

CONCLUSIONS

DIAGNOSIS OF THE STATE OF LITHUANIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

The present study was aimed at examining the potential of the Lithuanian civil society and at determining what impedes its development. Each chapter of this book attempts to define the obstacles which hinder the emergence of a society capable of controlling government and of collective action in pursuit of common well-being. Through the analysis of collected data we looked for intrinsic resources of ‘civic-ness’ which lie within the society - resources still scarcely used, but giving hope for growth and abundance, whose coming true depends on the efforts of all actors within the civil society to use the powers in their hands more frequently, and this is where the name of the study ‘Undiscovered power’ came from. In the conclusion of the study results we intend to provide a general review of the state of the Lithuanian civil society in an attempt to answer the question of what we should do to prompt more proactive involvement of Lithuanian society in the country’s political and social processes.

We will start the conclusions of the book from diagnosing public ‘diseases’, i.e. identifying the obstacles revealed by the data from our quantitative and qualitative research. This will be followed by the positive trends discovered in the course of our study which justify an optimistic approach. Finally, we will provide proposals arising from the research on how to develop the existing civic potential and to eliminate the impeding barriers.

Symptoms and causes of civil disability

Should the state of the civil society in Lithuania be defined in just a few words, it could be characterised as follows: Lithuanian society is suffering from the syndrome of impotence. That is to say, the most severe civil disability which hinders the development of civic initiatives in Lithuania is the society’s prevailing disbelief that citizens’ collective action can make a difference or help achieve significant outcomes. On the one hand, this attitude often has realistic grounds: In many instances, affecting decisions of government (even local) authorities is indeed extremely complicated owing to insufficient mechanisms for citizens to influence the government or to implement their initiatives. On the other hand,

this attitude of civic impotence is normally not based on the actual experience of involvement in civic action, in other words, it is a somewhat 'self-fulfilling' myth. This, we may say, leads to a 'vicious circle' when, in disbelief in their forces, people refrain from taking civic action and consequently have no opportunities to experience their citizens' power or to alter their attitudes.

Barriers to involvement in civic action could be overcome through associating with neighbours, friends, acquaintances and other fellow citizens for joint activity. Collective action through formal organisations or informal networks in Lithuania is still extremely scarce. So is citizen political involvement: There has been a dramatic decline in citizen electoral participation, while protest campaigns have been conceived as the last resort to be opted for only in the event of significant deterioration of living conditions or of a threat to the existing political regime. People feel dissatisfied with the government, but are not prepared to take any political action to change the situation. What prevents them from banding together and acting for common benefit?

As the analysis of the 'micro-model' of collective action, the communal activity of town x, shows, there are three crucial prerequisites for successful collective action: 1) open and broad social networks, 2) communal solidarity-based attitudes and norms of civic involvement, and 3) functioning public sphere for public and constructive discussion on common matters. Existence of these three prerequisites could enable effective civic action both on the local community and on the national level. Unfortunately, in all three areas we found rather substantial challenges which impeded development of the civil society's potential.

Civic engagement networks

The vitality of social networks in Lithuania, as research shows, varies from location to location. The residential area in Vilnius that was the subject of our research can hardly boast relations based on neighbourhood and solidarity traditions. The increasing mobility of urban population hinders formation of their communal relations with prevailing social alienation and prospering free-riding practices. In a small traditional-type community communal relations are much stronger, although rather narrow and closed: Socialising is

mostly focused on relatives and the closest neighbours, which is insufficient for mobilization on at least a somewhat broader scale. As a matter of fact, in both urban and rural areas civic activity is most successful through formal non-governmental organisations. Formal civic engagement networks in Lithuania, however, are still weak and sparse.

Although the number of non-governmental organisations has been constantly rising, the proportion of the population involved in their activities is nearly stable. According to research data, voluntary activity has actually experienced no development at all: Population involvement in voluntary activities without belonging to any organisation is a particularly rare phenomenon, which supports the fact that traditions of devoting time or money to specific public activity have been weak to date. This is conditioned by factors related to both population attitudes and by the activities of voluntary organisations.

The majority of the population are not involved in voluntary organisations and are not interested in their activities: People are aware of neither the organisations as such, nor what they do, their principles of activity and possibilities, their ways of receiving financial or other kinds of support, or of their differences from other institutions or companies. On the one hand, this is associated with the experience of ‘voluntarily compulsory’ participation rooting from the Soviet times in the then structures of limited choice. On the other hand, it is determined by the characteristic features of the non-governmental sector: The results from activities of citizen organisations are unknown and invisible to the majority of the population, which encumbers their ability to appreciate the benefits of those formations. The insufficient focus of non-governmental organisations on public relations and weak coverage of this sector in the media further restrain the opportunity to communicate their activities to broader circles rather than only to organisation members.

With regard to other organisations’ features which impede development of volunteering it should be noted that organisations are rather closed, uniting a small number of members with similar interests, making too little effort to involve new members, to develop a wider range of and non-traditional forms of activity and to represent more diverse interests of citizens. Furthermore, the study outcomes lead to the conclusion that the introduction of the new procedure for the registration of legal entities has conditioned slower development of the non-governmental organisation sector observed in recent years, for instance, in 2005 substantially fewer organisations were registered as compared to 2004. At

the same time, attention should be drawn to the lacking position of government authorities in reinforcing the activities of voluntary organisations and to their declared rather than actual support to the non-governmental sector.

Dispositions of communal solidarity and norms of civic involvement

One of the crucial barriers to the overall development of public organisations and of the civil society is the somewhat fragile norms of involvement in civic activity witnessed by Lithuanian society. People are embarrassed to join civic or political activity uninvited, be its different forms related to formal civic organisations or informal groups, without daring to express their position on political and social matters in public. Those not involved in civic activity are not ‘punished’ with social sanctions. As a matter of fact, it is the other way round: Non-participation is the ‘norm’, while involvement in any kind of civic activity is considered unusual and deviant behaviour. Furthermore, collective action is restrained by the fact that Lithuania lacks conventional behaviour patterns for this activity and specific traditional behaviour models of collective action ‘inherited’ from the past, which could serve as normative guidelines to facilitate the current activity.

Another barrier to citizen co-operation and association for collective action is the society’s dominant culture of distrust, the increasing trends of intolerance for ‘alien’ cultures and weak solidarity of the population. Distrust in the majority of fellow citizens, suspicion towards people who lead different lifestyles, and poor concern about collective wellbeing, in turn, reinforce people’s dependence on the government and their feeling of disability to make a difference in their own or their community’s lives.

Another important value-based prerequisite for collective action is the level of the society’s political self-awareness. When analysing the ‘micro-models’ of civic activity, the community in a provincial town and the community of a metropolitan residential building, we saw in what way the potential of collective activity depends on the level of communal identity associated with a specific social group. Only the community whose members are united by the feeling of alliance and by the sense of collective identity has the potential to act for common benefit rather than for particularistic interests. The assumption for civic action on the national scale is the high level of political self-awareness and patriotism. The study

has shown, however, that patriotism in Lithuanian society has been declining. The underlying reasons which explain this trend are the disillusionment with the work of public authorities and with politicians' behaviour, the society's prevailing social alienation and people's discontent with their living conditions.

The analysis on the alternation of civil values has revealed particularly vivid value changes between generations. The civic and political involvement of young people roots from selfish utilitarian motives with all but weak impact of moral and ethical factors. The feeling of moral duty, compassion and solidarity appear to be rarer motives for young people's involvement in civic activities as compared to the personal benefits and the satisfaction gained. This, in turn, limits the engagement of those individuals into communal activity and political organisations and conditions their passive participation in elections and poor support to the political community: For the young generation the question 'what could I do for the society's benefit?' is less important than the question 'what does the society give me?'.

Public spheres

Apart from the already discussed civic engagement networks and civic values, the third prerequisite for civic action is the existence of a functional public sphere and of practices to discuss public matters. The population's face-to-face discussions on politics serves as the environment to develop the capacity of political reasoning, one of the major capacities under the conditions of contemporary society, which is characterised by the diversity of population opinions, views, values and lifestyles. Data from the conducted research, however, raise doubts whether those face-to-face conversations about politics in our society teach the population political reasoning. One of the factors which downgrades the value of such discussions is that they take place between individuals closely bound to each other, who therefore avoid discussing political matters in fear of harming their cherished ties. For this reason face-to-face political conversations become the public space which is harder and harder to access, when it seems that you no longer have a single acquaintance, neighbour or friend that you would not avoid to discuss political issues or even have a lively argument with. Another factor which impedes the development of the public sphere is the shortage of

physical spaces with the capacity to generate a public space to consider and discuss common matters, and this factor applies to both rural and urban areas.

The lack of interpersonal public discussions in contemporary society could be compensated by the civic media. However, as various data show, this is one of the weakest links of the civil society in Lithuania. The population spends a lot of time watching television, but only a small portion reads newspapers or other periodicals as part of their daily routine. The fragmented, entertainment- and personality-oriented political information presented on television hardly creates preconditions for the development of civic literacy, i.e. of the interest and the skills to comprehend political life and to participate in politics.

Low readership of newspapers is determined not only by economic factors (still low income of the majority of the population), but also by the incapacity of newspapers to offer high-quality, valuable and exclusive information which would be unavailable through other media channels. People do not consider newspapers that attractive and valuable to spend money on. Therefore, despite the increases in the population's average income, the country has witnessed no growth in the numbers of readers and subscribers for newspapers and other periodicals.

Lithuanian media (both television and newspapers) faces many quality problems, which are noticed by not only media critics and researchers, but also ordinary citizens. The media hardly performs its functions within a democracy: To impartially observe and scrutinize political life, to help citizens gain a reasonable picture of the alternatives they have and to develop civic literacy. The dominating negative coverage of events and insufficient analysis provide no alternatives for corrupt politicians, who look out for their own good, nor the opportunity to notice positive action or change, nor do they reveal solutions to problems. This supports the previously mentioned sense of impotence and stimulates passiveness with the negative features of political life being presented as objective 'laws'. Furthermore, this is how the renewal of the elite is hindered since this attitude of the media makes it very cumbersome for political actors to preserve standing, which, in turn, restrains engagement of new players into the public life.

Although the media itself explains such attitudes and modes of action by its focus on the needs of the audience, the data from our study allow us to claim that this is a myth constructed by the media itself. Refusing to acknowledge the audience's potential and to

engage in its development, the media creates a vicious circle and proceeds with ‘stupifying’ the audience. The prevalent practice of hidden advertising enables the further disregard for the audience’s needs and expectations, whereas high concentration in the dailies market impedes the entry of new actors. The local press offers diverse levels of quality, but most of it faces the same problems. One of the alternatives for traditional press and television is the Internet media, however, owing to the still comparatively low scale of Internet usage, it cannot serve as an alternative source of political information for the majority of the population.

All these challenges – the underdeveloped civil engagement networks, fragile civil values and the non-functioning public space – are interrelated and interacting. The absence of dense and open social networks excludes a functioning public discussion, whereas the absence of public discussion on common matters and of value-based solidarity disables any collective action for common benefit. The incapacity to associate conditions the prevailing self-supporting attitude of civic impotence, which, in turn, presents the extra-favourable soil for the spread of alienation between society and the state. This results in the uncontrolled and therefore poorly operating government on the one hand and the increasing need for a strong leader’s rule, which, although not argued to show people’s direct inclination towards authoritarian rule, can yet be easily used to justify restraints to democracy, on the other.

The potential of civil society

Another issue of our concern is where and how much potential to develop civic activities currently lies in Lithuanian society? Where are the ‘viable sprouts of the civil society’, which give hope for the development of the civil society in Lithuania? We raised these questions in the hope to locate the civic resources, which, although not having been used to the full to date, could become an important starting point for the reinforcement of the civil society’s powers. And, indeed, the research shows that Lithuanian society is not as weak and indifferent to public matters and to its country’s fate as it is normally assumed.

We can start with the observation that in the last decade the number of non-governmental organisations has been constantly rising, which means that quite many people

in the society start exercising their right to associate guaranteed by the Lithuanian Constitution. The civil upheaval of the population in the rural areas and small towns for the last couple of years has been evidenced by the tenfold boost of local community organisations in 2001, which can be viewed as the commencing movement of organisations in the rural communities. As the analysis on the motivation of members at non-governmental organisations shows, the reasons for volunteering which are relevant to a significant portion of activists at public organisations include the objective to influence the country's social and political processes and the ambition to contribute in addressing the challenges faced by the local municipality. This kind of motivation, in turn, is one of the prerequisites which enables non-governmental organisations to impact public policy. The society's potential for citizen association and for the growth of the non-governmental sector is also evidenced by the fact that a significant share of the population would tend to participate, be their involvement in volunteering not hindered by the lack of information about non-governmental organisations, insufficient confidence in their capacity and by the society's dominant attitude to public activity as that existing beyond people's 'normal' daily routines.

The great potential for people's mobilisation for collective action through the use of informal social networks lies within small local communities. The living sociality traditions, the population's sense of solidarity and norms of mutual support provide preconditions for people's association for common action. Neighbourhood relationships, which, as can be seen from the analysis of town x, are quite successfully used for mutual support, could be invoked for mobilisation for other collective activity.

Although a great majority of the population do not come to vote, the analysis shows that many of those absentees from elections behave so not as much due to their passiveness and indifference to public matters as for other reasons, for instance, their critical attitudes to political parties or the diminishing political divides. Furthermore, electoral participation is minimised by the high emigration levels of Lithuanian citizens because their departure from the country, for objective reasons, encumbers such participation. It is likely that many electors who did not participate in the last election can be 'recaptured' because with their experience and skills of political involvement they, in principle, are not against democratic procedures.

Half of the country's population support protest campaigns as the way of influencing government decisions. Despite the fact that protest campaigns are normally perceived as the last resort to be opted for only in the event of significant deterioration of living conditions or of a threat to the existing political regime, the majority of the Lithuanian population recognise the importance of this right which they are guaranteed by this democratic system.

Although a decline of patriotism has been observed in the society in the last decade, a great majority of the population are still proud of being Lithuanian citizens, and even those who are not, are not indifferent to what is happening in their country and feel concerned about its maladies. People tend to have a specific sense of duty to the political community associated with the involvement in the creation of the country's wellbeing, concern about not only one's personal, but also other people's wellbeing, adherence to the law, national defence, involvement in political life and stringent attitudes to the issues of civil morale. These value-based attitudes of the population constitute the foundation that could support the development of people's proactive civic-ness in line with democratic governance.

In discussing other value orientations of relevance to the population's collective activity, it is important to note that most people believe democracy being the best form of governance for our country. Admittedly, Lithuania has witnessed a rather high level of criticism with regard to the current political system, but this not necessarily transforms into authoritarian views. As the more in-depth analysis on people's attitudes has shown, the repeatedly observed society's high acceptance of a strong leader, witnesses not as much the support to dictatorship, but rather the expectations for moral leaders and for a strong state.

Although Lithuanian society has been dominated by social alienation, the growing trends of social trust and common solidarity, which is associated with the concern about the living conditions of members in the local communities and of the overall Lithuanian population, have been observed in the last couple of years. This, in turn, evidences the formation of more favourable conditions for the population's association for collective activities in the society.

Despite the low political involvement, the country's political events are part of people's daily conversations and discussions, and people follow the events in the media. They value the freedom of the press and expression, which enables them to participate in

democracy, criticise the government and express different opinions on important issues in the society. While nostalgia for the Soviet times is felt in other spheres of life, the freedom of the press is undoubtedly viewed as a positive change.

The Lithuanian media audience is not as indifferent to the media quality and not as uncritical as media critics and media representatives think. A great majority of the Lithuanian population can critically perceive the content presented in the media, and discuss the Lithuanian media's role in the society and its capacity to perform this role. Citizen's expectations and demands towards the media are rather high, which means that there is a need for a better-quality content than that currently offered by the Lithuanian media. Through the use of this potential, the media could develop an intelligent and interested consumer of quality media.

Moreover, one can no longer rely on economic arguments that Lithuania has no market for quality press. The comparatively low readership of newspapers cannot be attributed merely to their high prices. A part of the audience does not choose newspapers because it finds them not sufficiently valuable or interesting. This leads to the implication that by providing a better-quality and diverse content, newspapers could expand their audiences. The growing standard of living increases consumption levels in many economic fields and should therefore prompt the formation of a niche for quality press, which has not been occupied to date.

Recommendations

After evaluating the potential of the civil society and the barriers to its development, we will offer a few recommendations to stimulate the development of the civil society in Lithuania. We pointed out several fields for action in developing the social capital and reinforcing the society's capacity to act for common benefit, namely, reinforcement of self-government, development of the volunteering sector, consolidation of the party system, enhancement of the media quality as well as school-based education and informal adult education.

Reinforcement of self-government

To overcome the feeling of civic impotence that gained ground in Lithuania, i.e. the attitude that ‘nothing depends on us’, we should start from reinforcing the self-government. As seen from the data provided in Chapter 3, confidence in one’s chances to make a difference in the native town, although somewhat higher than confidence in one’s powers on the scale of the whole country, is amazingly low. A local neighbourhood (borough), which represents the community’s natural traditionally and geographically established boundaries, could be the principal ‘school’ of democracy and the primary link between citizens and the government. It is on the local neighbourhood level where people know each other and are united by common interest, common experience and common concerns, that they could undertake to address the most relevant issues and feel the power of real ‘self-government’. Unfortunately, this is not so because the elder (the head of borough) is neither elected by nor accountable to the community, to let alone rather limited powers the local neighbourhood has.

In our opinion, the legitimisation of the local neighbourhood as the stand-alone administrative unit as well as of local neighbourhood councils and elections of elders could be an important step towards citizen empowerment. The granting of the right to independently address community matters would also impose civil responsibility – the responsibility for the present and future of the own community. It is this sense of responsibility that Lithuanian people seem to lack, as if watching the events in the country from the outside in disbelief that those events can depend on them. The reinforcement of self-government and bringing it closer to the citizens could break through that vicious circle when people do nothing because they do not believe in their powers and by doing nothing they strengthen their belief that actually nothing can be done.

The important assumption for the strengthening of self-government, in turn, is the improvement of the transparency and accountability of the local government and central government authorities. To date, local and national governments have reluctantly informed the population about pending issues and decisions, devoting too little attention to the engagement of the population into public discussion on relevant issues and on the problems and their solutions. This restrains people’s chances to affect the government decisions.

Therefore greater focus is required on the reinforcement of the dialogue between the government and citizens.

Development of the volunteering sector

The study outcomes have revealed that Lithuanian society would wish to and could be more pro-active and act together for common benefit, but one of the major barriers to such activity is the scarce traditions of civic activity and people's inability to accommodate to being socially active alongside the certain avoidance to stand out in the overall context of passive behaviour. As the research by Robert Putnam shows, the answer to the question why some societies are more civic than others, lies in centuries-old history: 'civic-ness' is characteristic of those societies which can rely on their deep tradition of public activity, adapting conventional cultural patterns to their current practices. Is it possible, nevertheless, to overcome this historic 'determinism'? Can we create the civic traditions on our own and overcome the 'civil shyness' which restrains Lithuanian people? If we can, what are the ways to do it?

This question perhaps is answered by other studies on civic practice conducted elsewhere which reveal the creation and formation of the society's activity models. For instance, the renowned historian and sociologist Theda Skocpol¹, who analysed how the United States of America became the "nation of joiners", notes that civic organisations in the country started flourishing in the nineteenth century after taking over the techniques of organising associations from religious movements. These movements disseminated their ideas and created their organisational structure by moving from location to location, inspiring local leaders to establish local congregations and joining these local compounds into federations under the common principles of morale and world-view. Having managed to establish thousands of such local congregations in the most remote locations, these movements caused competition among other religions, whereas lay organisations afterwards started imitating their techniques.

¹ Theda Skocpol, United States: From Membership to Advocacy. In Robert Putnam (ed.) *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 103-136.

This historic example shows that given the favourable conditions, the boom of civic organisations can be inspired from a certain ‘centre’ by applying effective communication tools and making use of the ‘infection’ effect. This missionary mode of organisation and the ‘federalised’ activity of organisations perhaps could compensate the lack of civic traditions and could help overcome the prevalent syndrome of impotence of Lithuanian society.

With the view to stimulating the development of the non-governmental sector, sufficient focus should be placed on the reinforcement of organisations’ human and social capital, on the bridging of information gaps with respect to what those organisations do and on the improvement of the legislative environment regarding the registration of non-governmental organisations and the funding of their activities.

Reinforcement of the human and social capital at non-governmental organisations could be supported with different trainings for community leaders, organisation members and the local community, providing knowledge and skills on the development opportunities for organisations, activity management, public relations, co-operation with local authorities and other potential partners and mechanisms for the engagement of the population into volunteering.

Addressing the problem of insufficient information about non-governmental organisations, their principles of activity and the potential benefits for the society, this task should gain greater attention from both non-governmental organisations themselves and the local and national media.

Given the decreased number of registered non-governmental organisations in the last couple of years, it is also necessary to evaluate the impact of the new procedure for the registration of legal entities on the incorporation and activities of non-governmental organisations.

Finally, we need to enhance the legislative environment regarding the financing of the activities of non-governmental organisations. The primary source of financing for most organisations are the project funds, which provide the opportunity to implement a certain activity, yet do not ensure their daily operation (‘survival’). Organisations cannot afford hired staff who would devote all their time and energy to the organisation’s activities, whereas volunteers with scarce free time and financial resources have limited chances to ensure the organisation’s stable operation. This is of special relevance for rural communities.

There is one more problem associated with the system of financing the activities of non-governmental organisations: Public authorities are one of the key financing sources for non-governmental organisations, but such practice leaves an open question whether and to what extent beneficiary non-governmental organisations should contribute their loyalty to the authorities which distribute support. One of the solutions could be to draw experience from other countries, for instance, Germany, where public authorities finance the activities of non-governmental organisations not directly under specific programmes, but rather through funds, in whose activities they cannot interfere, unless the legal provisions which govern the activities of those funds are violated. It is therefore necessary to look for legal solutions to, firstly, reinforce the system of the funds by ensuring their autonomy from public authorities and also from private business entities, and secondly, encourage business entities to allocate more money to the activities of the funds which support civic initiatives.

In addition, one should consider the option of amending the legal provisions governing the citizens' right to transfer up to 2 per cent of the personal income tax to a not-for-profit organisation which has the status of a beneficiary. At present, the greatest share of support goes to public institutions such as educational establishments, health care facilities, etc., whereas non-governmental organisations receive only a small slice of the cake. Separation of the support to state- and municipality- founded public agencies from that to non-governmental organisations in the legal provisions on the residential income tax could ensure more substantial assistance to organisations within the non-governmental sector and reinforce their status of full-fledged social actors.

Consolidation of the party system

Upon examining why people in Lithuania do not vote, we saw that one of the major reasons for electorate passiveness is the weakness of Lithuanian parties and the 'shapelessness' of the party system, i.e. the extinction of the divide between left and right. What motivates people to come and vote is their party identity, i.e. the possession of their 'own' party or at least a clear vision of their own and the major political parties' position on the left and right scale. By voting, individuals express support to a specific political power, and this is why being unable to identify the party they could trust and cast a vote for 'with

quiet conscience', they rather choose not voting at all. Only the parties themselves can stop the threatening decline of the electoral turnout because they are the democracy's key 'mechanism' to ensure the state's link with the society and to accumulate citizens' political support.

Perhaps the only trustworthy solution in this situation is to reinforce the party identity and the party structure as well as to intensify work with the society. Looking ahead to the state's and their own survival, parties should resolve to alter their work techniques and their strategies for attracting electorate. Instead of millions-worth investments into populist videos of election campaigns, money, focus and effort should be transposed to maintaining citizen relations in the inter-electoral period, more active direct contacts with electorate (both directly and through the use of information technologies) and the creation of strong think tanks to generate ideas and to offer the society's evolution scenarios. Parties must find their way out of any quicksand of internal intrigue, which blankets their other activities, and focus more on the society's concerns, discussion of common matters and the civic education of the population. Furthermore, parties should take care of the reinforcement of their internal structure and of their members' motivation because only the voluntary and zealous work of party members rather than that of hired staff can help them regain people's trust.

Admittedly, the proposed solution is not easy to implement because in the short run 'buying' electorate with populist promises is easier and simpler than investing into the structure and ideological identity. It is therefore important to provide legally governed incentives for desired behaviour, i.e. increase public financing for parties and at the same time financial control, restrict electoral advertising, etc. On the other hand, the mere existence of hundreds thousand of 'free' electors, i.e. those who do not vote for any party, could encourage parties to look for qualified ways of attracting them and of regaining their trust in parties and in the overall political system.

Addressing the problems of the media quality

The challenges of the media quality are hard to address. This issue has been discussed and possible solutions have been offered for numerous times, but the major challenge to date has been the insufficient will to implement the proposed measures. Perhaps the only measure with respect to the media which public authorities attempt to take has been

the reinforcement of the legal regulation of the media leading to restrictions on its content and on journalist rights. However, there have been no attempts to find essential measures to address the problems of and to improve the quality of the media. One of these urgent problems is the ensuring of the transparent ownership and funding of the media. Despite the adoption of the regulations for announcing media owners, in reality they are unfeasible and ineffective and therefore require a repeated concern about how to implement this requirement. Furthermore, it is necessary to search ways of dealing with the media corruption problem, which takes different shapes, for instance, covert advertisements on radio, television and in the press, the publishing of so called “ordered articles” (articles which are commissioned by and speak in behalf of a person or organization) without providing information about the person or organization, the non-publication of information which is relevant to the public for reward from the persons concerned or their groups, etc. Also, there is a need to reinforce the media’s self-regulation institutions *inter alia* through the education of the society about its rights and opportunities to apply.

The state should also take economic measures to encourage the reading of newspapers and to strengthen them generally. This could be achieved by providing support to local newspapers and to their distribution. Support to media projects in Lithuania is provided through the Media Support Foundation; however, its distributed amount of support, as compared to, for instance, that allocated to the press in the Nordic countries, is extremely scarce. One of the other barriers is the project-based nature of funding, which does not ensure continuity of support. Promoting the reading of newspapers in the rural areas, support to the distribution of newspapers could be beneficial. One should also consider the alternative of providing support to newly founded periodicals.

In order to encourage the reading of newspapers, reading in general should be promoted because the reading of newspapers is associated with the country’s general literacy and reading levels. Therefore we have to develop and implement national programmes to promote reading and special programmes to promote the reading of newspapers and to look for other ways of developing the reading culture. One of the examples of educating the newspaper audience could be the introduction of media literacy classes at schools: Schoolchildren are a very important audience because, once got used to reading at young age, they will retain the same habits in the future. Development of such programmes should

draw experience from other countries, for instance, Norway, where schools have this kind of programmes. Apart from promoting reading, media literacy programmes should also develop a critical approach to presented information and the understanding of how the media works and how news are produced.

Some alternative for the dominating media lies in the Internet media, but access to it has so far been limited, particularly in the rural areas. It is therefore necessary to further develop Internet access and to promote its use within the framework of ongoing programmes and by seeking new measures. It is important that the Internet becomes not only the channel for retrieving purposeful information, but also the source of political information and space for discussion. For this reason the Internet usage promotion programmes should focus on not only the improvement of the Internet statistics, but also the diversity of content on the web and its uses for civic purposes (discussions, networking, etc.).

The discussion about the need for quality media has been ongoing in Lithuania for quite a while. As was mentioned before, the opinion that Lithuania has no niche for quality media is not well-founded: Lithuanians have quite high expectations for the media, while substantial improvement in people's standard of living brings about the economic potential for the consumption of such media. Since the formerly proposed idea of a 'public daily' is unacceptable, we must hope that the present publishers or new market players (especially foreign investors) will finally acknowledge the real capacities and needs of the Lithuanian audience.

The media could substantially contribute to the destruction of the earlier described civic impotence myth through the provision of more room for constructivism and for the efforts to empower people by presenting the success stories of civic action. There could emerge more realistic examples of civic journalism that offer potential solutions for social problems. Furthermore, the media should devote more space to discuss significant ideas and to hold the population's interest focused on public issues. The toughest question is how to draw the media's attention to its audience and how to encourage the media to acknowledge the capacity of the audience and to engage in its cultivation since moralising and seeking a dialogue have not brought any significant results to date. In this context we also need efforts from public organisations to seek a more active dialogue with the media, particularly with

the local one, where closer links are possible, to take 'bottom-up' action, and to arrange events and campaigns to promote the media's closer relationships with the audience.

Education

The political passiveness, indifference and civic impotence of the Lithuanian population is often explained as legacy of Soviet regime. For this reason hopes are laid on the young generation who have matured in the already independent Lithuania on the assumption that both their authentic experience of democratic life and the followed civic education policy should develop competent and active citizens who are aware of their place in the political system and maintain a position on crucial public issues. Our study, however, showed a clearly outstanding political passiveness, a poor level of patriotism and a low moral and ethical motivation of young people. The proposal to address this problem by reviewing the civic education policy and strategy perhaps will not appear original. The concord on the importance of civic education in the development of a viable civil society has been in place for years. Nevertheless, the conducted study can also help to define the key guidelines for the civic education policy and to identify some of its more effective tools.

To develop a pro-active citizen, civic education should be focused not so much on theoretical knowledge as on its practical application and comprehension. As interviews with young people showed, memorising the definition of the democratic political regime does not imply the understanding of the principles for democratic governance or the ability to apply theoretic concepts in civic activities. In this context a lot of useful experience could be drawn from, for instance, the Scandinavian states, which are greatly focused on the civic development of young people through simulation games, the involvement of schoolchildren into the school's governance process, and the arrangement of public discussions on the issues of common concern on the lowest (e.g. class) level, etc.

Apart from building the skills and traditions of civic action, civic education should also develop political imagination. The 'scientific' definitions of political terminology presented to young people inspire for neither the criticism of the government, nor civic action and are too neutral and cold to become the ideals in viewing upon the established political order. In addition, such order normally meets the formal criteria, which makes it

difficult for young people to identify somewhat more acute or urgent problems when they evaluate politics against their learnt procedural definitions of democracy. Neither does the procedural concept of democracy offer any valued ideals which are worth cherishing and provide meaningful ground for acting and fighting. For this reason the civic education programmes should be supplemented with the more in-depth knowledge of political philosophy and should not be restricted to the basics of political science.

The civic development of young people within the described line of action should be reinforced by reviewing and updating the curricula on all levels of the education system. Substantial gaps in the building of 'civic-ness' in young people which require urgent bridging exist at not only comprehensive schools, but also vocational schools, colleges and universities, which to date have placed very little focus on their students' civic education.

Informal adult education

Experience from other countries shows that informal adult education helps people to become full-fledged citizens of the democratic society. Based on the information from different sources, a great majority of Lithuania's adult population would like to continue studies. However, the learning opportunities are strongly restrained by their place of residence and income. At present, people have little chance to choose the different forms of social education at their place of residence through the use of local social space (including schools, the local neighbourhood's facilities, etc.) and the surrounding information space (libraries, information centres and the local media). Assorted discussion clubs, workshops and lectures, and learning through common action to address the great variety of practical matters on the local level could not only provide conditions for continuous learning or practical experience, but also become the basis of association for the local population and promote the initiative to seek ways of changing the locally established situation and to build equal relations with the local authorities.

Focusing on competent or, in other words, 'empowered' citizens and their communities, attention should be drawn to the support of the different forms, techniques and measures of informal and education and self-education which ensure the freedom to choose and the development of specific networks (centres).

Furthermore, greater focus should be placed on the political education of adults. Political parties could make a contribution here. The activities of publicly-financed funds in the field of political education in Germany could serve as example. Those funds and political parties devote substantial efforts and money to make the population aware of the national and global political problems, the principles for democratic action, the different political ideologies and the citizens' opportunities to influence the political processes in the country.

Epilogue

We performed this study in the hope that it would become a starting point for further research on the development of the Lithuanian civil society and prompt discussions about the trends in the dynamics of civil and political involvement of the country's population that are defined here, about their causes as well as techniques of how to promote a more active engagement of the population in various civic activities. But what we were mostly concerned with was that the study could become a tool to support social change on the communal, regional and national scale: This roadmap is designed to find the power which belongs to the citizens.