constitutes a socially rich and politically effective infrastructure of civil society. By combining the aforementioned criteria, we may differentiate between various basic means of civic engagement (see Table 8).

Table 8: Basic means of civic engagement

		<i>Level of coordination</i>	
		<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>Type of engagement</i>	<i>individual</i>	Dispersed and indirect civic participation	Civic participation through CSOs and civic networks
	<i>collective</i>	CSOs as isolated (public) interest groups	CSOs as cooperating networks and coalitions

Source: authors

It is obvious that these means of civic engagement usually overlap and are not mutually exclusive in particular national civil societies. Previous research has shown that each civil society may differ in the level of collective coordination within its individual and organized activities, and thus different patterns in civic society structures and dynamics arise. We therefore propose to distinguish among different combinations of the aforementioned means of civic engagement in order to differentiate among four main “modes” of civic engagement in contemporary civil societies.

We may refer to the first mode of civic engagement (combining a low level of coordination of both individual and collective engagement) as “*fragmented*”. This type entails the indirect and privatized involvement of citizens who usually avoid having any enduring contacts with each other or with CSOs, and are instead using on-line instruments, ethical consumerism, and other indirect tools allowing individual civic engagement. The activity of organized actors is mostly isolated as well and for various reasons: competition for resources, high-profile CSOs, low levels of trust among the civic organizations, etc. This combination of these modes of individual and organized engagement usually results in a very low number of mass physical mobilizations, low CSO membership, low public attendance of protest events, and the practical non-existence of strong social movements and CSO alliances. In other words, transactions/social bonds between organizations and citizens and between organized civil actors themselves are largely missing (Diani 2003; Baldassarri, Diani 2007).

The second mode (combining a high level of coordination of the individual activities and a low level of coordination at the CSO level) may be labeled as “*pillarized*” civic engagement. It is typified by a considerable mass coordination of citizen engagement through direct and coordinated participation with CSOs or their activities. On the other hand, this engagement is either largely self-organized or coordinated by particular CSOs or by loose ad-hoc platforms and constantly changing initiatives sharing more or less the same political or cultural opinion leaders and organizations (former dissidents, journalists, actors, businessmen). CSOs are largely focused on their own constituency and its particular needs, and have no interest in mobilizing a larger part of society or engaging in cooperation with other organizations. They focus rather on particular issues or projects and act more like interest groups – in isolation from other CSOs and with a rather narrow vision of their mission rather than with broad long-term political goals. Typical examples are local trade unions mobilizing workers in particular factories or enterprises, local NIMBY groups, and series of frequent yet one-off local or nationwide initiatives that use specific opportunities and mobilize citizens for instant purposes, often in a social environment characterized by profound distrust

towards political elite and organized political activities (Císař 2008; Dvořáková 2003).

The third type (consisting of a low level of coordination of individual participation and highly coordinated CSO activities) is a “*transactional*” civic engagement: it is based on the notion of transactional activism. (Petrova, Tarrow 2007; Císař 2008; Císař 2010) Growing theoretical discontent with analyzing the CEE societies only through the lens of the concepts of grassroots and membership-based civil society actors led to a focus on the relations among the collective actors themselves instead of on their capacity to mobilize a population and directly engage citizens in their activities. In the post-communist context, the apparent lack of mass membership in social movements and lack of popular mobilizations is compensated for by the plurality of CSOs and various civic organizations. These tend to focus not on mobilizing people but rather on linking themselves to each other and cooperating with authorities/institutions in order to promote their goals while making use of professional staff. They tend to be financially dependent on external sources (EU grants, foundations, public funding, etc.). This type of civil society realm is dominated by a good proportion of activity of organized civic actors that interact with each other, share a common identity, and join coalitions to promote their interests, with a very scarce presence of citizen involvement. Individual civic engagement is rather rare, indirect, or remote, and takes place mostly outside the organized civil sphere.

The last type of civic engagement (combining high level of coordination of both individual and collective engagement) may be called a “*social movement*” one (Meyer, Tarrow 1998; Rucht, Neidhardt 2002, Corrigan-Brown 2012). This notion was developed in pre-war Western Europe and the US and describes a civil society inhabited by dense networks of CSOs that cooperate with each other, build upon various collective identities, promote shared goals and standards, and use common symbols and language. Collective actors are able to create large ad-hoc coalitions or instrumental platforms across various sectors and issues, and social movement organization activities combine with massive engagement of citizens in terms of event attendance and membership in CSOs or volunteering. In other words, the relationship between CSOs and their constituency is strong

and based on mutual trust; civil societies of this type build upon the mass mobilization capacities of networked civil organizations and other collective actors that rely on the permanent involvement of citizens. In this perspective, civic advocacy is defined as the facilitation of democracy through grassroots social action (Hager 2010: 1096).

By outlining this basic analytical framework we suggest that to evaluate the quality of particular society, two key dimensions should be taken into account: the quality of relations between organized civil society actors, and the quality of relations between organized civil society actors and citizens. As the former aspect has already become a subject of systematic empirical research and scholarly debates, this study is focusing on the latter one.

3.2 Czech Civic Advocacy

Civic advocacy and its collective representatives – be they CSOs, social movements, or other actors – have usually been considered as the offspring of the society as a whole, both as a reflection of its vital needs and a tool for their fulfillment on the level of societal and political system. Does this vision apply in the Czech Republic? After the basic analytical framework for assessing the quality or strength of civil societies has been specified, it now may be applied to post-communist civil societies in general (and the Czech civil society in particular). When the perspective emphasizing the individual type of engagement in civil society is applied and the mass personal involvement and individual participation in the collective organizations of civil society is highlighted, it is hard to speak unambiguously about robust civil societies in CEE countries. Existing empirical research generally suggests that there is a low level of individual intra-organizational participation, solidarity, and trust towards civic collective actors, resulting in organizational passivity and civil privatism of the citizens. (McMahon 2001; Howard 2003; Newton, Monterro 2007) On the other hand, the research focusing specifically on the new forms of individual participation reveals that Czech citizens seem to be very active in the civic sphere, engaging with outside organizations through internet activism, political consumerism, e-donations, and

financial contributions to various campaigns (Pospíšil et al. 2012; Pospíšil 2013). Czech citizens fare relatively well in this area, even in comparison with Western democracies (Charities Aid Foundation 2012).

Taking into account the collective type of civic engagement, it seems that the aforementioned extra-organizational engagement of the citizens is supplemented by less embedded civic actors that focus on horizontal cooperation with other SMOs or on vertical relations (either conflicting or cooperative) with elites and the system rather than on the engagement of citizens. Some CEE countries seem to be comparatively developed in terms of the number of civil society organizations, details of their legal frameworks, richness of sectoral divisions, and the structure of financing (state versus private donors) (Flam 2001; Petrova, Tarrow 2007; Císař 2008; see Müller and Skovajsa 2009 for overview). It has been widely argued that one of the main reasons for the relatively well-developed and organized civil society infrastructure in our countries (apart from the rapid opening of political opportunities for various political actors) is the role played by external supporters of the democratic change – i.e., foreign donors, mostly from the United States. These supporters considered advocacy as a key function for stabilizing new democracies, and a lot of issues could not have been addressed in our societies if this external support had not reached particular actors here – especially human rights, transparency, environmental issues, equal opportunities, etc. Although US and EU private foundations and state institutions supported service providers and community organizations, they focused mainly on human rights, advocacy, green, and watchdog NGOs (Quigley, 1997; Carothers, 1999). Research focused specifically on the capacity of Czech collective civic actors to connect with each other – either domestically or internationally – indicated that a substantial number of CSOs are very actively networking, transmitting resources, information, and skills, and entering into the processes of negotiation with authorities. These CSOs are usually in the field of post-materialist contention and are mostly environmental, human rights, anticorruption, or GLBT CSOs. (Císař 2008; Císař et al. 2011)

After the years of building an organized civic advocacy infrastructure, it was generally believed that advocacy organizations

would become widely accepted and socially embedded in Czech society and – according to the aforementioned scheme – would resemble Western “social movement societies”. It seems that instead we have a constellation of types and scopes of civic actor coordination that may be identified rather as a “transactional civil society”. As previous research suggests, there is an active stratum of organized “advocates without members” as well as a considerable number of citizens engaging in civic activities through extra-organizational means, with only sporadic mass-attended events (see also Dvořáková 2003). We are thus witnessing some kind of a gap between the level of coordination of collective and individual civic engagements. We propose that this gap should be explored. In other words, while organized actors are able to form advocacy coalitions and networks, individual engagement remained dispersed and unorganized, but not passive. This is a general evaluation of Czech civil society, and despite its clear overlap with the area of civic advocacy, a more focused inquiry should be conducted.

To formulate our puzzle in conceptual terms, we focus on the mutual relations between the individual and organized spheres of civic advocacy; in other words, on the problem of the social embeddedness of civic advocacy. The concept of embeddedness has been used in different theoretical contexts, and its definition ranges from a rather restricted one – the relationship between civil society actors and political institutions (Haddad 2006) – to a general one – the position of these actors within a particular social order that is defined by a shared understanding of its purposes (Fligstein, McAdam 2012). We take the middle course, understanding the embeddedness of advocacy CSOs in a more traditional fashion as the capacity of these organizations to function in a reciprocal manner with their (local) social environment (cf. Polanyi 1992; Granovetter 1985) – in other words, as their capacity to become rooted in broader social networks of individuals, to incorporate them within the inner structure of organizations or groups, to provide them with access into their internal processes, to gain their trust, and to mobilize them on different occasions.

To explore mutual relations or reciprocity between advocacy CSOs and citizens, we have formulated several research questions. First, in light of the issue of discrepancy between organizational and individual

levels of civil advocacy, we focus on CSOs as the main organized bearers of advocacy function in our societies. Generally, we ask:

- *What are the differences between engagement in advocacy and non-advocacy CSOs?*
- *What are the obstacles for advocacy CSOs that want to involve citizens in their structures and activities?*
- *What are the obstacles for citizens who want to enter into closer relations with advocacy CSOs?*

In order to find valid answers and address our research concerns in a detailed and complex way, we further specified and transformed our questions into more focused and mutually connected research sub-questions:

- *What are the differences between membership in advocacy and non-advocacy CSOs in the Czech Republic when taking into account also the European context?*
- *What are the levels, forms, areas, and motives for direct and indirect involvement of Czech citizens in civil advocacy?*
- *What are the attitudes of Czech citizens towards advocacy issues and CSOs?*
- *What are the levels and forms of direct and indirect involvement of Czech citizens within activities and structures of advocacy CSOs?*
- *What are the attitudes of representatives of Czech CSOs towards the involvement of citizens within their structures and activities?*

3.3 Data and methods

The paper draws on two major data sources: the European Value Study and the “Has Our Dream Come True?” project.

The survey for the data from the European Value Study (EVS) was conducted between 2008–2010 in 47 countries in Western and Central-Eastern Europe. The dataset was used to analyze citizen membership in voluntary organizations. The question was: “Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organizations and activities and say which, if any, do you belong to?” The following

options were available: social welfare services for elderly, handicapped, or deprived people; religious or church organizations; education, arts, music, or cultural activities; trade unions; political parties or groups; community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality; third world development or human rights; conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights; professional associations; youth work (e.g., scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.); sports or recreation; women's groups; peace movement; voluntary organizations concerned with health; other groups; or none of them. We selected social welfare, cultural, sport, and youth activities for analysis of membership as non-advocacy types; women's, political, peace movement, and trade union groups were selected for analysis as advocacy types. Other groups were not included as they cannot be easily identified with advocacy, with service provision, or with community building (typically these groups concerned community action, environmental protection, religion, or health issues). We do not claim that the types of organizations that were not selected are not (or cannot be) involved in advocacy activities; on the contrary, our own research shows that advocacy activities may be identified across many different issue sectors (see below). However, we do claim that the selected sectors in the EVS data may be more directly associated with either a high or low proportion of advocacy activities than the others, and thus we use them as a proxy for evaluating the embeddedness of advocacy and non-advocacy activities in civil society.

The data used were collected within the framework of an international comparative research project on the embeddedness of civil societies in seven CEE countries ("Has Our Dream Come True? Comparative Research of Central and Eastern European Civil Societies").

In order to answer these questions, we used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In the quantitative part, we rely on an individual survey (N=800) that was based on a quota sampling strategy and was conducted via telephone interviews; in the qualitative part we used focus groups and personal semi-structured interviews with representatives of advocacy CSOs. With the survey, we intended to map the levels and means of citizen involvement in civic advocacy and their attitudes towards advocacy CSOs. If we found that citizens were somehow involved, we asked them how they were involved and

how precisely they got involved; we further asked about their motives, obstacles, information channels, and the mechanisms of their involvement (or non-involvement); we asked their opinions on CSOs and on various aspects of their activities; and we assessed their trust in various social institutions. These data were compared with the findings from the interviews with CSOs.

Realizing the potential impact of different issue areas and policy fields on citizen engagement, we used the individual survey to map the attitudes and relations of citizens with regard to fifteen different advocacy sectors and CSOs (children's rights; disability rights; anticorruption; personal security; human and citizen rights and freedoms; environment; education, health, social policy; consumer protection; animal rights; women's rights; economic policy; work of democratic institutions; international and global issues; national minority rights; and LGBT rights). Even if we acknowledge that many advocacy activities take place outside these sectors, we aim to map only those issue areas that are most explicitly connected with the advocacy or political function of civil society (contrary to e.g. sectors connected with sports or culture). We focused on three main dimensions here: first, we mapped the opinions of citizens towards the importance of CSO activities in these sectors (7-point scale). Second, we focused on their perception of the actual engagement of CSOs in these sectors (7-point scale). Finally, we focused on the (reported) engagement of citizens in these sectors (4-point scale). Following the average ranking of the respective dimensions of the listed advocacy areas, we elaborated an "embeddedness index" that shows the multidimensional embeddedness of the listed advocacy areas. To make these dimensions fully comparable, we present the ranking of particular advocacy areas in these dimensions instead of showing exact numeric results.

The qualitative part of the project included thirty-one semi-structured interviews with key CSO members and four focus groups with CSO representatives. The aim of the qualitative methodology was to get a picture of the embeddedness of advocacy organizations and their campaigns from the side of the collective actors (CSOs and informally organized groups). The sampling strategy followed previous theoretical considerations and applied some further criteria. The sample was created as a combination of three basic criteria: the

advocacy area of the group (groups from four of the most and four of the least-embedded advocacy areas were invited), the focus of the group (fifteen nationwide and sixteen local), and the level of its embeddedness as evaluated by the individual survey results (fifteen involving citizens and sixteen not involving citizens). The interviews were all conducted in January 2011. Despite the complex sampling strategy, our sample is obviously too small to be deemed as entirely representative for the field of organized advocacy in the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, we use the data more in an explorative and illustrative fashion as an intermediary methodological tool between individual survey and in-depth focus group interviews in order to capture some important formal features of CSO strategies and policies towards their social environment. In the semi-structured interviews, we focused on how these actors actually relate to their constituency and the public in general: their formal approaches with regard to the institution of membership, their involvement of the public into their activities, and their consultations with citizens.

Using focus group in-depth interviews with key members of 17 CSOs, we attempted to sketch more normative attitudes and the latent motives of CSO representatives towards the inclusion of citizens into their inner structures and activities, and to draw more subtle map of meanings underlying their relations with public. The interviews were recorded and analyzed in order to depict the motives, normative positions, and justifications of CSO members towards relations with their social environment. We analyzed the recordings and inductively searched for more general patterns of motivation toward (non-)cooperation with extra-organizational environments. These two features of qualitative methodology are also connected via the sampling strategy: the focus group data provided, among other things, an expert assessment of the most and least-embedded advocacy CSOs and their campaigns within the least and the most embedded advocacy areas.

We organized four focus group interviews (approximately 100 minutes each):

FG 1, Brno, 20th January 2011: three participants representing the CSOs from the least-embedded advocacy areas (economic policy, national minority rights, LGBT rights) with a simultaneous focus on advocacy at the local level.

FG 2, Brno, 20th January 2011: five participants representing the CSOs from the most-embedded advocacy areas (children's rights, disability rights, environment), with a simultaneous focus on advocacy at the local level.

FG 3, Prague, 21st January 2011: five participants representing the CSOs from the least-embedded advocacy areas with a simultaneous focus on advocacy at the national level.

FG 4, Prague, 21st January 2011: four participants representing the CSOs from the most-embedded advocacy areas with a simultaneous focus on advocacy at the national level.

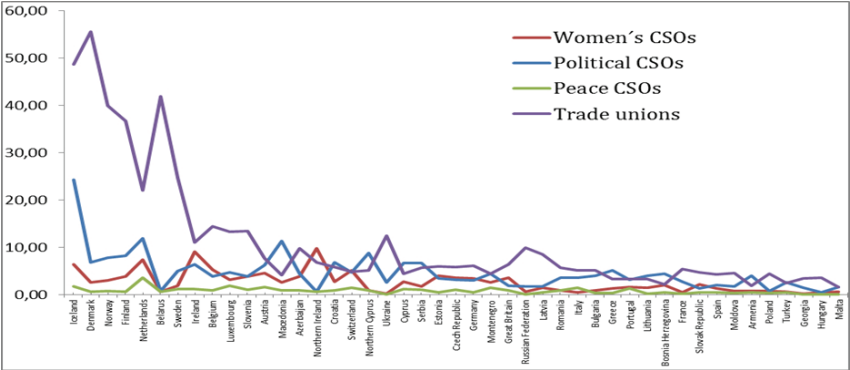
3.4 Membership in advocacy and non-advocacy groups compared

After clarifying the theoretical and conceptual issues, we compare organized advocacy and non-advocacy civic engagement in the Czech Republic to that of other European countries. The exploration of politically-oriented activities within the realm of civil society revealed several things (Figure 4). First, one of the most unevenly distributed types of membership is in the trade unions, with the highest rates among Northern countries, with some post-communist countries (Belarus, Ukraine). The distribution of membership in other types of advocacy organizations (women's, political, peace) is less varied. The overall picture suggests that Western countries have generally higher memberships, but with quite a lot of exceptions from Eastern Europe – particularly because of the high number of members in their trade unions. The Czech Republic is situated exactly in the middle of the selected European countries.

Data on the non-political engagement of citizens in groups or organizations suggest more uneven distribution of membership than in the previous case (see Figure 5). Most of the leading countries are from Western Europe; Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Estonia are the only Central-Eastern European countries in the top third of the countries on the list. The Czech Republic occupies the twelfth position, eleven place-ranks higher than in advocacy organization membership. This is the second largest shift to the top of the chart in the list

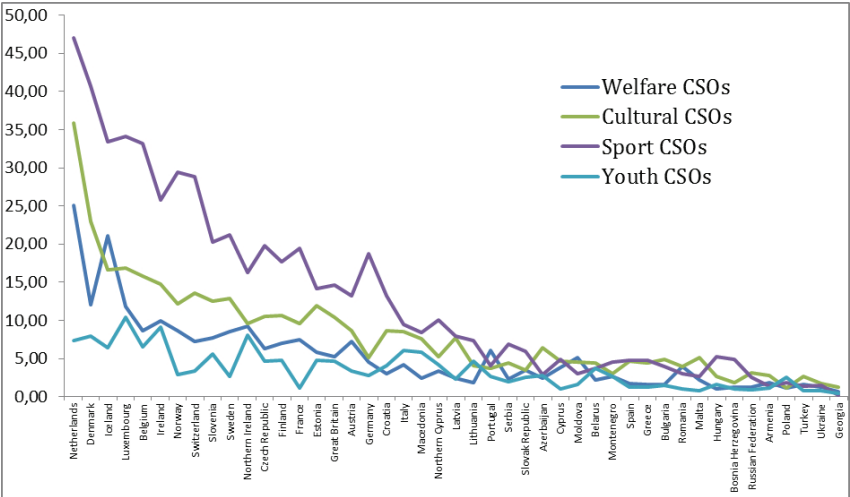
(compared to the position in Figure 4), after France (22 ranks). The largest shifts downward for membership in non-political organizations were experienced by Belarus and Ukraine (both by 25 ranks).

Figure 4: Membership in civic advocacy organizations in European countries



Source: European Value Study 2008–2010

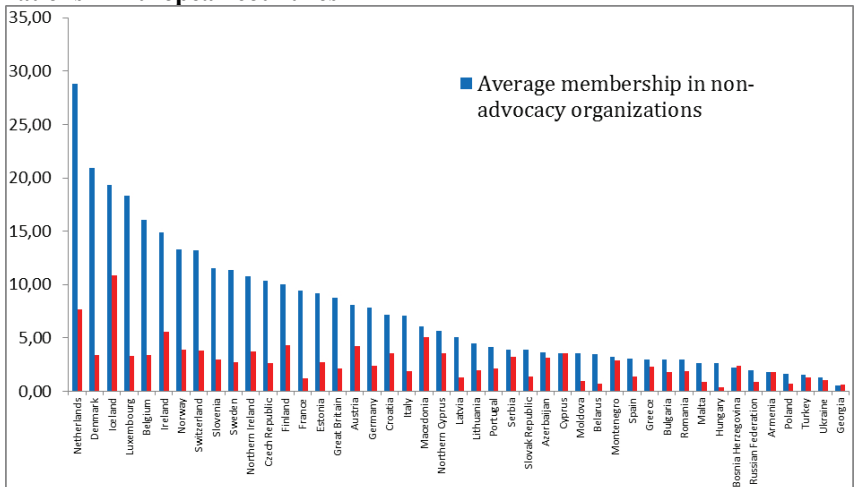
Figure 5: Membership in civic non-advocacy organizations in European countries



Source: European Value Study 2008–2010

If we compare both figures, focusing on the averages of the non-advocacy and advocacy organization memberships (see Figure 6), membership in non-advocacy organizations clearly prevails in most countries. This is even more visible in the first part of the chart, where most of the Western Europeans countries are situated. The Czech Republic has the twelfth-largest gap between average membership scores in advocacy and non-advocacy organizations.

Figure 6: Average membership in civic advocacy and non-advocacy organizations in European countries



Source: European Value Study 2008–2010

The difference in the ranking of the Czech Republic between these two types of organizational membership is the point of departure for our further empirical investigation. It seems that in non-advocacy areas and activities, Czech citizens are quite similar to the countries that are usually described as “mature” democracies with long traditions of vibrant civil society, and are clearly separated from the rest of the post-communist countries (with the exceptions of Slovenia and Estonia). However, the ranking of organized engagement in the advocacy areas is much lower: the Czech rank suddenly dropped to the middle of the chart, surrounded by other post-communist countries. What are the causes of this discrepancy? Why are Czech

citizens unwilling to join advocacy-oriented CSOs? What are the strategies of these CSOs for engaging citizens?

3.5 Individual participation in civic advocacy activities

First, we start by exploring the aspects and forms and patterns of civic engagement and non-engagement of Czech citizens. The general level of public participation in civic advocacy activities among Czech citizens is relatively high: almost one third of respondents declare their personal involvement in civic advocacy activities (see Table 9). In other words, two decades after the regime change, about one third of the citizens participate in civic activities with an exclusive political dimension.

Table 9: Personal involvement in civic advocacy activities (N=800)

	%
<i>Yes</i>	32.9
<i>No</i>	66.9
<i>NA</i>	0.2
<i>Total</i>	100

Source: Czech Survey 2010

First, it is important to explore the non-participation in civic advocacy activities. Even if people are not actively engaged at the moment, they may become involved later and they plan this involvement. Although the answers to inquiries about future action may not be very reliable, they may nonetheless indicate some trends. However, data on possible future engagements reveal that only 13% of the people that are not engaged at the moment are considering future civic involvement (Table 10).

Table 10: Intended future involvement in civic advocacy activities (N=535)

	%
<i>Yes</i>	13.0
<i>No</i>	83.4
<i>DK</i>	3.6
<i>total</i>	100.0

Source: Czech Survey 2010

It seems that the most popular issues for planned individual engagement are children's rights and environmental issues, while minority rights and non-domestic issues are at the bottom of the list. As shown in Table 11, the preferences of people who are not engaged in civic advocacy are very similar to the preferences of those who are.

Table 11: Ranking of advocacy areas according to planned involvement (N=17)

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Planned personal involvement in the area</i>
1	children's rights
2	animal rights
3	environment
4	disability rights
5	human and citizens rights and freedoms
6	personal security
7	women's rights
8	consumer protection
9	anticorruption
10	education, health, social policy
11	work of democratic institutions
12	economic policy
13	LGBT rights
14	international and global issues
15	national minority rights

Source: Czech Survey 2010

After a closer look at the citizens that are not involved in civic advocacy, we now turn to the exploration of the participating ones. We may begin to explore the forms of their reported engagement. Based on these data, we may conclude that (1) there is an obviously disproportionate structure to the particular forms of individual participation that (2) explains the relatively high proportion of active participants in civic advocacy activities (see Table 12). The vast majority of people that are active in advocacy prefer donations or some form of loose support rather than more direct engagement, e.g., as a member of a CSO or as a voluntary worker. This helps explain why many Czech citizens easily declare themselves to be active in civic advocacy. On the other

hand, a decent share of respondents is engaged in voluntary activities, although not through membership in CSOs.

Table 12: Forms of personal involvement in civic advocacy activities (N=263)

	%
<i>donation</i>	89.8
<i>supporter (signing petitions, participating in campaign)</i>	52.4
<i>voluntary work</i>	37.0
<i>chatting, blogging, etc.</i>	26.5
<i>member of a CSO</i>	20.3
<i>other (promoting ideas and attitudes)</i>	5.3
<i>DK</i>	.2

Source: Czech Survey 2010

This general look at the basic structure of citizens’ reported engagement may be further differentiated and detailed by focusing on various issue areas of civic advocacy and differentiating between citizens’ attitudes towards collective activities in these areas, their perception of collective activities, and their own engagement in these areas (see Table 13).

First, we assess the “attitude dimension”, or the importance of CSO engagement in these areas as perceived by citizens. The areas where the organized activities are perceived as the most important overlap with humanitarian issues and with the protection of the most vulnerable social groups – disabled people and children. The massive preference for the anti-corruption issue may be a reflection of the current political discourse. Animal and environmental issues – which tend to be over-emphasized in the mass media – are somewhere in the middle of the list, together with personal security, education, and consumer protection themes. The least support for organized advocacy activities was expressed for national/ethnic minority rights (presumably tied to the issues of the Roma minority) and LGBT rights (presumably a consequence of a feeling of “mission accomplished”: registered (civil) same-sex partnership was established under Czech law in 2006).

Table 13: Ranking of advocacy areas according to the importance of CSO activity, perceived CSO activity, and personal involvement (N=263)

<i>Importance of CSO advocacy activities in the area</i>	<i>Perceived activity of civic organizations in the area</i>	<i>Personal involvement in the civic activities in the area</i>
children's rights	children's rights	children's rights
disability rights	environment	disability rights
anti-corruption	national minority rights	animal rights
environment	human rights and freedoms	environment
personal security	animal rights	human rights and freedoms
human rights and freedoms	disability rights	education, health, social policy
education, health, social policy	women's rights	personal security
animal rights	consumer protection	international and global issues
consumer protection	international and global issues	consumer protection
women's rights	LGBT rights	anti-corruption
work of democratic institutions	education, health, social policy	women's rights
economic policy	work of democratic institutions	work of democratic institutions
international and global issues	personal security	national minority rights
national minority rights	economic policy	economic policy
LGBT rights	anti-corruption	LGBT rights

Source: Czech Survey 2010

The “cognitive dimension” of the embeddedness of advocacy areas concerns the perceived level of activity of CSOs in particular areas. It seems that children's rights are perceived as being well covered by CSOs. But many other issue areas where the importance of collective activism is deemed very high are thought to be neglected by CSOs, or CSOs are believed to devote too much effort to issue areas that are not important. In other words, CSO activities may be perceived as wasted on low-priority areas and, as a result, in short supply in high-priority areas.

The dimension of actual personal involvement in various advocacy areas is consistent with the preceding lists in a very particular way. There are basically two key patterns here: first, children's rights are still the most important issue area, which is consistent with the previous stance. But otherwise it seems that the level of personal involvement in various advocacy areas follows the priorities of the perceived need for CSO involvement rather than the perceived activities of CSOs. Citizens perceive the activities of organized civic actors as inconsistent with their own opinion of the needs for coordinated action in particular advocacy areas and with their own individual engagement. There are areas (disability rights, anti-corruption, and personal security) that are perceived as important, evaluated as rather insufficiently covered by CSOs, and, perhaps for that reason, people report that they engage in these areas. On the other hand, there are areas (environment, women's rights, national minority rights, and LGBT rights) that are perceived as less important, that are evaluated as being sufficiently covered by CSOs, and, possibly in consequence, people do not engage in these areas. These relations may signal some kind of "compensating mechanisms" that are at work in 10 out of 15 advocacy issue areas. This indicates that people have their own evaluations of the importance of various issues and they try to follow these evaluations in their individual engagements in civil society, thus compensating for the different focus by CSOs, or citizens may evaluate the extent of actual activity of organized collective actors and then avoid their own engagement in those areas where they believe the activity of CSOs is high enough. Either way, this is an important signal of a distance between individual citizens and organized civic actors.

The final important aspect of the attitude of both participating and non-participating citizens and CSOs are the means of communication by which citizens get their picture of CSOs, be it direct transfer of information and knowledge at various public events, or mass-produced presentations of CSOs that are offered by the mainstream media. The data (Table 14) offer a picture that is quite consistent with previous findings. The most influential means of communication are the most "impersonal": television and newspapers, followed by the Internet and radio. It is striking that there is no significant difference between

engaged and unengaged citizens: the most direct means of getting information are almost the least used.

Table 14: Channels of information about CSOs and their activities

<i>Engaged in civic advocacy (N=263)</i>	<i>Unengaged in civic advocacy (N=535)</i>
Television	Television
Newspapers, magazines	Newspapers, magazines
Internet	Internet
Radio	Radio
Other	Friends, family
Activists	Other
Friends, family	Street posters, leaflets
Street posters, leaflets	Activists
Attending event	Mail
Mail	Attending event
Telephone	Telephone

Source: Czech Survey 2010

3.6 Social embeddedness of advocacy CSOs

After presenting an overview of the patterns and forms of non-/engagement of Czech citizens in civic advocacy activities, we go a step further and explore the organizational level of civic activities: the CSOs. To combine the analysis of the individual and organizational levels of embeddedness of civic advocacy, we focus on the willingness of CSOs to involve citizens and on the strategies of such involvement, examining the sample of thirty-one CSOs from the four most-embedded (seventeen organizations) and the four least-embedded (fourteen organizations) advocacy areas (both nominally open and closed to citizens; both local and nationwide). We then compare the attributes and strategies of these two groups of CSOs and their campaigns.

One of the most important indicators of how willing CSOs are to integrate citizens into their structures and activities is the institution of membership: we know that there may be elite, closed, and professionalized CSOs, but there are also grassroots and open groups. What

is the situation within our sample? And how does this apply to the most/least-embedded advocacy issue areas?

Our data suggest that organizations in the most-embedded advocacy areas are slightly more likely to be based on (individual) membership than others (see Table 15): even an informal form of membership, which is usually more exclusive than the formal one, may be often found there.

Table 15: Types of organizational memberships and their distribution

	<i>formal</i>	<i>informal</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>total</i>
<i>CSOs from the most-embedded advocacy areas</i>	13	4	1	18*
<i>CSOS from the least-embedded advocacy areas</i>	7	2	5	14

* One CSO reported both types of membership – both formal and informal

Source: Czech SMO Interviews 2010

Why is this? Some organizations argue that their legal form does not enable them to have formal membership (public benefit company – see previous chapter). In other words, these organizations were founded without the intention of having members (one CSO from the most-embedded advocacy areas and three from the least embedded). Another type of reasoning ignored the problem of the legal form of the organization and openly stated that the aim of the organization from the very beginning was not to have members, but to provide people with education or information. Membership CSOs had various criteria for accepting new members: there were formal, informal, or no criteria. Most often, some formal criteria for membership were applied (see Table 16).

Table 16: Types of membership criteria and their distribution

	<i>formal</i>	<i>informal</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>total</i>
<i>CSOs from most-embedded advocacy areas</i>	8	2	5	2	17
<i>CSOS from least-embedded advocacy areas</i>	8	0	1	5	14

Source: Czech SMO Interviews 2010

Formal membership criteria are basically very similar throughout the whole sample: these are typically membership fees, identification with the purpose and the status of the organization, or age. Only one national minority organization conditioned the membership by formal membership in a (Jewish) religious community.

After a brief overview of the formal aspects of membership, we may look at how the CSOs directly expressed an attitude to involving new members: seven CSOs from the most-embedded expressed willingness to seek new members, while nine CSOs were unwilling; six CSOs from the least-embedded issue areas claimed they were looking for new members, while three opposed it. One of the important aspects of CSOs openness to new people is their strategy for attracting new members. CSOs from the most-embedded areas usually try to find new people through public action and media (campaigns, recruitment at their events, and dialogue with supporters); the CSOs from the least-embedded areas tend to rely on recommendations from existing members or from the leaders of the organization, or through informal contacts among friends and cooperating organizations.

Apart from the strategies for involving new people as members, there are other aspects of CSO embeddedness or openness towards citizens. One aspect is the extent to which people other than members, employees, or volunteers are allowed to participate in the annual meetings of the groups and organizations. In the most-embedded CSOs, twelve out of seventeen organizations require that only members, employees, or invited guests may participate, while the annual meetings of the other five CSOs are open to anybody. In the fourteen least-embedded CSOs, just one organization admits people from outside the organization, but only on the condition of their advanced approval by the members of the organization.

The strategies of the civic organizations were somewhat more balanced in formulating their goals, which is one of the most important strategic activities: four of the seventeen most-embedded CSOs declared that it was possible for the public to influence the shaping of their goals; the same was stated by three of the fourteen least-embedded groups. But what is the precise inner structure of these strategies? What type of stakeholder is more restricted from participation in the formulation of the goals of collective civic actors? What type of

stakeholder do CSOs listen to more? Basically, the priorities of CSOs in both of the advocacy areas are the same: not surprisingly, the most welcomed opinions were those of employees. The second most important class of opinion-maker were cooperating CSOs, closely followed by members and experts. It was only here where the general public came into play, followed by the donors (most-embedded areas) and the community (least-embedded areas). Finally, and not surprisingly, the least favorite stakeholder to be included in the process of strategy formulation were politicians. We may also assess the openness of CSOs towards their environment by comparing the extent to which various categories of stakeholders and the public and various subjects are involved in the process of preparing campaigns and projects. We build our comparison upon the same categories of subject as for the public involvement in the formulation of CSO goals. Within the first group (the most-embedded advocacy areas), the most important are – again – the employees of the organization, which seems quite obvious. And again, the next most important factor for these groups were their collective partners and counterparts – cooperating CSOs, closely followed by members; experts had the same ranking as the general public. These were followed by donors, the community and, finally, politicians. The ranking within the second group of CSOs was somewhat different: the most important companions for making projects and campaigns were cooperating groups, followed by employees and members. The next important partner was the public, which preceded experts and the community. The least favored ones were donors and politicians, rated equally low.

We can make several generalizations based on this overview: generally, CSOs take a very practical stance in the development of their goals, activities, and strategies as they give priority to the subjects that may be coordinated most easily – employees, cooperating groups, and members. Members and experts are probably seen as outsiders that may help them to legitimize and review their procedures and visions, but these are consulted rather less frequently, as they are probably not manageable in an easy and efficient way. The distance of most CSOs from the community is quite interesting. It might be due to the fact that civic advocacy organizations usually raise more universal issues than immediate community interests. Our

findings again support one of the constant features of Czech political culture: a broad and intensive suspicion and distrust towards the political elite – be it parties, politicians, or political institutions.

Apart from including citizens in the process of formulating goals and strategies and in the preparation of their projects and campaigns, we also explored what emphasis CSOs put on their contact with a narrower social group that may provide them with some correctives of their activities – their sympathizers. Generally, this type of contact, between advocacy organizations and their immediate environment, took the unilateral form of information for their followers through “classic” media, such as newsletters, magazines, and mailing lists (ten of the seventeen CSOs from the most-embedded areas, and seven of the fourteen CSOs from the least-embedded areas). The rest of the organizations declared a more “direct” and interactive exchange of information and opinion with their sympathizers via social networks, face-to-face meetings, phone calls, public discussions, and events. These activities were usually held several times a year (nine of the seventeen groups from the most-embedded areas) to several times a month (nine of the fourteen groups from the least-embedded advocacy fields). It seems that even the sympathetic public is rather restricted from direct access and communication with advocacy CSOs.

We compared several types of subjects in terms of the extent to which their opinions were reflected in the formulation of goals and strategies of advocacy organizations, and to how the organizations relate to their sympathizers and supporters. But what is the actual perception of citizens on the part of CSOs? Are they seen as active contributors to collective advocacy activities or rather as recipients of these activities? Are they considered to be a source or a target for the organization’s activities? Groups from the most and from the least-embedded issue areas of civic advocacy have remarkably close attitudes: thirteen of the seventeen most-embedded CSOs and ten of the fourteen least-embedded CSOs see citizens as targets of their advocacy activities; the others see the role of citizens as more balanced – either both as the source and the target or just as a primary source of inspiration and rationale for their activities. This trend of treating citizens as a target rather than a source group of advocacy activities is clearly noticeable in the agenda setting process: twelve of

the seventeen CSOs from the most-embedded advocacy areas choose their issues according to various circumstances but do not directly consult citizens: they are inspired by the experts in the field, they consult their fellow organizations, their members, employees or managers; sometimes they state that they have long-term goals that do not change, or that they just follow the principles and status of their organization. Ten of the fourteen CSOs from the least-embedded areas dominantly followed those issues and cases for which they had funding and/or for which funding was available from national or supranational institutions; they also followed the advice of experts, members or cooperating groups; sometimes they even asked politicians. The remaining organizations declared that citizens might be – among many other subjects – a source of their agenda setting. To conclude, a large majority of CSOs see citizens as a social group that may benefit from their advocacy activities, but they do not respect them as originators of these activities: sometimes, citizens are perceived as patients that have to be cured but are not consulted about the disease.

We have mentioned two important parts of organized advocacy activities and campaigns: including people into their structures and into the process of formulating their goals. However there is one more important moment that needs be stressed: the process of evaluating the advocacy activities. How do civil society actors get feedback about their advocacy efforts? How do they evaluate their campaigns? Here the role of the public is similar to that in the process of formulating the goals of CSOs: only nine organizations (four from the most and five from the least-embedded areas) stated that they try to get some reflections from the broader public via questionnaires or even systematic research, or from direct “clients” of their activities (participants in events, seminars, etc.). The rest of the organizations are more inwardly focused: their evaluation is based on inter-organizational discussions, on the feedback from cooperating CSOs, or on the reflections from relevant elites (donors, politicians).

So, in conclusion, how exactly do CSOs – according to their own statements – incorporate people into their activities? Keeping the limited representativeness of our CSO data for the Czech field of organized civil advocacy in mind, we found the following patterns in our sample: the groups from the most-embedded areas declare that their

goal is to have an impact on the public rather than to involve the public into their campaigns: citizens tend to only be involved locally and in the form of some logistical support (volunteering during events, helping with the promotion of actions and campaigns, distributing leaflets, spreading information, collecting signatures for petitions, organizing camps, translating materials, or performing some minor tasks within the organization). CSOs from the least-embedded areas enable people to get closer to their activities: they use the public as a source of information, use them as experts and tutors, include them in the cooperation on particular issues, and enable them to focus on problems of their own in the framework of the activities of the organization. At the same time, a small part of these groups also use people as logistical support during petitions, as helpers with the organization of events and happenings, etc. So there seems to be some difference between these two groups of organizations – the former treats citizens more instrumentally and enables them to participate on the periphery of their activities, while the latter lets them get closer to the decision-making and provides them with a certain degree of autonomy.

3.7 Patterns of alienation between citizens and CSOs: mutual perceptions

The preceding sections explored the existing level of individual engagement and non-engagement of citizens and the relations between organized and individual participation in the field of civic advocacy; we now focus on understanding the motives and attitudes on either side of the gap.

First, it is interesting to look in more detail at the reasons that people most often give to explain why they are not engaged in civic advocacy (Table 17). The two most cited reasons in the Czech case closely align with several theories of civic engagement that emphasize various resources conditioning participation: these resources are time and money. Other important reasons are attitudinal, when people display a considerable normative distance towards collective civic actors and activism as such.

Table 17: Reasons for uninvolved in civic advocacy activities (N=535)

	Yes	No	DK
<i>no time</i>	68.3%	31.7%	0.0%
<i>have no money to support them</i>	63.0%	36.3%	0.5%
<i>solving those problems should be done by other actors, not by civic ones</i>	47.5%	43.4%	9.1%
<i>I do not believe that civic activism could change anything</i>	34.0%	61.5%	4.5%
<i>health conditions do not allow me to be active</i>	26.2%	73.8%	0.0%
<i>not interested in principle</i>	21.3%	75.3%	3.4%
<i>I had been active but I got disappointed</i>	19.9%	79.3%	0.8%

Source: Czech Survey 2010

What are the views of the citizens that are not engaged in civic advocacy of the abilities of advocacy CSOs? One of the important reasons for non-involvement in civic advocacy may be the “realistic” mistrust of the very capacity of CSOs (in terms of skills, resources, impact, etc.) to bring change or to simply succeed when dealing with different problems in various advocacy areas. However, there is a surprisingly high confidence among unengaged citizens regarding the capability of CSOs to solve problems in various advocacy areas: more than three quarters of respondents think that they are able to solve them (see Table 18).

Table 18: Perception of capability of CSOs to solve problems (N=535)

	%
<i>yes, they can</i>	77.9
<i>no, they cannot</i>	20.6
<i>DK</i>	1.6
<i>Total</i>	100.0

Source: Czech Survey 2010

Finally, we inspect the attitude of the group of citizens that are most skeptical about the civic advocacy engagement in general and advocacy CSOs in particular – not only are they not active in civic advocacy, but they also think that CSOs are not capable of solving problems in their particular issue areas. A more detailed inquiry into the reasons why some citizens view CSOs as incapable of solving

problems reveals that almost two thirds of the respondents are persuaded that CSOs do not represent civic interests, and more than half of them think that CSOs are ineffective, are too tied to political parties, or do not address important issues (see Table 19).

Table 19: Attitudes towards CSOs (N=118)

	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>total</i>
<i>I think that they represent business interests, not civic ones</i>	57.6%	31.3%	11.1%	100.0%
<i>I don't think these organizations are effective</i>	56.4%	25.9%	17.7%	100.0%
<i>I think these organizations are vehicles of political parties</i>	53.0%	36.1%	11.0%	100.0%
<i>I don't think they deal with problems that are really important</i>	52.3%	39.4%	8.3%	100.0%
<i>I think these organizations concentrate on their own financial benefits</i>	45.2%	44.5%	10.3%	100.0%
<i>I do not know anything about the activities of the CSOs</i>	39.1%	58.6%	2.3%	100.0%
<i>They represent foreign interests</i>	26.9%	58.4%	14.6%	100.0%

Source: Czech Survey 2010

One general conclusion may be drawn from the preceding tables and figures: both engaged and unengaged citizens maintain a considerable distance from advocacy CSOs. People who are not engaged in civic advocacy are rather optimistic about the technical capacity of CSOs to promote change and to address problems in their respective issue areas, but at the same time, they believe that collective actors should not be engaged in solving those issues, and that these should be solved by someone else. As was illustrated in the previous section, active citizens demonstrate this belief in CSOs in practice: they are engaged in civic advocacy, but only through distant means. Most often, they support some causes and campaigns through donations and loose support; only some are engaged in voluntary work and only a very small minority of active citizens are closely affiliated with organized collective actors – CSOs.

We focus on a direct comparison of the attitudes of engaged and non-engaged citizens in order to depict similarities and differences that could help us understand their different relations to organized

civic advocacy. First, the apparent distance between citizens and collective actors should be clarified more. What is the public perception of CSOs as related to the needs of citizens? Are CSOs responsive enough? Do they reflect relevant problems? The belief that CSOs are responsive to citizen issues (Table 20) differs between citizens who are engaged in civic advocacy and those who are not. While both groups share a large proportion of undecided respondents, engaged citizens are generally more optimistic about the role of CSOs in solving the problems of ordinary people. Still, only one quarter of citizens at best consider CSOs to be responsive towards their needs.

Table 20: Extent to which the advocacy activities of CSOs reflect the problems that people personally face

<i>%</i>	<i>Engaged in civic advocacy (N=263)</i>	<i>Unengaged in civic advocacy (N=535)</i>
<i>low</i>	15.9	30.9
<i>neither, nor</i>	50.9	47.9
<i>high</i>	24.4	13.7
<i>DK</i>	8.8	7.5

Source: Czech Survey 2010

It seems that the issue of trust plays an important role here. This is not the trust of citizens in the technical competencies of CSOs to deal with the problems in their specific area of expertise, but specifically the trust in them as general social institutions that may help citizens deal with their hardships. Both engaged and unengaged citizens rank CSOs very low compared to other social and political institutions. Our findings match previous empirical research on citizen opinions towards various social and political institutions (Červenka 2010: 2) and confirm ambiguous and mostly negative attitudes towards CSOs, resembling the attitude towards the least trusted area of Czech public life – political institutions (see Table 21). It seems that there is a considerable lack of confidence in Czech civic and political actors; people only trust their closest social environment, i.e., their family and friends. The most trusted public institutions are the police and the local authority: Czech citizens seem to refuse the intermediary level of CSOs when solving their problems, tending to rely either on personal ties or on direct

communication and negotiations with the appropriate bodies closest to their locality.

Table 21: Ranking of subjects to contact in case of any problems

<i>Unengaged in civic advocacy (N=535)</i>	<i>Engaged in civic advocacy (N=263)</i>
family	family
friends	friends
none	police
police	none
local authority	local authority
colleagues at work	colleagues at work
local government representative	local government representative
media	civil society organization
civil society organization	media
MEP/ EU institutions	government agency (ministry)
government agency (ministry)	MEP / EU institutions
MP	MP
church community	church community

Source: Czech Survey 2010

Based on our previous considerations and the presentation of the survey data, we can draw some conclusions about the attitudes of Czech citizens towards collective actors in the realm of civic advocacy and about the main reasons for the apparent distance that citizens express towards organized civic action. The data suggest that unengaged citizens generally trust the technical capacity of CSOs to deal with the problems in their particular advocacy areas, but some of their normative views of CSOs are rather gloomy: they question the motives of CSOs, and they do not think that CSOs focus on issues that are important for citizens. This is quite similar to the views of engaged citizens as they evaluate the activities of CSOs in different advocacy areas. All in all, there are only minor differences between engaged and unengaged citizens with regard to their trust in CSOs and the roots of that trust: CSOs are generally seen as unreliable partners that focus on their own issues and ignore the real problems and needs of citizens.

With regard to the attitudes of CSO representatives towards citizens and their engagement, the analysis shows how CSOs and their representatives perceive citizens: whether they are seen as active

contributors to organized advocacy activities or as recipients and end-users of these activities, and whether they are considered to be a resource or a target for organizations' activities. CSOs from the most-embedded and from the least-embedded issue areas of civic advocacy have remarkably similar attitudes: 76 % and 71 % respectively see citizens as a target of their advocacy activities; the rest see the role of citizens as more balanced – either both as a resource and a target or just as a primary source of inspiration and rationale for their activities (Czech SMO Interviews 2010). This attitude is based on the perceptions of the role of citizens in the process of civic advocacy in general, and the situation in the Czech Republic in particular. Four key types of justification for these strategies were found in the data.

The first set of CSOs argue that citizens are generally not interested in the work of CSOs, and particularly not in actively working for them. These organizations feel that there is considerable distrust of the non-profit sector and that (Czech) society has been developing towards selfish individualism; that people are too busy, and that it is too demanding and expensive to win them over and make them actively interested in public issues generally and/or in the particular issue that their organization addresses. Representatives of CSOs complain about the unwillingness of citizens to participate in public affairs. They attribute this unwillingness to various circumstances stemming from Czech political culture: ignorance, lack of interest and motivation, laziness, passivity, pessimism about the abilities of CSOs to influence things, and the bad image that they believe the whole non-profit sector has due to negative campaigning by political elites:

I definitely don't think (...) that the mentality of the Czechs ... even though I hate it when someone speaks about Czech national characteristics ... that the mentality is somehow shaped ... and if you can expect that some wave or some social movement for something would emerge and be successful in the United States, it does not necessarily mean that it takes root here because the Czechs are not used to getting involved that much and I think it is necessary to keep that in mind (...).

Source: FGI (representative of a CSO from the least-embedded advocacy area)

Another set of reasons refers to the “expert knowledge” of CSOs and the highly detailed focus of the organizations: citizens do not have the education and the expert knowledge that is necessary to understand the nature of the problems the CSOs deal with, and consequently are unable to participate in their solution. The CSOs complain that people have insufficient information, are prejudiced against CSOs in the particular area that they are active in, and that they are too oriented towards “populist” solutions to problems. A similar complaint arises when defining the target groups of CSOs: sometimes the primary target of the CSOs, particularly in the environmental sector, is not a part of society and consequently there is no need to enter into a dialogue with any social groups and citizens:

“I was thinking ... as you asked who formulated (the goals) ... if the advocacy issue is environmental protection ... it is – among others – about articulating the interests of nature ... let’s say ... which means that people that formulate the goals often speak in the interests of the environment and not of a particular target group... of course that metaphorically speaking the target group is the population as a whole, whose being is conditioned by the existence of a functional ecosystem ... which means that there is no such things as a specified target group that could be addressed ... which means that ... I really know that those people (environmentalists) are systematically observing public attitudes towards particular problematic issues in the area of environment but of course there is no direct demand ... simply because ... there is always someone speaking on behalf of nature and basically this is one of the roles of the environmental CSOs: that they articulate the interest of nature in the public discourse.”

Source: FGI (representative of a CSO from the most-embedded advocacy area)

The third type of reasoning used by CSO representatives is similar, but it builds upon the claim of universality and autonomy of advocacy activities. CSO leaders are suspicious of politicians and, to a degree, of donors, as the spheres of politics and economy are usually seen as threats to the independence and objectivity of CSOs. Therefore, the distance of some CSOs towards citizens might be also due to the fact

that civic advocacy organizations usually claim to raise more universal issues than immediate community/business/policy-making interests. There is, therefore, quite a clear sense of unease on the part of some CSOs towards the influence of donors on CSO activities:

"What I lack ... and I've actually been the leader of the CSO for a year and a half ... is the ability within the advocacy area and within the organization to choose the goals, the campaigns and the directions without restraints ... which I think ... the way that we are funded and project-oriented ... we lack the freedom to do so."

Source: FGI (representative of a CSO from the least-embedded advocacy area)

Finally, there is the question of resources, which is frequently explored in studies of transactional activism (Cisár 2010): despite the fact that the organization-donor relationship (or even dependence) is usually downplayed by the civic actors, the role of resources still seems highly relevant for their relationship with the citizens:

"I would say that we focus more on the authorities, not on people ... because if you want to work somehow, you have to get the money ... you can only get the money from Europe, or from the government, or from the regional government, or from the city or local government ... so for us it is important to get the money and with the money I can realize my agenda ... I can do almost nothing without the money ... and it is the authorities that decide on the distribution of the money, not people ..."

Source: FGI (representative of the CSO from the least-embedded advocacy area).

3.8 Summary

This chapter addressed the evaluation of Czech civil advocacy based on empirical data. It started with the conceptual framing of the problem and showed different assessments of the quality of civil society that are embedded in particular theoretical traditions. Next, the non-

/involvement of citizens in advocacy and non-advocacy activities were compared in order to show that the organized civic involvement in the former is generally weaker and less embedded. Then, based on original data, we explored the gap between citizens and CSOs in the area of civic advocacy and attempted to identify their mutual perceptions in order to better understand their distance and the low social embeddedness of advocacy CSOs.

The analysis of empirical data revealed several things. First, a clear gap between the involvement of Czech citizens in advocacy and non-advocacy CSOs was illustrated. The general level of Czech citizens' involvement in civic advocacy is relatively high, but their involvement bypasses any organized actors in this area and takes mostly distant and indirect forms. Even if we lack comparative data from other countries in this regard, we may speak about a clear distance of citizens towards practical engagement in CSO activities: while unengaged citizens trust the capacities of advocacy CSOs, they are often suspicious of their motives. Citizens that are engaged in civic advocacy often behave as if compensating for too intensive or too weak activity of CSOs in most advocacy areas. Both engaged and unengaged individuals think that advocacy CSOs very rarely reflect the real problems of citizens, and advocacy CSOs are one of the least-preferred types of social institutions. The chapter revealed the tendency of advocacy CSOs to largely ignore the citizens and to rely more on technical expertise and their employees in fulfilling their missions. Generally, a large majority of CSOs see citizens as a social group that may benefit from their advocacy activities, but they do not respect them as a source of these activities: sometimes, citizens are perceived as patients that have to be cured but are not consulted about the disease. CSO representatives share four main types of excuse for this attitude: they doubt that Czech citizens are interested in civic activism at all; they argue that CSOs represent expert knowledge that simply cannot be generated from people's opinions; they claim to represent much wider or long-term goals than the immediate interests of the community; and, in order to achieve their goals, CSOs must rely more on their contacts with authorities and institutions for adequate economic resources for their action.

Generally, advocacy CSOs thus fail to perform the role of the intermediary between the individual and politics, and the citizens as a rule do not make use of CSOs when they encounter a societal problem. Two main conclusions can be drawn. First, it seems that the specific weakness of Czech organized advocacy lies in the low social embeddedness of advocacy CSOs; in the disconnection between the individual and organized sphere of civic advocacy. In other words, it is not the absence of activity or even actors in one of these spheres, but rather their alienation. Therefore, an assessment of the weakness of Czech civil society that focused exclusively on the evaluation of either individual participation in civic advocacy or advocacy CSOs would probably show a more optimistic picture. Second, the tendencies and motives for this disconnectedness do not stem exclusively from one sphere of civic advocacy, but are interactive and arise from the opinions of both citizens and the representatives of CSOs. Therefore any attempt to change the status quo would require changing the opinions and attitudes of either side, which, however, seem to be firmly embedded in the Czech political culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This study focuses on the state of the advocacy or political dimension of Czech civil society. It assesses its vitality through the empirical inspection of the embeddedness of the advocacy layer and of the relations between citizens and CSOs within the realm of civic advocacy. The study consists of three main parts. First, we focused on the cultural roots of the idea of civil society in Czech society and reconstructed the key original ideas of political dissent – dreams – of how civil society should look and work after (or, in order to bring about) the fall of the Communist regime. Second, we traced the evolution of key aspects of civil society in the past two decades, exploring the changes in its structures, actors, opportunities, and prospects. Third, we conducted an empirical analysis of how citizens perceive the organizational structures of civil society and their attitudes toward civic engagement; we also empirically assessed the relationship of civil society organizations towards citizens and their engagement in advocacy activities.

Originally, three main concepts of the role and functioning of civil society arose within the Czech dissident circles before 1989: one that intended to connect citizens and public affairs through the structures of civil society, stressing the intermediary function of organized engagement and thus representing a Tocquevillean moment in the Czech history of the idea of civil society (Tesař); one that saw it as a way of substituting the dysfunctional state institutions with citizen initiatives (“parallel polis”) and which stressed the need of the political dimension of extra-state civil activity (Benda); and one that strictly distanced civil society from institutional politics (“non-political politics”) thus relating the concept to the ethics of the self in a utopian-moralistic fashion (Havel). Also because of the post-1989 cultural and political prominence of its author, it was the last concept of civil society that politically and socially prevailed and affected Czech political culture and attitudes of citizens towards the advocacy function of civil society.

In quantitative and institutional terms, Czech civil society flourished after 1989: the number of collective actors and their resources continuously grew, and the opportunities (provided by political elites and

institutions) to change public affairs were increasingly open to them. Despite this, today we see neither the ideal of the pluralism of independent and self-sustainable actors competing with each other and with the state, nor the model of an emancipated sphere of “citizen wisdom” that would permanently monitor the exclusiveness of the political process and the instrumentality of the market economy. The situation has inclined towards the corporatist heritage of Czech society, the Central-European political culture, and the ideas of Communist regime: the government has treated CSOs as a supplement to its own policies, kept certain areas strictly under its control (education, justice, health care, etc.) and tried to establish its own agents, tools (e.g., via grants), and standards in other areas (social policy, leisure, sport). On the other hand, there has been little effort on the part of Czech civil society actors to make better and more frequent use of confrontational tactics and to better identify and represent real interests of the citizens.

The empirical assessment of the relations between CSOs and citizens within the sphere of civic advocacy revealed the extent and shape of the gap between them. We demonstrated a clear difference between the involvement in advocacy and non-advocacy CSOs (not only) in the Czech Republic, with a considerably lower engagement of citizens in the former ones. The exploration of the individual attitudes towards participation in civic advocacy activities suggested a relatively high proportion of active people. However, further analysis revealed that Czech citizens are largely active only through donations and support for various campaigns, but they keep a clear distance from civic advocacy organizations. Although most citizens think that CSOs are capable of solving problems in a given area, there are two main obstacles to participation: an overall normative skepticism about whether CSOs are the “right” actors to deal with various problems and issues in society and the apparent belief by citizens who are engaged in civic advocacy that CSOs are engaged in wrong issues and that they should do something else. Therefore, citizens engage in civic advocacy rather separately from CSOs. Another reason for this distance may be the overall lack of trust towards CSOs as social institutions because of their presumed connectedness to institutional

politics that – because of the still-vivid myth of anti-political politics – alienate CSOs from citizens.

We also explored the other – organized – side of civic advocacy, trying to find whether there were differences between the attitudes and strategies of CSOs from the most and the least-embedded advocacy areas towards engaging citizens in their activities. Our analyses, albeit based on a limited sample of CSOs, revealed that there are hardly any significant differences between the organizations from the most and from the least-embedded advocacy areas: both sets of CSOs are based on formal membership and their procedures for involving fellow citizens follow fairly rigid rules and written regulations. Their willingness to recruit new members is also very similar with the exception that the groups from the most-embedded areas are less interested in the enlargement of their membership base. The comparative analysis of the preferences for the inclusion of various public groups in the process of formulating goals and in the preparation of projects and campaigns reveals that CSOs clearly prefer their own employees, members, and cooperating groups to opening their deliberations to external experts or the general public. Like their fellow citizens, the CSO leaders follow the values of non-political politics, being the most suspicious of politicians and donors; the spheres of politics and economy are usually seen as interwoven and threatening to the independence and objectivity of CSOs. While keeping in mind the specific context of particular advocacy areas, we may come to general conclusions that “low demand meets low supply”: Czech CSOs tend to see citizens as the target audience of their highly professionalized activities; they are very skeptical about the public’s motives, willingness, and capacities to participate.

To conclude, it seems that the weakness of Czech civil society may be described as a failure to establish mutual relations of trust between citizens and CSOs within the sphere of civic advocacy that would prevent the existing animosities from distorting potential cooperation strategies. Our exploration shows that the level of Czech citizen involvement in civic advocacy is relatively high and describes complicated relations between citizens and CSOs within this dimension of civil society. We observed a clear distance of citizens towards practical (pro-)active engagement in CSO activities and a tendency on the side of

the CSOs to ignore the citizens and to rely on technical expertise and their employees in fulfilling their missions. Both the citizens and the CSOs are active, but they do not connect very well. The CSOs thus fail to perform the role of the intermediary between the individual and politics, and the citizens as a rule do not make use of CSOs when they encounter a societal problem.

Apart from this knowledge about the existing problem, our analysis offered some new insights. First of all, it seems that the weakness of Czech civil society may be identified just within the sphere of civic advocacy; the extent to which this gap is also open within the areas of non-political and service activities of the civil society sector remains an issue for further investigation. Our data suggest that these two areas might be very different.

Second, relations between CSOs and citizens that result in low membership in advocacy organizations (or, in their low social embeddedness) are typically attributed to the heritage of the non-democratic rule, administrative centralization, and political oppression. However, in the attitudes and opinions of Czech citizens we discovered cultural patterns duplicating Havel's thinking from the 1970s that prevailed after 1989 (and which, in fact, unfold and resonates with even more ancient Czech cultural patterns): citizens display considerable suspicion towards any organized political activity, or towards the political role of CSOs, and they automatically associate advocacy-oriented organized civil society actors (negatively) with political institutions. On the other hand, they easily identify themselves with charitable, social, and humanitarian issues in civic advocacy that enable them to identify with the cause personally and more on an ethical than political basis – that is why they are far from any organized engagement there. This attitude, together with a remaining persuasion about the desirability of the omnipotent role of state in many social areas and issues, represents the deadlock at the individual level of Czech civil society. On the other side of the gap, advocacy organizations seem quite happy with such an arrangement. They welcome financial support, but not demands by, or even conversations with, the public. CSO representatives share four main types of reasons to explain why they are not keen to engage people in their activities and keep CSO activities separate from the community: they doubt that Czech citizens

are interested in civic activism at all; they argue that CSOs represent expert knowledge that simply cannot be generated from people's opinions; they claim to represent much wider or long-term interests than is in the immediate interest of the community; and, in an attempt to achieve their goals, CSOs must rely more on their contacts with authorities and institutions to get adequate economic resources for action.

Therefore, it seems that while some evaluations of post-communist civil societies dominantly rest upon the assessment of membership in advocacy organizations as a privileged form of civil society engagement, this does not necessarily expose the full picture of contemporary Czech civil society. This study insists that speaking about weak Czech civil society means precisely speaking about the low social embeddedness of civic advocacy, and not about the overall passivity of citizens or a general distrust of citizens towards all CSOs. There is a considerable proportion of citizens who engage in non-political organizations, and data suggest – alongside contemporary studies of new forms of political participation – that many citizens indeed take part in advocacy activities. They just do it individually, more directly, and without any collective actors. Moreover, the actors' justification of the gap between individual and organized activity is fully in accordance with the long-term attitudes of the former dissenters and new political elites, which disqualifies the old regime from being the only and thus indisputable cause of low social embeddedness of organized civic advocacy in the Czech Republic.

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