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SPACE

Socio-Political Alternatives in Central Europe

DOM WYDAWNICZY ELIPSA

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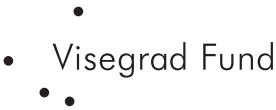

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Abbreviations

LSNS – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (People's Party Our Slovakia)
KDH – Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie (Christian Democratic Movement)
VV – Věci veřejné (Public Affairs)
TOP09 – Tradice Odpovědnost Prosperita 09 (Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 09)
LMP – Lehet Más a Politika (Politics Can Be Different)
RP – Ruch Palikota (Palikot's Movement)
SaS – Sloboda a Solidarita (Freedom and Solidarity)
OĽaNO – Obyčajní *Ľudia* a Nezávislé Osobnosti (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities)
OWS – Occupy Wall Street
PO – Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform)
LP – Lepsza Polska (Better Poland)
ZS – Związek Słowiański (Slavic Association),
PP – Partia Piratów (Pirates Party)
PPiK – Partia Przewoźników i Kierowców (Drivers Party)
PR – Partia Rozwoju (Party for Development)
NWP – Nowa Wizja Polski (New Vision of Poland)
PWO – Partia Wolnych Ojczyzn (Free Homelands Party)
KFP – Partia Krajowe Forum Przedsiębiorczości (National Entrepreneurship Party)
ANO 2011 – Akce Nespokojených Občanů 2011 (Action of not Satisfied Citizens 2011)
ODS – Občanská Demokratická Strana (The Civic Democratic Party)
ČSSD – Česká Strana Sociálně Demokratická (Czech Social Democratic Party)
LIDEM – Liberální demokraté. (Liberal Democrats)
RAS – Ruch Autonomii Śląska (Silesian Autonomy Movement)
PiS – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)
LiD – Lewica i Demokraci (Left and Democrats)
SLD – Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance)
PSL – Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Party)
EFA – European Free Alliance
PNV – Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party)

Introduction

Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik
Dominika Kasprowicz

The year 2014 has been a time to sum up and review 25 years of social, economic, and political transformation in the CE. In this context significant attention has been paid to a) the condition of civil society and state institutions and b) the relationship between them. Evaluation of both remains ambivalent as regularly conducted research reveals an image of a quarrelsome society, with a low degree of social capital which is marred by low quality and ineffective traditional institutions. These indicators are typical of a world of post-politics, post-democracy, and post-ideology. In the world of "post" the end of traditional agreements between society and the world of politics is accompanied by the foundation of new, often synergic enterprises, functioning on the (faint) boundary of "the social" and "the political". In this context political parties, which are the traditional vehicles of representative democracies, have been seriously challenged by various initiatives which attempt to supplement or even replace their functions. In this volume these phenomena are referred to as socio-political alternatives (SPACE – Socio-political Alternatives in Central Europe).

In this volume several case studies from around the region are presented as heralds of what Rancière has called "the end and the comeback of politics in one". They are ventures that use the new space in relationships between authorities and citizens, offering a more or less real alternative to traditional mediators, especially political parties. What is important is the fact that they take on different forms and mark

their presence in the countries of our region not only on the eve of the elections but also in the 'political' meantime.

The volume itself is a summary of the first phase of the SPACE project (Socio-political Alternatives in the CE) conducted at the Department of Political Science, Pedagogical University of Krakow and its interdisciplinary seminar that took place in December 2013 thanks to the financial support of the Visegrad Fund and Pedagogical University of Krakow. Our collaborators and co-authors of this publication are: Professor Andrea Petó and Zoltán Vasali PhD from CEU Budapest, Professor Olga Gyárfášová from Comenius University Bratislava, Agnieszka Hess PhD from the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Mario Rodríguez Polo PhD from Palacky University Olomouc, Michal Vit Fellow of Leipzig University, Wojciech Przybylski the Editor in Chief of Res Publica Nowa and Visegrad Insight magazines and Łukasz Zweiffel PhD from Pedagogical University in Kraków.

The main aim of this volume is to offer an alternative perspective on the political processes throughout the region, a perspective that includes alternatives to the mainstream actors and thereby fill in a niche in existing social science research. There are a number of legitimate reasons for the negligence of this particular research area. The two that stand out are the organizational diversity of the alternative actors and the ambivalent role they play in the political game. They are the subjects of research as separate actors, either functioning in politics or in the sphere of civil society, but not as a specific group of actors which, in their activity, unite both dimensions.

Keeping that in mind, editors of this volume decided on a case study approach that enables in-depth analysis of the wide variety of these entities, whose common feature is the active role played in the political process that goes beyond the roles traditionally ascribed to interest groups. Subsequent chapters deliver empirical data on several SPACE organizations including anti-party parties, social movements, NGO actors as well as non formal organizations in the four Visegrad countries. Readers will also have the chance to get to know different scientific perspectives – from historical to sociological and from anthropological to political science.

The most obvious scenario for creating an alternative to the political establishment includes the foundation of new political parties. Usually

they are populists and quite often, once they acquire positions of power, they cease to exist. When compared to the consolidated democracies Central and Eastern Europe is specific in this aspect as populist parties, based on criticism of those in power, have entered parliaments and have not disappeared but have survived to become lasting elements of the political landscape. In practice it is difficult to consider parties that mix anti-establishment slogans, demagogy and leader charisma which have become part of mainstream politics, as alternative. There are however other 'alternatives' as in Central Europe we are faced with the phenomenon of parties presenting themselves as alternative parties yet denying the party organizational or programmatic formula, they are rather anti-parties or quasi-parties. They are described in chapters on Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

In 2012 the Slovak elections were dominated by party alternatives as most of the twenty-six registered committees were completely new or newly-created (as a result of a breakup or rebranding). Among them OĽaNO (Ordinary People, Independent Personalities) stands out as a quasi-party that has achieved 8.6% of the vote to become the second biggest opposition party. The group built its platform on the complete denial of the traditional political party formula. The first visible sign of this protest was the (unsuccessful) attempt to change the election law to permit both organizations and individual candidates to compete in elections. On their electoral list, which was headed by four former liberal politicians, there were many people from different backgrounds with divergent views who mobilized voters during a highly personalized campaign. The anti-party formula in this case meant neither a party structure nor a coherent political programme. The emphasis was put on direct communication with their voters, who are also a heterogeneous group but united in a dislike of "corrupted elites" and non-transparent policies. Anti-party alternative seems to attract voters, especially younger voters, of a larger group of those discouraged by politics. It is worth noting that they do not constitute a negative electorate but are rather a group expressing protest through the ballot box even at the cost of giving their vote to organizational and programmatic ephemera.

A similar phenomenon is described in the chapter by Michal Vit who writes about ANO 2011 (Action of Non Satisfied Citizens) and Úsvit (Dawn of Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura) that are active in the

Czech Republic. Another example of quasi-parties is described in the chapter by Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik and Dominika Kasprowicz. Alternatively called political plankton, these are officially listed in the register of political parties yet they function de facto outside of the electoral and party system. These associations, trade unions, and informal organizations have transformed themselves into political parties seeing the change as a "necessary evil." For them, being a party is not an objective in its own right, but an additional asset enabling better realization of the group's interests. Such is the case of Związek Słowiański (Slavic Union), Elektorat (Electorate), and Lepsza Polska (Better Poland), to name just a few. Although they remain (deliberately) in the shadow of parliamentary politics and are not financed from the state budget, once they pass the formal registration threshold they gain media publicity, a better position in relation to state institutions and professionalise their internal structures. They act locally and the political party formula gives them the chance to improve their efficiency. To a limited extent such quasi-parties fill the gap between society and the state. Their existence is also quite telling when it comes to the condition of the two sectors.

Global trends, although present in the region, have their own dynamic which is influenced by the domestic social and political context. This aspect was explored by Andrea Petö and Zoltán Vasali in their study on Hungary over the last decade. In Budapest, demands to increase the scope of civic control of state institutions or the financial sector had already appeared before the memorable year of 2011. This was a leitmotif of alter-globalist and pro-environmental protests. Although they had made their presence known in public debate before the 2005 elections and continued to be active in 2011–2013, they did not provoke wider discussion nor did they turn into a civic movement. It is worth mentioning that the second wave of the 'Outrage!' movement activity in Hungary was primarily concerned about the situation of Hungarian borrowers who were indebted in foreign currencies. An interesting fact is that, in the specific national context that is dominated by the Christian Right and its radical allies, this subject was taken up by the authorities and became one of the crucial themes of Viktor Orbán's political campaign. Orbán presented foreign financial institutions as the main culprits responsible for the difficult position of more than a million households. This popular subject thus found itself at the centre of political processes, but its application was in denial of

the ideology of its makers, turning media attention away from them and weakening their credibility.

Equally interesting is the example of the Czech initiative Occupy Olomouc which is presented in an anthropologically informed study by Mario R. Polo. A group of activists carried out a project "regaining" a space for public dialogue and for initiating discussion on politics, the economy, and social policies from October 2011 to May 2012. In this case "regaining" was also real in a physical sense as the activities took place in the main square in Olomouc. The square near the clock tower was to be filled by passers-by who were encouraged to take part in discussion. The performance did not gain the recognition of public opinion as, at its peak, only thirty people participated and the admirable efforts of the organizers did not bring about the anticipated results. They were met with reactions ranging from astonishment to outrage. Criticism was directed chiefly at the subject and the form of the performance as well as the physical occupation of part of the urban space. The attempt to persuade people to take part in discussions on important matters and to integrate in the open air was received with distrust and reluctance. All these aspects were considered "strange," "unnecessary," and "inappropriate for the Czech context," and the organizers were advised to use a more official formula, for example a political party. Of course, Occupy Olomouc is just one example of the creation of a socio-political alternative in the Czech Republic. However it is especially interesting in that it perfectly illustrates the problem of citizens' dependency on political parties as institutions and on on certain other third sector organizations that are perceived as having some sort of oligopoly in representing the mass interest.

Social subjects that enter actively into the sphere of politics include non-governmental, especially civic, organizations. An interesting and comprehensive study in that regard has been authored by Agnieszka Hess who follows the Polish NGOs and by Wojciech Przybylski who focuses on urban movements. They are organisations that draw in people and are usually made up of active social workers. What characterises them are strong bonds among their members and identification with the targets and subjects touched on in the public sphere. The consequences of the transfer of social capital to the political sphere are as yet ambivalent, especially when it comes to the placement of social activists or whole

organizations within the electoral and parliamentary realm. Entering the world of politics is tempting; it creates numerous possibilities for boosting effectiveness such as direct influence on the legislative process, budget financing and getting media attention. On the other hand, as many initiatives from Central Europe show in practice, this transfer plants the organizations and social initiatives in an unknown, unfriendly ground and undermines their trustworthiness. In the new context their original postulates, stemming from their disagreement with institutionalised parties and the political status quo, risks losing credibility.

This variant may be represented by the Hungarian movement *Milla* (Million for the Liberty of Speech), which started in 2010 as a Facebook fan page. *Milla* became a channel for voicing negative reactions to Orbán's restrictive politics toward the media, for violation of the principle of separation of powers and nontransparent decision-making processes in the highest circles of power. According to the aspirations of its creators the movement was to develop into an independent think-tank backed by wide social support. Its role would not be limited to control functions but would also aim to impact the political sphere. As reported by commentators, these decisions were made in the first stage of the movement's activity but social support began to fade when the leaders decided to redirect this social capital into the realm of politics. The status and the fate of *Milla* are now uncertain as the organization has become part of the emerging coalition of the dis-united opposition movements (*Együtt-PM*).

Yet the most interesting when it comes to social alternatives to politics are more distanced subjects who transgress the border between civil society and state institutions. Most of these elaborate on civil society in their programmes, diagnose the current state of the country and society and define challenges for government. Moreover, these organizations strive to voice their interests in the sphere of politics or by lobbying in state institutions, all in the interest of society or of certain groups. These social actors often embark on significant political activities which may take the form of a direct presence in elections (having candidates on party lists) or participation in advisory and consulting roles.

The Polish Congress of Women (Kongres Kobiet), which from the beginning of its existence has displayed strong political connections characteristic of a party, might be an example of such an actor and is

described in the chapter by K. Sobolewska-Myślik and D. Kasprowicz. The association was founded in 2009 with, as one of its most accentuated postulates, the inclusion of women in party candidate lists. This demand was undoubtedly of a political nature and was directed at a relatively broad target which included political parties of all types as well as the ruling class of the time. A meeting held in Warsaw in June 2013 brought about the announcement of the creation of a Political Advisory Board (Rada Polityczna) to promote the inclusion of women in party candidate lists. The idea of forming political party was also discussed. Nevertheless, for the moment, the Congress has not set about forming a party 'limiting' itself to presenting its candidates on the party list of the coalition Europe Plus Your Move (Europa Plus Twój Ruch). The political postulates will therefore continue to emerge among other goals taken up by the association. In the SPACE perspective the Congress of Women is an example of a social organization, with a broad spectrum of interests, whose activity in the political sphere has been a crucial issue from the beginning. What is more the association partly won the battle for a gender quota on party lists. This has shown that a social actor who not only postulates, but also proposes solutions, can permanently change the political context. Thus Congress influence, apart from affecting the realm of social life, advances the development of rigid party structures in a "top-down" manner.

Sobolewska-Myślik and Kasprowicz describe yet another example, the well known Polish trade Union Solidarność, both in its historic role of a social movement active in the politics of transition as well as its contemporary attempts to influence politics in a manner that is characteristic of political parties but without taking their form. Łukasz Zweiffel analyses RAŚ (Movement for Autonomy of Silesia), an association which engages in politics but without the "political form" of a regular party.

The sphere in which traditional political institutions and social interests meet, is full of such new initiatives. In the now not-so-new democracies they are symbols of a new configuration of the political sphere which is in the process of being shaped – an emerging configuration of which mainstream politicians are seldom conscious.

Chapter 1

Political Alternatives in Central and Eastern Europe: A Polish Case

Dominika Kasprowicz and Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik
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Introduction

Academic discussion around political parties and their environment in the 21st century is dominated by the theory of post-democracy perceived as a system dominated by *corporatist arrangements* in the decision-making process and the dominating powers being an *unholy trinity* of interest groups, circles of experts and political elites (Crouch 2004, p. 93). One of the most frequently asked questions in this context is whether there is a diminishing role for parties as intermediaries in the democratic process. It stresses the necessity to revise and re-conceptualize party politics and a need to take a closer look at the (changing) relations between established parties and their environment and possible alternative organizations that can enter the political field and share or take over roles that are traditionally ascribed to those established parties (Hug 2001).

A growing number of researchers, who have recently been proposing a return to more systematic research on the process of mediation between social groups and political systems, share an interest in the 'overlap area'. The organizations within civil society are becoming a particularly interesting element of this puzzle and a central point of study.

In this chapter the authors present three different types of Polish organizations (SPACE – Socio-Political Alternatives in Central Europe), whose common denominator is an active alternative to party politics as