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The Role of Civil Society Organisations in the Slovenian Welfare System during the Transition Period after 1990

Abstract. The authors examine the development of the civil society sector in Slovenia and its role in the country's welfare system. They emphasise the 'boom' in the growth of civil society organisations, notably in the legal form of associations during the 1980s and 1990s. They argue that although civil society organisations rapidly proliferated at this time, they did not become more professionalised or financially stable. In the 1990s, a relationship of complementarity between the public/state and civil society sectors was established in Slovenia's welfare system, though civil society organisations exerted little influence on public policies directed towards the provision of social protection and other contributions to people's welfare.

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Introduction

The role played by civil society organisations in transforming the former state socialist countries into capitalist societies during the 1980s and 1990s remains an important topic for the social sciences, particularly political science.¹ However, most research has considered how civil society organisations contributed to the transition from a single-party system to a multiparty, democratic political order. Focussing on the political role of civil society organisations and their

¹ Danica Fink-Hafner, ed, *The Development of Civil Society in the Countries on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since the 1980s*, Ljubljana 2015; Peter Vandor et al., eds, *Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe. Challenges and Opportunities*, Vienna 2017; Eva More-Hollerweger et al., *Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe. Monitoring 2019*, Vienna 2019; and the special issue on the Balkans and a collection of regular general papers in *Journal of Public Affairs* 19, no. 2 (2019), DOI: 10.1002/pa.1839. All internet references were accessed on 15 June 2020.

effects on democratisation, such research has resulted in findings that often show civil society organisations to be alienated from ordinary people and to be unable to concentrate on citizens' needs, identify real-world social problems and contribute to long-term solutions.² Such findings arise from overlooking those civil society organisations whose role is not important to the political system but to the welfare system of democratic societies. Civil society organisations provide numerous social services, represent the voices and interests of various minorities or disadvantaged social groups and help in community building.³ They are known as private nonprofit organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society organisations. Together with social movements and interest groups, they are located within the 'sphere of civil society', that part of the social space or reality found between households and communities on the one hand and the state on the other.⁴ They are distinct from those parts of the social space, which are governed by the rules of the market, and they provide opportunities for self-organising and coordinated activities.⁵ Locating civil society organisations in this intermediary sphere of social reality assumes the concurrent separation and closeness of such organisations with entities operating in community, state and market spheres. By defining civil society organisations in this way, one moves beyond the more narrow normative definition, which assumes the complete separation of civil society organisations from the state. A broader understanding emerges that can account for their connectedness.⁶

In their service, advocacy and expressive roles, certain civil society organisations are an important structural element of the 'welfare system' in contemporary societies. The 'welfare system', a broader concept than 'welfare state' and/or *Sozialstaat*, entered Eastern and Western European social policy discussions

² Danica Fink-Hafner, A Framework for Studying the Development of Civil Society on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since the 1980s, in: Fink-Hafner, ed, *The Development of Civil Society in the Countries on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since the 1980s*, 1–22, 11.

³ More-Hollerweger et al., *Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe. Monitoring 2019*, 4.

⁴ Christopher Bryant, Social Self-Organisation, Civility and Sociology. A Comment on Kumar's Civil Society, *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (1993), 397–401, 399, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/591809.pdf?seq=1>.

⁵ Charles Taylor, Modes of Civil Society, *Public Culture* 3, no. 1 (1990), 95–118, DOI: 10.1215/08992363-3-1-95.

⁶ Fabio Giomi / Stefano Petrunaro, Voluntary Associations, State and Gender in Inter-war Yugoslavia. An Introduction, *European Review of History* 26, no. 1 (2019), 1–18, DOI: 10.1080/13507486.2018.1471043; Marek Skovajsa, Cultures of Civil Society in East Central Europe. Discourses, Codes, and Performances of Czech Civil Society. APSA 2012 Annual Meeting Paper, August 2012, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2104845>.

in the late 1980s.⁷ An open and universal concept, it embraces not only the institutions, programmes and measures through which the state provides social protection and social well-being to its citizens but also those, which evolve and function according to the logic of the market and those, which operate in the domain of civil society and community.⁸

During the early 1990s, experts from international monetary organisations became engaged in transforming the welfare systems of the former socialist countries. Among their recommendations were the privatisation of existing public systems, especially pension and healthcare insurance.⁹ This was also the time when Johns Hopkins University engaged in comprehensive international research into private nonprofit organisations and launched the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (hereafter: JHP), studying Western and certain Eastern European countries. Its research, the first comprehensive international comparative study of civil society organisations, identified different roles and development potential of the private nonprofit / civil society sector, which could both reduce the state's role (public sector) and relieve the burden borne by the family in providing social protection and welfare.¹⁰

In 1996, members of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana applied the JHP's methodology in its comprehensive research on a representative sample of Slovenian civil society organisations.¹¹ They studied all legal forms of such organisations in Slovenia—associations, institutes, foundations and religious organisations—and all fields in which they operated according

⁷ Endre Sik / Ivan Svetlik, Shifts in the Welfare Mix. Significant Features in Countries with Planned Economy. Similarities and Differences, in: Adalbert Evers / Helmut Wintersberger, eds, Shifts in the Welfare Mix. Their Impact on Work, Social Services and Welfare Policies, Vienna 1988, 273–280; Ivan Svetlik, Yugoslavia. Three Ways of Welfare System Restructuring, in: Evers / Wintersberger, eds, Shifts in the Welfare Mix, 331–368.

⁸ Zinka Kolarič / Ivan Svetlik, Jugoslovanski sistem blaginje v pogojih ekonomske krize, *IB revija za planiranje* 21, no. 8–9 (1987), 23–31, 23; Zinka Kolarič / Andreja Črnak-Meglič / Maja Vojnovič, Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi, Ljubljana 2002.

⁹ Zinka Kolarič / Anja Kopač / Tatjana Rakar, The Slovene Welfare System. Gradual Reform instead of Shock Treatment, in: Klaus Schubert / Simon Hegelich / Ursula Bazant, eds, The Handbook of European Welfare Systems, London, New York/NY 2009, 444–461; Zsuzsa Ferge, Welfare and 'Ill-Fare' Systems in Central-Eastern Europe, in: Robert Sykes et al., eds, Globalization and European Welfare States. Challenges and Change, Hampshire/NY 2001, 127–152.

¹⁰ Lester M. Salamon et al., Global Civil Society. Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector, Baltimore/MD 1999; Lester M. Salamon et al., Global Civil Society. Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector, vol. 2, Bloomfield/CT 2004.

¹¹ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi.

to the International Classification of Non-Profit Organisations (ICNPO).¹² The research examined the development of civil society organisations in Slovenia, given their sharp increase during the 1990s following the change in the political system. In 2005, the research (using the same methodology) was repeated so that the growth and development of civil society organisations in the intervening decade could be studied. In particular, given their proliferation, we were interested in whether their role in the country's welfare system and influence on public policies showed a corresponding increase.¹³ Unfortunately, this survey represents the latest comprehensive and representative data set available on civil society organisations in Slovenia because financial support for further research has been lacking. Since the 2005 project there have only been smaller studies based on data culled from national registers and explorative surveys.¹⁴

Relying on the findings of the two studies mentioned above, we address in this article the dilemma surrounding the growth and development of civil society organisations and their power—or powerlessness—to help transform the Slovenian welfare system during the transition period. The *growth* of civil society organisations refers to their rising number; their *development* concerns their level of professionalisation as well as the structure and share of their financial sources. These two factors determine the extent of these organisations' power in their role in the welfare system and in their relationship with the state. We argue that although the Slovenian civil society sector grew during the transition, this expansion did not lead to its development.

The paper will unfold in three parts. The first section considers the growth and characteristics of the Slovenian civil society sector during the transition period, given the proliferation of civil society organisations during the post-independence years. The second part offers analysis of both the growth and the development of the civil society sector with regard to its role in the Slovenian welfare system. Finally, we examine, on the state and local levels, the relationship between civil society organisations and the government after Slovenia's independence. The paper concludes by placing the civil society sector's service and governance role during the transition period in one of the typologies of government–civil society sector relations and reflects on potential future developments in Slovenia's welfare system, which continues to be in flux.

¹² Lester M. Salamon / S. Wojciech Sokolowski / Regina List, *Global Civil Society. An Overview*, Baltimore/MD 2003.

¹³ Zinka Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji. CRP Konkurenčnost Slovenije 2001–2006. Celovita analiza pravnega in ekonomskega okvirja za delo nevladnih organizacij*, Ljubljana 2006.

¹⁴ Tatjana Rakar et al., *Civil Society in Slovenia*, Ljubljana 2011; Tatjana Rakar / Zinka Kolarič, *Social Enterprises and Their Ecosystems in Europe. Country Report Slovenia*, Luxembourg 2019.

Slovenia's Civil Society Sector Historical Background

Historical analyses reveal a long and extensive tradition in people's interest associations and self-organisation in Slovenia.¹⁵ Up through the end of the Second World War, a period in which the welfare state was undeveloped, civil society organisations, together with the informal sector, were primarily responsible for the provision of public goods and social services. In 1938, there were around 8,000 civil society organisations in Slovenia: 6,014 associations and 1,677 cooperatives.¹⁶

In the postwar period, the development of civil society organisations can be explained by the economic and political regime in former Yugoslavia that had started to deviate from the Soviet model in the early 1950s.¹⁷ Most pronounced was the introduction of self-management, leading to an increasingly decentralised public administration, greater independence from the state for businesses and other organisations, a stronger role for market forces, a better standard of living and more individual freedom with respect to self-organisation and contacts with the outside world. Regarding civil society organisations, the historical background may be divided into four periods.¹⁸

The first of these is the period of state socialism till 1970. The activities undertaken by civil society organisations, especially those providing social protection and welfare, had been disrupted by the socialist revolution, which allotted these services to the state / public sector. The civil society sector of the pre-war period was thus considerably weakened, but it did not disappear. Certain organisations such as the fire brigades continued operation and several new associations were formed.¹⁹ Cooperatives and foundations ceased to be, however. Thus, although civil society organisations were comparable in number during the interwar period (approximately 8,000) and at the end of the 1960s (decreasing but not precipitously, to around 7,000), such organisations existed during the latter period only in the legal form of associations operating in their members' interest. The provision of public goods and services had been transferred to the public / state sector.

¹⁵ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi; Giomi / Petrungaro, Voluntary Associations in Yugoslavia.

¹⁶ Andreja Črnak-Meglič / Tatjana Rakar, The Role of the Third Sector in the Slovenian Welfare System, *Teorija in praksa* 64, no. 3 (2009), 237–254.

¹⁷ Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia. From World War II to Non-Alignment, London, New York/NY 2016.

¹⁸ Črnak-Meglič / Rakar, The Role of the Third Sector in the Slovenian Welfare System.

¹⁹ Ana Kladnik / Thomas Lindenberger, Traditionen der Freiwilligkeit im Transformationsregime, in: Nicole Kramer / Christine G. Kruger, eds, *Freiwilligenarbeit und gemeinnützige Organisationen im Wandel*, Berlin 2019, 249–273. Cf. also Ana Kladnik's contribution to this thematic section.

Second, there was a decade of self-governing socialism in the 1970s, marked by decentralisation—in which the responsibility for providing and financing public goods and services was delegated to municipalities—and a weakening of state control over associations' activities, brought about by the Act on Associations (1974) governing the founding of new organisations. We see here a new space for the bottom-up establishment of civil society organisations, which could be created not only by the state's initiative but also by citizens' initiative. Consequently, civil society organisations enjoyed greater autonomy, while their communication with the state remained quite limited. Furthermore, the state did not include them on an equal basis neither in the production of public goods and services nor in the process of enforcing interests.

The third period, the 1980s, marked the beginning of the political system's democratisation, in what turned out to be the prelude to Slovenia's independence. Efforts at democratisation were strongly supported not only by civil society organisations, in the form of social movements and interest groups, but also by the reformed Communist Party of Slovenia, especially its youth branch.²⁰ New social movements, represented by various peace, ecological, feminist, spiritual and subcultural groups, began to spread, which had effects that went beyond their political activities and allowed the emergence of an alternative network for the production of goods and services. During this period, civil society became an alternative to the official political structures. However, by the end of the 1980s, these new social movements focussed strongly on their political activities. In the 1990s, members of these new social movements, in significant numbers, would be integrated into various political parties and, later, into the new state's establishment. The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, for example, included members who participated in the democratisation process during the so-called Slovenian Spring from 1988 until 1990 and later took up several important positions in the ruling political parties and power structures. In fact, only a few of the social movements that emerged during the late 1970s and 1980s stayed within the realm of civil society. After the enactment of the Act on Associations, many became associations in fields such as alternative approaches to social work and psychiatry, as well as dedicating themselves to various activities of psychosocial help for population groups in need and to alternative cultural production. Between 1975 and 1985 the number of associations in Slovenia rose by 64 % (see Figure 1).²¹

Finally, the period of transition after 1990, following the change in the political system and Slovenia's independence. The deregulation of the conditions for

²⁰ Božo Repe / Darja Kerec, *Slovenija, moja dežela. Družbena revolucija v osemdesetih letih*, Ljubljana 2017.

²¹ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*.

Fig. 1: Number of Civil Society Organisations in Slovenia from 1965 to 2007 (Source: Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*; Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji*; Črnak-Meglič / Rakar, *The Role of the Third Sector in the Slovenian Welfare System*)

the founding and operation of civil society organisations, which had started in the 1970s, continued; it came to an end by the mid-1990s, with passage of new laws that provided the basis for the activities of all types of civil society organisations. The same legislation also abolished the state's monopoly on social and other services. The Act on Foundations (1994) enabled anew the establishment of foundations, and the Act on Institutes (1991) allowed for the founding of private institutes. At the same time, the political changes also supported the renewed establishment of church organisations, which, though active, had been illegal. By 2007, the number of organisations had almost doubled (see Figure 1). The vast majority of these were associations, followed by institutes, while the number of foundations remained very small.

Slovenian Civil Society in a Comparative Perspective

A comparison of Slovenia with the countries studied in the JHP reveals that Slovenia has one of the least developed civil society sectors—even as it is among the countries having the highest numbers of civil society organisations per inhabitant (1.02 organisations per 100 inhabitants).²² The explanation for the discrepancy between the *growth* and the *development* of Slovenia's civil society sector is obvious: rapid growth during the country's transition period did not entail development as measured by the JHP's two main indicators: professionalisation, that is the share of the active population employed by civil society organisations, and the share of civil society sector revenues as percentage of

²² Črnak-Meglič / Rakar, *The Role of the Third Sector in the Slovenian Welfare System*.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the following, we evidentialize this for the main civil society sector characteristics.

As stated, associations are the most common form of civil society organisations in Slovenia, far more common than other types such as private institutes and foundations. During the transition period the process of establishing these two latter varieties began to intensify, but their numbers remained relatively low due to the continuing limited possibilities for developing the service function of civil society organisations. This is also reflected in the composition of the sector as structured by field of activity. Civil society organisations have remained most robust in those fields in which they had been active in the past. In 2005, most were found in the area of sport and recreation (27.6 %), followed by culture (17.7 %), professional activities (9.8 %), the development of local communities and residences (9.1 %) and fire brigades (8.7 %), but significantly less in the fields of education (4.5 %), the environment and advocacy (4.2 %), social services (3.6 %) and healthcare (2.1 %).²³ The figures from 2005 show that the structure of the civil society sector did not differ considerably from the composite portrait that had been taken about a decade earlier in 1996.²⁴

With regard to the absolute prevalence of associations as member-serving organisations, membership fees constitute the most important individual source of income for Slovenian civil society organisations. There is also public (mainly local government) funding, which enables employment primarily in civil society organisations in the field of social services (such as organisations for the disabled), as well as corporate sponsorship money, which is the most important income source for civil society organisations in the field of sport. According to the methodology used in the JHP,²⁵ in 1996 all income sources combined within the overall structure of annual revenues of all Slovenian civil society organisations' public sources (state budget and municipalities' budgets) represented 27 %; funds from private donations (donations from private foundations, individuals and enterprises) represented 29 %; membership fees 20 %; and the share of pure commercial income (sale of goods and services) amounted to 24 %.²⁶ By 2005, income from public sources had increased and funding from private donations and market sources had decreased. The most important individual income source for Slovenian civil society organisations was now local government funding (28.7 %), followed by membership fees (18.9 %). This allocation ranks Slovenia among those countries where public sources are the

²³ Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji*.

²⁴ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*.

²⁵ Salamon et al., *Global Civil Society*; Salamon et al., *Global Civil Society*, vol. 2.

²⁶ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*.

Fig. 2: Share of Civil Society Sector Employment (Source: Salamon / Sokolowski / List, *Global Civil Society. An Overview*; data for Slovenia: Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*)

dominant source of funding for civil society organisations, a characteristic of a conservative-corporate type of welfare system,²⁷ although the share of this funding was substantially lower than the average of all countries included in the JHP.²⁸ However, if one adds donations made by private individuals (9.2 %) to membership fees, nearly one-third of the funding for civil society organisations comes from contributions by individuals who are members or supporters.

This revenue structure, having such a high share of private funding, proves that the governmentalisation and marketisation processes providing the basis for the professionalisation of civil society organisations had not truly begun in

²⁷ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*.

²⁸ Salamon et al., *Global Civil Society*; Salamon et al., *Global Civil Society*, vol. 2.

Fig. 3: Structure of the Civil Society Sector According to Service and Expressive Functions (Source: Salamon / Sokolowski / List, *Global Civil Society. An Overview*. Data for Slovenia: Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji*)

* 32-country average. ** The remaining 21 % could not be classified.

Slovenia. Governmentalisation refers to the process that transforms civil society organisations into service providers for the welfare state through paid arrangements with the government that task them with providing health, educational, social and other kinds of services. Marketisation refers to the penetration of essentially market-driven relations into the nonprofit sector. It allows for and encourages competition among civil society organisations themselves and between them and profit-oriented organisations for customers who can pay more for the services and goods offered for sale.²⁹ Governmentalisation, marketisation and professionalisation are mutually connected and will indeed begin only when, alongside the member-serving organisations, the share of organisations which serve the public starts to expand within the structure of Slovenia's civil society sector.³⁰ Data from other countries points up the discrepancy between the growth and the development of civil society organisations in Slovenia. As shown in Figure 2, Slovenia possesses one of the least developed civil society sectors according to one primary indicator of sector development—the level of a sector's professionalisation as measured by employment.

The low level of professionalisation stems from especially modest development in the service role of the Slovenian civil society sector. The share of civil society organisations active in service provision in Slovenia is very small. Especially evident is the underdevelopment of civil society organisations in social services, health and education. Figure 3 shows the picture that emerges when fields of activities are grouped according to the International Classification of

²⁹ Lester Salamon, *The Marketisation of Welfare. Non-Profit and For-Profit Roles in America's Welfare State*, *Social Service Review* 67, no. 1 (1993), 16–39, 16.

³⁰ Zinka Kolarič, *Neprofitno-volonterske organizacije in njihov razvoj. Od volontarizma k profesionalizmu*, *Teorija in praksa* 40, no. 1 (2003), 37–56.

Non-profit Organisations (ICNPO)³¹ into two broad general categories—service functions and expressive functions.

The data for all countries included in the JHP show that in most countries the civil society sector primarily has service functions. However, in postsocialist countries and in Scandinavian countries this sector chiefly has expressive functions. But note Poland, the only postsocialist country to be included in the group of countries possessing a service-dominant civil society sector.³² Hence, comparison of Slovenia with Hungary and especially Poland makes the modest development of civil society organisations in service fields particularly conspicuous. This further indicates that the striking growth in the number of civil society organisations in Slovenia did not lead to their development given their limited role in the country's welfare system, where the public sector continues to be the primary service provider.

In short, despite the relatively rapid proliferation of civil society organisations during the transition period, the civil society sector's position in Slovenia is relatively weak when measured by the two main indicators of sectoral development: number of people employed in the sector and the share of civil society sector income in national GDP. Among all the researched countries,³³ civil society organisations in Slovenia hold second-to-last place for all professionalisation levels. They employed just 0.7 % of all employees in Slovenia and their income represented only 1.92 % of the GDP both in 1996 and 2005.³⁴ The country's civil society sector is among the least developed in Europe and was so among other former socialist countries during the transition period.

The characteristics of Slovenia's civil society sector can be explained by considering the sector's role and integration in the country's changing postsocialist welfare system; more precisely, one should inquire whether the civil society sector's role was based on the principle of subsidiarity or complementarity with the public sector. We examine whether civil society organisations act as a substitute provider for public sector services (subsidiarity) or merely as a provider of services which the public sector does not sufficiently provide or does so on an unsatisfactory level of quality (complementarity). Therefore, we discuss this issue in the broader context of the Slovenian welfare system's characteristics as they developed during the period of transition.

³¹ Salamon / Sokolowski / List, *Global Civil Society. An Overview*.

³² Salamon / Sokolowski / List, *Global Civil Society. An Overview*.

³³ Salamon et al., *Global Civil Society*; Salamon et al., *Global Civil Society*, vol. 2; Salamon / Sokolowski / List, *Global Civil Society. An Overview*.

³⁴ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*; Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji*.

The Slovenian Welfare System and the Role Played by Civil Society Organisations

Many of the characteristics of today's civil society organisations in Slovenia remain determined by the structure possessed by the welfare system during the socialist period. As described, this dual system consisted of a strong public sector working in tandem with the family as a social institution. Also involved in public welfare, however, were numerous civil society organisations, though these were member-serving organisations and not public-serving service providers.

It stands to reason that the characteristics of the socialist welfare system would determine the relationship between civil society organisations and the public sector during the transition period. No Slovenian government during that time attempted to quickly privatise the public sector with respect to the provision of social protection and other contributions to citizens' welfare. Slovenia, unlike certain other postsocialist countries, thus did not confront with a growing 'welfare gap' that was then filled by civil society organisations.³⁵ In Slovenia, a relationship of complementarity (and not subsidiarity) was established between the public / state sector and the civil society sector. This welfare system model reflected the country's left-leaning political elite (unlike the political elites in most other former socialist societies) deliberately rejecting reformist measures and recommendations based on the 'shock therapy' principle advocated by experts from international monetary institutions. These recommendations called for the earliest possible privatisation of the economy; the deregulation of the market, including the labour market; the privatisation and commercialisation of the public / state sector; and the retrenchment of public / state social expenditures to provide for social protection and ensure the well-being of citizens.³⁶ The implementation of recommendations mentioned above by domestic political elites meant that the former socialist welfare system transformed itself in the direction of a liberal welfare system, in a way similar to Hungary.³⁷ On the contrary, in the first half of the 1990s the Slovenian welfare system constituted a dual model combining elements that, according to Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typology, made up a conservative-corporate

³⁵ Kolarič / Kopač / Rakar, *The Slovene Welfare System. Gradual Reform instead of Shock Treatment*; Zinka Kolarič / Anja Kopač / Tatjana Rakar, *Welfare States in Transition. The Development of the Welfare System in Slovenia*, in: Stefan Dehnert / Maria Stambolieva, eds, *Welfare States in Transition. 20 Years after the Yugoslav Welfare Model*, Sofia 2011, 288–309; Ferge, *Welfare and 'Ill-Fare' Systems in Central-Eastern Europe*; Philipp Ther, *Europe since 1989. A History*, Princeton/NJ, Oxford 2016.

³⁶ Ferge, *Welfare and 'Ill-Fare' Systems in Central-Eastern Europe*; Ther, *Europe since 1989. A History*.

³⁷ Ferge, *Welfare and 'Ill-Fare' Systems in Central-Eastern Europe*.

welfare system and a social-democratic one.³⁸ On the one hand, a compulsory social insurance system, based on social partnership and hence a constitutive element of the conservative-corporate welfare system, became the primary instrument to provide social protection to employees and their family members. On the other hand, the strong public / state sector continued to be the dominant service provider of all types of services to which all citizens are equally entitled. A complementary relationship between the public / state and civil society sectors was also gradually established along with state support for the informal sector. These are distinctive elements of a social-democratic welfare system.³⁹

Similarly, as in genuinely social-democratic welfare systems, the highly developed, comprehensive network of public / state institutions left little space for civil society organisations to develop as service providers in Slovenia. And yet, within their complementary relationship with the public sector, the importance of civil society organisations grew. Their founders were individuals and private legal persons, and the Roman Catholic Church played an important role in the founding of secondary and higher education institutions, pre-school institutions, elderly care facilities, maternity homes, support communities for drug and alcohol addicts, etc. In this way, the part played by the civil society sector gradually strengthened, usually on the basis of concession agreements, i. e., a contract between the state (on the state or local level) and the private profit or nonprofit service provider, outlining the extent and type of services to be provided by the private actor and the cost to the state.⁴⁰ This complemented the offering of public / state sector services in all fields where services were not ensured to a sufficient extent or at a high level of quality. However, the civil society sector did not substitute or replace services that should be provided by public sector / state organisations. The highly developed, comprehensive public sector was viewed as a positive characteristic of the Slovenian welfare system, and here especially can we observe many similarities with the social-democratic welfare system. Yet there is one important difference. In the Scandinavian countries, civil society organisations are well integrated within public policy and are recognised to be vital representatives of civil society interests.⁴¹ Civil

³⁸ Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton/NJ 1990; Kolarič / Kopač / Rakar, *The Slovene Welfare System. Gradual Reform instead of Shock Treatment*; Kolarič / Kopač / Rakar, *Welfare States in Transition*.

³⁹ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*; Steen Bengtsson / Lars Hulgard, *Co-operative Activity and Community Development*, in: Carlo Borzaga / Jacques Defourny, eds, *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*, London, New York/NY, 2001, 65–81.

⁴⁰ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, *Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi*.

⁴¹ Stein Kuhnle / Per Selle, *Government and Voluntary Organisations. A Relational Perspective*, in: Stein Kuhnle / Per Selle, eds, *Government and Voluntary Organisations. A Re-*

dialogue in Slovenia, on the contrary, is underdeveloped, as shown in the next section. The lack of the civil society sector's development in Slovenia, in terms of its income and level of professionalisation, determines its power—or more precisely, its powerlessness—in the civil dialogue taking place in the country.

Civil Dialogue within the Slovenian Welfare System

Though the term 'civil dialogue' is frequently used, especially in political discourse, it has not been clearly defined theoretically. In general, civil dialogue is broadly defined as the dialogue between civil society organisations and state authorities on all governmental levels in terms of their cooperation.⁴² Civil participation in forming policies and making decisions is very important for the legitimisation of government policies. Civil society organisations can represent the interests and voices of citizens in this process.⁴³ In our analysis of the governance role played by civil society organisations within the Slovenian welfare system, civil dialogue is measured by the level and forms of cooperation between civil society organisations and the state and by civil society organisations' influence on government decisions on the state and local levels. We are interested in the frequency and manner in which civil society organisations communicated and cooperated with the government; how often they took the initiative versus how often the government invited them to partner with the state; and in the ways they usually cooperated.

Figure 4 shows how often civil society organisations initiated cooperation with government on the state and local levels. We asked: Do you initiate cooperation between your organisation and local or state authorities? The possible answers were 'often', 'sometimes' and 'never'. As regards civil society organisations' cooperation with the state on the local and state level, the data clearly show that such organisations more frequently offered to cooperate with local government; on the state level, overwhelmingly these organisations rarely ever initiated partnership. However, even on the local level, civil society organisations initiated cooperation with the authorities only occasionally.

Figure 5 shows how often the local and state authorities invited civil society organisations to cooperate. We asked: How often do local and national authorities invite you to cooperate on matters within your areas of activity? Possible answers were 'very often', 'often', 'sometimes' and 'never'. As in the previous

lational Perspective, Aldershot 1992, 1–33.

⁴² Tatjana Rakar / Tomaž Deželan, *Opolnomočenje civilnodružbenih organizacij v Sloveniji, Teorija in praksa* 53, no. 2 (2016), 449–468.

⁴³ Stephen P. Osborne et al., Government/Non-Profit Partnerships, Public Services Delivery and Civil Society in the Transitional Nations of Eastern Europe. Lessons from the Hungarian Experience, *International Journal of Public Administration* 28, no. 9–10 (2005), 767–786.

Fig. 4: The Initiative Taken by Civil Society Organisations to Cooperate with Local and State Authorities (Source: Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji*)

Fig. 5: The Initiative Taken by State and Local Governments to Cooperate with Civil Society Organisations (Source: Kolarič et al., *Nevladne organizacije v Sloveniji*)

case, civil society organisations were mostly invited by the local authorities, and almost never by state officials. However, even on the local level, invitations from the government were infrequent.

In addition, the representatives of civil society organisations were asked about the methods they used in instances where they had initiated cooperation. These organisations most often cooperated with local authorities on the basis of in-person communication, followed by telephone conversation and correspondence by e-mail about a given problem. Other forms of communication and cooperation, such as participation at government meetings, the preparation of additional materials for procedural documents, appeals in the media or the organisation of public platforms and conferences, were significantly less frequent. The most common form of communication with state authorities

was the sending of written materials about a particular problem, followed by telephone and in-person communication. Other forms of communication and cooperation were, as on the local level, not very common. Yet, on the state level, formal forms of communication were used more often than on the local level, where modes of communication were less formal.

These findings make it understandable that, when asked about their presumed influence on government decisions (on local and state levels) in matters regarding their areas of activity, most civil society organisations responded that they have very little influence, and whatever marginal influence they might exert is only on the local level. We asked: 'What is your influence (in your estimation) in the decision-making process on the state and local government level when considering the fields of activities within your domain?' The possible answers were: '1—no influence', '2—very little influence', '3—little influence'; '4—moderate influence', '5—strong influence' and '6—very strong influence'. The average value of estimated influence on the local level was 3.07 and on the state level 2.97, which means the estimation ranged from 'little' to 'very little' influence. Hence, when examined from a civil society sector perspective, our research findings point to the conclusion that Slovenia had a low level of cooperation and communication between civil society organisations and the state: only a modest level of civil dialogue existed during the decade of transition. Moreover, it is striking that the 2005 findings so closely align with those of 1996, indicating that not much changed in a transition period spanning nearly ten years.⁴⁴

In the following, we discuss these findings within the framework of government policies aiming to develop civil dialogue in Slovenia during the transition. In 2003, the Strategy of Cooperation of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia with Nongovernmental Organisations was issued to enhance the formation of precisely such civil dialogue in the country. A document entitled 'Agreement on the Cooperation between Nongovernmental Organisations and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia', prepared by a special negotiation group including representatives of civil society organisations and the government, was supposed to be ratified but, unfortunately, negotiations soon ceased and the agreement was never signed. This failure was the consequence not only of flawed relations between the two parties but also of incoherence and disagreements within the civil society sector itself. According to interviews with representatives of the latter, the signing of the agreement was to be post-independent Slovenia's first attempt to unify civil society sector organisations with the aim of influencing government policies. The government response was to exhaust the civil society organisations. As these organisations

⁴⁴ Kolarič / Črnak-Meglič / Vojnovič, Zasebne neprofitno-volonterske organizacije v mednarodni perspektivi.

themselves pointed out, this approach was an effective means to weaken the civil society sector, because these organisations lacked sufficient resources to dedicate themselves to activities that were not essential to their everyday survival and the implementation of ongoing projects.⁴⁵

We may thus conclude that civil dialogue in Slovenia during the transition period was not well developed, despite some efforts to encourage it. The situation indicates the type of relationship established between the government and civil society organisations, which, according to a typology of government and civil society sector relations, falls within the model of 'separated autonomy', in which there is a small degree of financing and control.⁴⁶ In fact, Slovenia's civil society organisations are relatively independent of the state in these terms. This is because the service role of the country's civil society sector is undeveloped and most organisations are active mainly in the fields of sport and culture. These types depend less on government resources, and the government exerts less control over them than over organisations that provide services. Second, there is not much in the way of communication and contacts: civil dialogue is not very prevalent, which results in a distant relationship between civil society organisations and the government in Slovenia.

Conclusion

We addressed the dilemma between the growth and the development of civil society organisations and the extent of their (lack of) power in Slovenia's welfare system transformation after 1990. In the transition period, the country's civil society sector grew but did not develop. There was an increase in all types of civil society organisations, yet all other parameters we relied on to measure the sector's development remained practically unchanged. During the transition period, the Slovenian welfare system saw the establishment of a relationship of complementarity between the public / state and the civil society sector, yet civil society organisations exercised only a weak influence on public policies regarding the provision of social protection and other contributions to people's welfare.

All the characteristics of civil society organisations' development during Slovenia's transition period remain relevant for an understanding of the characteristics and position of such organisations in the country today. In the last decade, the restructuring of the country's welfare system has continued to strengthen the role of civil society organisations as well as that of other for-profit providers, partly via the contracting out of services based on concession agreements,

⁴⁵ Rakar et al., *Civil Society in Slovenia*; Rakar / Deželan, *Opolnomočenje civilnodružbenih organizacij v Sloveniji*.

⁴⁶ Kuhnle / Selle, eds, *Government and Voluntary Organisations*; Rakar / Deželan, *Opolnomočenje civilnodružbenih organizacij v Sloveniji*.

and partly as for-profit providers in many fields of public services, such as healthcare, education and social services. This trend is consistent with tendencies in other European countries at a time when the role of the welfare state is under review, especially following the economic crisis of 2008 and, now, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020.⁴⁷

There has long been criticism of the efficiency and legitimacy of the welfare state in Slovenia. However, more than the failures of the public sector itself, economic pressures and the ageing population have pushed politicians and the representatives of civil society organisations alike towards the idea of a 'welfare mix'. The essence of this idea is not simply an agreement that sectors should not be regarded as substitutes for each other but should function in a complementary fashion. This conception also involves the possibility of creating and implementing new programmes through the collaboration of two or more actors from different sectors so as to forge a sustainable welfare system, referred to as a social policy by other means.⁴⁸ The central question for the further development of the civil society sector and the entire welfare system in Slovenia should not be how to substitute or replace one sector with another or one principle of social equity with another. Rather, we should ask how to best take advantage of their combined potential. A precondition for success in implementing this principle is a substantial increase in the level of civil dialogue.

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⁴⁷ Peter Taylor-Gooby / Benjamin Leruth / Heejung Chung, eds, *After Austerity. Welfare State Transformation in Europe after the Great Recession*, Oxford 2017; Lars Hulgard, *Social Enterprise and the Third Sector. Innovative Service Delivery or a Non-Capitalist Economy?* in: Jacques Defourny / Lars Hulgard / Victor Pestoff, eds, *Social Enterprise and the Third Sector*, London, New York/NY 2014, 66–84.

⁴⁸ Laura Seelkopf / Peter Starke, *Social Policy by Other Means. Theorizing Unconventional Forms of Welfare Production*, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis. Research and Practice* 21, no. 3 (2009), 219–234, DOI: 10.1080/13876988.2019.1574089.