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## The Role of Civil Society in Public Governance

### 1. Introduction

As an integral part of democracy, civil society has been studied with growing interest in recent years. Developed, modern democracies provide all the necessary conditions for the growth of political awareness and activism. Taking this into consideration, it is important to emphasise that the representatives of civil society and their increasing power strengthen the growth of civil participation and in this way they influence the decision-making process. In other words, efficient civil society acts as a provider of interests in the relationship between the state and public.

The presented article is orientated to analysing the political aspect of civil society and its position in the new model of ruling – governance which is defined by political scientists Y. Dror as a collective capacity to influence the future for the better.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of the article is to summarize platforms of civil society in the context of *governance* concept and at the same time to compare it with the traditional model – *government*.

Furthermore, the paper pays attention to the scope of civil society influence in the process of democratization and good governance in one of the post-communist countries, the Slovak Republic. The hypothesis is based on the existence of active civil society as an inevitable influence on the democratization process and on good governance in Slovakia. It is necessary to emphasise the different development of civil societies in various countries. The social and political situation favoured the establishment of civil society in the Western Bloc countries, while the non-existence of any kind of political participation and political activism was typical in post-communist countries until the end of communist rule in 1989.

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<sup>2</sup> Y. Dror, *Strategic Brain for Central Government*, in: *The Capacity to Govern in Central and Eastern Europe*. Bratislava, Potucek M. (eds.), NISPAcee, 2004, p. 13–29.

## 2. Phenomenon of civil society

“The phenomenon of civil society as a part of a political system presents distinguished interest in the study of modern democracy. Current increased concern about analysis of civil society is based on these pillars: social and political development, increasing requirement to strengthen public awareness, enforcement of civil participation and demand to balance the relationship between citizens and government.”<sup>3</sup> Given the complexity of civil society meaning, the aim of the paper is to focus the attention on the political-scientific point of view, in which the representatives of civil society and their increasing power ensure the growth of civil participation effectiveness, which is connected with the aim to affect and influence the decision-making process.

The well-known political philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville focused his interest on the issues of active civil society, civil organisations and various forms of civil participation in the United States of America. He came up with the finding that American citizens constantly support the establishment of diverse clusters, organizations and movements. The ideas behind that are based on the effort to actively participate and influence the decision-making process at all levels. The authors' conclusion is long-lasting, as it is still current in the political system of the United States of America. Additionally, USA has a higher number of civic organizations and a bigger percentage of participating citizens in the contrast to continental Europe.<sup>4</sup>

The division into politically active and passive citizens creates an image of the stance of civil society in the country. Democratic political system provides the environment for presenting citizens' ideas and interests. According to Karl Popper, it creates preconditions for an *open society* which is in contrast to the most criticized closed society, an origin of totalitarianism.<sup>5</sup>

The ideas of civil society date back to John Locke (society creates order and provides the state legitimacy; government is derived from agreement between citizens), Thomas Hobbes (society uses the force with the aim to uphold the contacts), David Hume (self-interest of every citizen will eventually achieve what is in the interest of the whole society – the idea is linking to utilitarianism which calls for the maximization of goodness in society).<sup>6</sup>

Taking into account the historical and political context of civil society development, it is necessary to highlight the contribution of Adam Ferguson

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<sup>3</sup> V. Dzatková, *Vplyv hnutia Tea Party na posilňovanie občianskeho aktivizmu*, “Politické vedy” 2015(1), p. 107–123; [http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/1\\_2015/DZATKOVA.pdf](http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/1_2015/DZATKOVA.pdf) (20.04.2015).

<sup>4</sup> A. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Penguin Classics, New York 2003, p. 992.

<sup>5</sup> K. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2013, p. 808.

<sup>6</sup> H. J. Storig, *Malé dejiny filosofie*, Karmelitánske nakladateľstvá, Prague 2007, p. 630.

and his work *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* in which he attends to the development of civil society in the context of enormous influence of division of labour on dividing the entire society.<sup>7</sup>

The next decades brought more understanding of civil society derived from political changes and of the scope of democratic principles. The era of increased democratic principles and active civil society alternated with an era of absence of democratic elements and non-existence or borderline existence of civil society.

The renaissance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought different features of successful civil society that provide a platform to create various definitions. M. Evans and H. C. Boyte define civil society as a public space in which citizens have an opportunity to participate in various discussions and debates about democracy. Both authors refuse to accept the negative attitude of a minority which defined themselves as observers, complainants, victims or accomplices for the conditions in a society.<sup>8</sup>

In general, we can say that civil society includes the guaranteed rights of every citizen with the responsibility to maintain them. This statement is related to the existence and support of free civil society.

Among many points of view on the civil society, all of them have several common characteristics (Ghaus-Pasha, 2004)<sup>9</sup>:

- existence besides the state and the market
- existence of pluralism
- participation of active citizens with common needs, interests and values
- cooperation and joint effort
- development through a fundamentally internal and autonomous process which cannot easily be controlled from outside.

Civil society also provides its citizens with the opportunity to actively participate and to enforce the democratic preconditions via influence and pressure to decision-makers in public affairs. In other words, it creates fertile ground to promote and to support the rights of every citizen.<sup>10</sup>

In that context, the next part of the paper analyses the existence of a relation between the extent of civil society and the scope of democracy and

<sup>7</sup> A. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 322.

<sup>8</sup> M. Evans, H. C. Boyte, *Free spaces: the sources of democratic change in America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992, VII–XXV.

<sup>9</sup> Ghaus Pasha A., *Role of civil society organizations in governance*, 6th Global Forum on Reinventing Government Towards Participatory and Transparent Governance 24–27 May 2005, Seoul 2005; <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan019594.pdf> (10.02.2015).

<sup>10</sup> R. D. Putman, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, New York 2000, p. 48–65; M. Evans, H. C. Boyte, *Free spaces: the sources of democratic change in America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992, VII–XXV.

public governance. According to presented parallel, it is possible to observe the period of increasing democratic principles and associated growth of civil society, on the other hand the absence of democratic principles leads to a decline of civil society. This analogy can be explained with the help of qualitative and quantitative models of political participation. Increasing number of participating citizens results in an increase of the scope of legitimacy within political decision-making process (quantitative model of political participation). Increasing the number of opportunities for participating citizens leads to growth of democracy in the political system (qualitative aspect of political participation).<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, it is necessary to pay attention to the roles in a functioning civil society, which could be described in this way<sup>12</sup>:

- policy analysis and advocacy;
- regulation and monitoring of state performance, and the actions and behaviour of public officials;
- building social capital<sup>13</sup> and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic practices;
- mobilizing particular constituencies, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized sections of masses, to participate more fully in politics and public affairs;
- development work to improve the wellbeing of their own and other communities.

From this point of view, civil society fulfils corresponding roles arising from mentioned clarification with centre of attention on transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness and accountability. All of the roles help the civil society act as a counter balance to the state.

### 3. The transformation from government to governance

Active citizenship and political participation has significant impact on the decision-making process in public administration as well. Civil society engagement has been growing progressively and the level of its success is clearly connected with the transformation process from government to governance.

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<sup>11</sup> F. Briska (eds.), *Teória a prax verejnej politiky*, Zvolen: Bratia Sabovci, 2010, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup> A. Ghaus Pasha, *Role of civil society organizations in governance*, 6th Global Forum on Reinventing Government Towards Participatory and Transparent Governance 24–27 May 2005, Seoul 2005. <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan019594.pdf> (10.02.2015).

<sup>13</sup> R. Putman (2000) emphasised the role of social capital through mutual relationship between society and public institutions, political participation and influence on the decision-making process. According to the author, one of the benefits of social capital is the fulfilment of fundamental requirements for the existence of an effective and responsible society.

The traditional model of government is based on vertical arrangement, where the state has ultimate authority and its governance is centralized. In other words, the power is concentrated in the hands of state. Typical characteristics of that system are centralisation and high level of bureaucracy. Bureaucratic system is often closely connected with elitism. Consequently, the creation and realization of public policy is linked to current performance of ruling elites.

M. Maesschalck defines the orthodox concept of governance as follows<sup>14</sup>:

- respect of political neutrality of public affairs in accordance with the teachings of W. Wilson;
- organization of public affairs in accordance with the concept of rational bureaucracy derived from M. Weber;
- use of top-down method in the implementation of decisions of the government centre and the most limited freedom of lower levels involved in the management of public affairs;
- effort to develop and maintain rules that are accurate and applicable in all circumstances, and mandatory for all involved entities.

The traditional model of governance still persists in the society and its defenders argue that government is a well-organized system which involves two-way concept consisting of both top-down and bottom-up models.

However, the government concept is confronted with criticism, and as Ralf Dahrendorf writes, the crisis of traditional model of governance is in the loss of confidence in elected representatives who prefer to advocate more the interests of financial groups than the interests of citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Summing up, the crisis of democracy in the 1950s and 1960s together with an economic crisis resulted in the considerable demand for innovative forms of governance which would be an appropriate reaction to the changes in civilization.

An answer to critical voices was the transformation from government to the new model of effective governance in which the authoritarian ruling was replaced by hierarchical arrangement. The concept of governance relies on the new perspective of ruling in spite of the traditional model in which absent the aspect of comprehensive understanding, governance analysing and sufficient response to changes in society is absent.<sup>16</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> J. Maesschalck, *Ethics and Administrative Reform*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Public Administration and Public Policy*, Rabin J. (eds.), Taylor & Francis, London: 2005, p. 94–98.

<sup>15</sup> R. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict In Industrial Society*, Standford University Press, Standford 1959, p. 325.

<sup>16</sup> R. A. W. Rhodes, *The New Governance: Governing without Government*, "Political Studies" 1996, vol. 44, issue 4, p. 652–667; <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/post.1996.44.issue-4/issuetoc> (11.03.2015); G. B. Peters, *Governance and Public Bureaucracy: New Forms of Democracy or New Forms of Control?*, "The Asia Pacific Jour-

attention is not on the centralized position of state or main decision-maker, but on the upraising political actors e.g. market and civil society. Take into consideration the definition of governance, according to the Czech author Martin Potůček, as “*a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. It operates at every level of human enterprise.*”<sup>17</sup> In the words of Göran Hydén governance refers to the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena on which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the political dimension of civil society presents an environment for different forms of influence on decision-makers within the public policy making. In other words, governance prefers the aims of citizens and tries to accomplish their demands. Involvement of citizens in the decision-making process decreases the power of the state, which is no longer acting as a single player. Moreover, the creation of suitable conditions results in the implementation of the new concept, emphasising participatory aspect of governance. The government is subsequently perceived not as a provider, but rather as enabler for the existence of diverse actors of public policy making.<sup>19</sup>

Initial transformation process started with the establishment of neoliberal concept associated with public policy – Public Management, and later with the creation of separate course – New Public Management. The New Public Management focuses on managerial concept instead of bureaucratic. Also, its role is linked with a wide transformation process in public administration, emphasising the relationship between government institutions and social services.<sup>20</sup> The activating function of the state and the increasing role of active civil society are now well recognised phenomena.

It is worth to mention, that in spite of the New Public Management efficiency its implementation into public administration was not successful. The obstacles have been the insufficiency of managerial strategies and resources within public policy.

The clear differences between state and market are also in the way of reaching various targets. On one hand the market tries to maximize profit

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nal of Public Administration” 2004, vol. 26, no. 1, <http://sunzi.lib.hku.hk/hkjo/view/51/5000603.pdf>. (19.01.2015).

<sup>17</sup> *Veřejná politika*. M. Potucek (eds.), Slon, Prague 2005, p. 396.

<sup>18</sup> G. Hyden, J. Court, K. Mease, *Making Sense of Governance*, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., Colorado 2004, p. 265.

<sup>19</sup> J. Cavaye, *Governance and Community Engagement: The Australian Experience*, in: *Participatory Governance: Planning, Conflict Mediation and Public Decision-Making in Civil Society*, W. R. Lovan, M. Murray, R. Shaffer (eds.), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005, p. 85–101.

<sup>20</sup> *Veřejná politika*. M. Potucek (eds.), Slon, Prague 2005, p. 396.

regardless the method or manner, on the other hand the state seeks to assure public welfare through democratic and transparent principles.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from the New Public Management, as one of the concepts to overcome bureaucratic approach, there emerged another models to regulate governing during the 1980's, such as cooperative model of public administration, networked governance, progressive public administration or a new public service.

All of these transformation approaches have common goals towards the new forms of governance, e.g. to highlight the inefficiency of traditional management and to demand the applicability and feasibility in accordance with modernisation- and globalisation-related changes in society. In other words, these changed conditions have forced governments and parliaments at the national level to delegate activities 'downwards' to Local Governments, 'outwards' to private organizations, 'inwards' to semi-autonomous state agencies, and last, but not least, 'upwards' to the EU and other international organizations. The result is a 'hollowing out' of the state.<sup>22</sup>

The new concept of governance will not avoid criticism as well, mainly for the weakening of democratic institutions and the ambiguity of responsibility of actors in the decision-making process. In addition, the critical voices said that the concept cannot be applicable to various states in the same manner.

It should also be noted that in spite of positive effects of the concept of governance, the implementation of various actors in the decision-making process does not represent a kind of panacea for the problems caused by governance. Thus, governance does not imply an end of state intervention, but rather, a change of its forms.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. Aspect of civil society contributing to the good governance and democratization process in the Slovak Republic

The first application and theoretical background of governance concept has its roots in the international organization. According to the United Nations, the inevitable elements of good governance are: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and effort, the inclusiveness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

<sup>21</sup> M. Potucek, *Strategic Governance in Central and Eastern Europe: From Concepts to Reality*, a paper submitted to the 14th NISPAcee Annual Conference 2006 or "Educational Leadership and Management Studies"; [http://www.nispa.org/conf\\_paper\\_detail.php?cid=14&p=571&pid=1169](http://www.nispa.org/conf_paper_detail.php?cid=14&p=571&pid=1169) (18.03.2015).

<sup>22</sup> R. A. W. Rhodes, *The New Governance: Governing without Government*, "Political Studies" 1996, vol. 44, issue 4; <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/post.1996.44.issue-4/issuetoc> (11.03.2015).

<sup>23</sup> J. Kooiman, *Governing as Governance*, Sage Publications Ltd, London 2003, p. 264.

According to the European Commission the concept consists of five basic elements: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. According to the International Monetary Fund, it is based on: transparency, accountability, efficiency and fairness.<sup>24</sup>

With the implementation of governance concept in Eastern and Central European countries, it is necessary to give particular attention to their common historical background, consisting of centralized power and long lasting non-existence of dialogue between state and citizens. In that context, the transformation process in the post-communist countries, including the Slovak republic, has been influenced by reduced participation in public affairs which is referred to by political scientists as a *participatory gap*.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the initial deficit, the *governance* concept significantly affected post-communist countries in the following way:

- new *governance* is not only orientated to government or government structure but also to processes and procedures
- existence of a wide range of democratic institutions
- connection between political and economic sphere
- significant influence and involvement of the third sector in the decision-making process.<sup>26</sup>

The process of democratization has another specific feature, regardless of the political situation before the fall of communist regime in the Slovak republic. In the 1990's, the existence of public sector had been significantly impacted by the government of that time, which tried to control all of its activities.

During that time, the civil society became the key player in the support of democratic character of the state. Representatives of the third sector tried to inform, mobilize and support citizens with the aim to boost political activism.

Their initiative had inevitable assistance, which helped to win the democratic political parties, restore the democratic principles within the state and repair the reputation in the international relations.

Contrary to the expectations which relied on restored democratic principles, the situation in the country can be described as a certain apathy and anger with not delivering promises. Moreover, at that time policy excluded the aspects of ethics and morality. Put differently, economic and international reputation was restored but the principles of morality were not achieved with satisfaction. "*We can come to the broad generalization*

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<sup>24</sup> D. Klimovsky, *Genéza koncepcie good governance a jej kritické prehodnotenie v teoretickej perspektive*, "Ekonomický časopis" 2010, no. 2.

<sup>25</sup> G. Mezeiova, *Democratic Consolidation in Serbia: Regional and Global Perspective*, "Godišnjak" 2013, vol. 7, no. 10, p. 43–44.

<sup>26</sup> P. Vymetal, *Proměny teoretických koncepcí governance*, in: *III. Kongres českých politologů. Praha: Česká společnost pro politické vědy*, J. Němec, M. Šuštková (eds.). 2006, p. 534–547.

*that the more ethical decision-making behaviour tends to be associated with those who have higher level of moral qualities and moral development, who have greater awareness and sensitivity to the ethical dimension of situations, who are capable of greater self-control, who are professionally older and more experienced, and finally who are less manipulative.*<sup>27</sup>

Overall positive effect of development since 1989 resulted in “*cognitive wealth, wealth of practical experiences and wealth of pro-social behaviour patterns.*”

At the same time, it is important to note that this progress has been positively reflected in subsequent profiling of civil society in the Slovak republic as follows:

- establish controlled power with the aim to avoid progressing towards authoritative regime
- support existence of alternative approaches in public policy-making
- promote participation in the different international organisations supporting human rights and democratic organizations.<sup>28</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Francis Fukuyama said about the civil society that it is something that the state can more easily destroy than establish.<sup>29</sup> The importance of this statement still persists. Presumed aim and hypothesis have thusly been proven. Firstly, the research confirmed that functioning civil society has inevitable position as part of a democratic system and also plays a central role in good governance. Secondly, it confirmed that the actors of civil society had an inevitable position during the democratization process in the Slovak republic, being supported by the democratic character of the state; informing and mobilising citizens, strengthening political activism, helping democratic parties to win, as well as restoring international reputation and supporting good governance.

These days the importance of civil society is proven by its roles in the country within its acts, as an agenda-setter and generator of ideas, participant in decision-making and fulfilling a function of control at the same time.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> D. Ondrova, *Ethical Decision Models and Public-Service Ethics*, in: *Aktuálne problémy a výzvy verejnej správy*, 2012, p. 21–32.

<sup>28</sup> M. Butora, Z. Butorova, B. Strecansky, *Mimovládny sektor: pluralita činností a foriem*, in: *10 kapitol o vývoji občianskej spoločnosti na Slovensku*, PDCS, o. z., S. Abre (eds.), Bratislava 2010.

<sup>29</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, The Free Press, New York 2006, p. 464.

<sup>30</sup> D. Neve, *Civil Society and Governence – Pluralizing the State*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office for Regional Cooperation in Asia, Singapore 2012. [http://www.fesasia.org/media/publication/2012\\_CivilSocietyAndGovernance\\_DeNeve.pdf](http://www.fesasia.org/media/publication/2012_CivilSocietyAndGovernance_DeNeve.pdf) (18.02.2015).

Finally, we can say that the existence of clear deficits in the civil society is balanced by strong will to support the future development.

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## The Role of Civil Society in Public Governance

### Abstract

One of the elementary conditions of democratic society includes, among others, an active and powerful civil society which acts as an intermediary between the state and citizens. Moreover, the functioning and effective civil society represents the way to influence the public governance. The aim of the article is to research the scope of the relationship between civil society and public governance in the particular post-communist country – the Slovak Republic, where preconditions for establishing a civil society were completely different than in Western democracies. Moreover, the article examines, with the help of analysis and synthesis methods, the contribution that an efficient civil society can make to the democratization process and good governance.

**Keywords:** civil society, public governance, political participation, democratization process, Slovak Republic

## Rola społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w zarządzaniu publicznym

### Streszczenie

Jednym z podstawowych elementów społeczeństwa demokratycznego jest m.in. aktywne i silne społeczeństwo obywatelskie, które działa jako pośrednik między państwem a obywatelami. Efektywne społeczeństwo obywatelskie pozwala wpływać na zarządzanie publiczne. Celem artykułu jest analiza zakresu wzajemnych relacji między społeczeństwem obywatelskim a zarządzaniem publicznym, szczególnie w postkomunistycznych uwarunkowaniach Republiki Słowacji. Ponadto opracowanie analizuje wkład społeczeństwa obywatelskiego do procesu demokratyzacji i dobrego rządzenia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** społeczeństwo obywatelskie, zarządzanie publiczne, partycypacja polityczna, proces demokratyzacji, Republika Słowacka