

# LEADERSHIP AND URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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## Abstract

There had been many changes in the civil society in the Czech Republic during last 25 years. A discussion concerning partnership principle and participation of the civil society organisations (CSOs) in the political decision-making comes to the fore during recent years.

The aim of our study is to find out how are politicians rooted in the civil society and what impact it has on re-election of politicians and on development of the region/municipality. A relationship between activity of CSOs, political representation and local development were tested. The main research questions were, whether local politicians are rooted in the civil society more successful than other politicians and whether local political elites are able to influence the aim of the EU Cohesion Policy?

The research was conducted in Prague where one election for the whole city and 57 elections in districts take place every four years. We have data about who was a candidate and who was elected in each election. More detailed information about candidates was obtained by questionnaire survey. Obtained data were compared with the implemented policies in individual municipalities.

**Key words:** Leadership, Regional development, NGOs, Politics

**JEL Code:** D72, L31, H70

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## Introduction

The political parties became disconnected from civil society and more in a role of brokers between civil society and the state. As Mair (1997) points out, political parties grown out of the civil society during the second half of the 19th century. Than the industrialization and urbanization process caused changes in roles of political parties and civil society which lost importance in political decision-making.

The Czech society witnessed political, economic and social transition during the 1990s. It also concerned role of the civil society organisations' role in the society and political decision-making. The expectations of the civil society organisations were high, but not fully met by public sphere (see Harvey 2004 for the EU Cohesion Policy preparation in Central Europe).

Although representatives of the civil society played an important role in starting the social change, civil society organizations as a whole, however have not acquired a strong influence on later political events. Paradoxically, one of the main signs of newly established civil society was membership in new democratic political parties in the Czech Republic at the beginning of 1990s.

Moreover, according to Laboutková (2009), Czech politicians opposed the participation of civil society in political decision-making. Indeed, some politicians viewed the civil society as competitors. There was similar situation also in democratically developed countries such as in the UK (Bache and Chapman, 2008).

The overall situation of the Czech civil society organisation is at an approximately similar level during the last few years although the situation of similar organisations in other Central European countries worsens (see the graph 1 for the civil society sustainability index based on legal, organizational, financial, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure and public image of the civil society organizations.). It worsened after the Czech Republic's accession into the European Union.

**Fig. 1: Development of the civil society sustainability**



Resource: USAID (2012), own calculations; 1 = the highest sustainability; 7 = the worst sustainability

The partnership is a tool to increase democratization of policy implementation and accountability. It covers cooperation among public sector, civil society and private companies. The democratization of a process in the case of the EU Cohesion Policy is described in Bache and Olsson (2001).

Positive effects of partnership at the local level are confirmed by a study Potluka and Liddle (2014) in the case of the Czech projects funded by the European Social Fund.

Main concern of scientific studies is on EU or national level. Thus the local level is omitted from this perspective. We study the research question whether are the politicians at the local level rooted in civil society. We have chosen Prague's local political representation after the 2010 local election as a case of the capital of a counter after transition.

The paper is organised as follows. Firstly, we introduce the system of local elections in Prague, than a chapter on data and methodology follows. Third chapter covers results and discussion. The last part concludes.

## 1 Local election in Prague

Prague is a capital city of the Czech Republic. Prague has approximately 1,3 million inhabitants. The city is divided to 57 city districts which differ in size and number of inhabitants. The largest one has more than 130 thousands inhabitants and the smallest one just about 300.

There were 58 elections (57 districts plus Prague as a whole city). The Czech local election system enables local governments to decide within the legal framework how many seats will be held in the following election period. Local governments may also divide city district to several election districts. The election system applies d'Hondt system of calculation of votes to seats. It enables to make a better position for these political parties with higher share of votes. Just 8 districts actually used this possible advantage.

**Tab. 1: Number of mandates according to the number of inhabitants**

| Inhabitants      | Seats   |
|------------------|---------|
| <500             | 5 - 15  |
| 500 - 3 000      | 7 - 15  |
| 3 000 - 10 000   | 11 - 25 |
| 10 000 - 50 000  | 15 - 35 |
| 50 000 - 150 000 | 25 - 45 |

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| 150 000 > | 35 - 55 |
|-----------|---------|

Source: Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on municipalities, § 68

According our calculations using data from Czech Statistical Office (2014) the mean of number of candidates standing for seats in all local elections in Prague 2010 is 7.25. The strongest competition was in the case of the whole city of Prague as it has different competencies. There were 17.05 candidates standing for one seat in Prague (total number of seats is 63). The same number of candidates as seats appeared in three districts (thus the candidates were sure about gain of a seat).

## 2 Data and Methodology

The aim of the study is to evaluate an interconnection between political representatives and civil society. The research was set up to find out how are politicians rooted in the civil society measured by their membership and/or leading positions in CSOs and what impact it has on their election. The research also dealt with the possibility of divergent views of different groups of candidates on the various issue at the local level such as market regulations in the economy, environmental protection, culture, social justice, education, participation of citizens on political-decision making, etc. Respondents were also categorized by gender, by affiliation to a particular political party and by the size of the council to which they candidate.

Data was collected through a survey among candidates, regardless of whether they were successful or not, in municipal elections in Prague in 2010. List of candidates was obtained from the website of the Czech Statistical Office.

An electronic questionnaire was created for this purpose. There were two different ways of distribution of the questionnaire among respondents. At first, secretariats of political parties were contacted with a request to distribute a questionnaire among their members. Secondly, a questionnaire was sent directly to individual candidates to whom an email contact can be found. We managed to get back 205<sup>1</sup> responses.

The data sample includes answers from 122 successful candidates and 83 unsuccessful candidates in the elections. According to the distribution of gender 157 men and 48 women participated in the survey. Three quarters of respondents belonged to 8 main Czech political parties and remaining respondents represented members of local parties or independent

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<sup>1</sup> We received 205 filled questionnaires but two respondents did not fill their political affiliation.

candidates. Obtained responses from the candidates came from 43 different Prague election districts.

Pearson's Chi-square test was used to find out statistical relationship between selected answers. Calculations were performed using SPSS software. The results are presented hereinafter.

### 3 Results and discussion

Results show that attitudes to policies are changing with moving from the national to the local level. On the one hand the free market economy is supported by majority of respondents at national level. On the other hand those who support this idea at national level see social justice as well as the as welfare state policies important issues at local level.

**Tab. 2: Relationship between questions: Do you support the idea of free market? \* Do you see social justice as an important issue at the local level?**

|  |             | Do you see social justice as an important issue at the local level? |             |    |            | Total |
|--|-------------|---|-------------|----|------------|-------|
|  |             | Yes   | Yes, partly | No | No, partly |       |
| <b>Do you support the idea of free market?</b> | Yes         | 44  | 27          | 6  | 26         | 103   |
|  | Yes, partly | 53  | 21          | 3  | 7          | 84    |
|  | No          | 4   | 1           | 0  | 0          | 5     |
|  | No, partly  | 11  | 2           | 0  | 0          | 13    |
| Total  |             | 112   | 51          | 9  | 33         | 205   |

| Chi-Square Tests   | Value               | Degrees of Freedom | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 19.894 <sup>a</sup> | 9                  | 0.019                 |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 23.288              | 9                  | 0.006                 |
| N of Valid Cases   | 205                 |                    |                       |

<sup>a</sup> 9 cells (56.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.22.

Source: Own calculations

Analogically, there is the significant relationship between those who positively respond to question about necessity of market regulations in the economy and those who considered welfare state policies and social justice as important issues.

**Tab. 3: Relationship between questions: Do you support the idea of free market? \* Do you see welfare state policies as an important issue at the local level?**

|  |             | Do you see welfare state policies as an important issue at the local level? |             |    |            | Total |
|--|-------------|---|-------------|----|------------|-------|
|  |             | Yes   | Yes, partly | No | No, partly |       |
| <b>Do you support the idea of free market?</b> | Yes         | 32  | 26          | 9  | 36         | 103   |
|  | Yes, partly | 46  | 21          | 6  | 11         | 84    |
|  | No          | 4   | 0           | 0  | 1          | 5     |
|  | No, partly  | 10  | 3           | 0  | 0          | 13    |
| Total  |             | 92  | 50          | 15 | 48         | 205   |

| Chi-Square Tests   | Value               | Degrees of Freedom | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 26.176 <sup>a</sup> | 9                  | 0.002                 |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 31.316              | 9                  | 0.000                 |
| N of Valid Cases   | 205                 |                    |                       |

<sup>a</sup> 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.37.

Source: Own calculations

The vast majority of responding politicians across the political scale said that they promote participation of citizens on political-decision making.

The majority (126) of politicians are members of any CSO. Almost one quarter of respondents is a member of the board of directors or directors of any CSO. It means that approximately one third of respondents who are members of CSOs are in leading positions of these organizations. Detailed results are shown in the Tab. 4.

**Tab. 4: Relationship between questions: Are you a member of any CSO? \* Are you a member of the board of directors or director of any CSO?**

|                                     |     | Are you a member of the board of directors or director of any CSO? |     | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--|-----|-------|
|                                     |     | Yes  | No  |       |
| <b>Are you a member of any CSO?</b> | Yes | 44   | 82  | 126   |
|                                     | No  | 6  | 73  | 79    |
| Total                               |     | 50   | 155 | 205   |

| Chi-Square Tests                   | Value               | Degrees of Freedom | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square                 | 19.660 <sup>a</sup> | 1                  | 0.000                 |                      |                      |
| Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup> | 18.207              | 1                  | 0.000                 |                      |                      |
| Likelihood Ratio                   | 22.273              | 1                  | 0.000                 |                      |                      |
| Fisher's Exact Test                |                     |                    |                       | 0.000                | 0.000                |
| N of Valid Cases                   | 205                 |                    |                       |                      |                      |

<sup>a</sup> 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.27.

<sup>b</sup> Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Own calculations

Results do not vary according different political parties neither by gender. The statistical chi-square test does not prove that some political parties are far from the civil society. In all cases of the political parties are members of the board of any CSO or even are in a role of an executive director.

**Tab. 5: Relationship between questions: Political parties \* Are you a member of the board of directors or director of any CSO?**

|   | Are you a member of the board of directors or director of any CSO? |     | Total |
|---|--|-----|-------|
|   | Yes  | No  |       |
| Other political parties   | 1  | 3   | 4     |
| Green Party   | 3  | 14  | 17    |
| Czech Social Democratic Party                                   | 8  | 25  | 33    |
| Christian and Democratic Union –<br>Czechoslovak People's Party | 3  | 9   | 12    |
| <b>Political parties</b> TOP 09                                 | 7  | 27  | 34    |
| Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia                          | 2  | 10  | 12    |
| Public Affairs  | 2  | 6   | 8     |
| Civic Democratic Party  | 10   | 26  | 36    |
| The Free Citizens Party   | 2  | 1   | 3     |
| Independent or local candidates                                 | 12   | 32  | 44    |
| Total   | 50   | 153 | 203   |

| Chi-Square Tests   | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 4.373 <sup>a</sup> | 9  | 0.885                 |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 3.943              | 9  | 0.915                 |
| N of Valid Cases   | 203                |    |                       |

<sup>a</sup> 8 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.74.

Source: Own calculations

However, further tests did not demonstrate any significant relationship between membership in any CSO and a success of candidates in elections. As well as there is no significant effect of success in elections and participation in leading position of CSOs.

## Conclusion

Politicians apply less ideological approaches to local policies than to national ones. Local politicians see the local level more close to them and willing to solve local problems even on costs of the national policies.

Local politicians do not differ in their active participation in civil society organisations across political scale. It means that the local political representatives are rooted in civil society. On the other there is no effect of participation in any civil society organization on the success in elections.

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