INA ALBER
University of Göttingen*

DOING CIVIL SOCIETY IN POST-SOCIALIST POLAND. TRIANGULATION OF BIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Abstract

This paper focuses on the intersection of actors and discourses in "doing civil society"[1] in everyday life. It takes into account the diversified discourse about civil society in the socio-historical context of Poland. Interviews with human rights and democracy activists in post-socialist Poland provided the empirical basis for the qualitative study. Methodologically, a triangulation of biographical analysis and discourse analysis was used in order to approach the social phenomenon from different perspectives. Using the framework of Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM), two interpretative types were reconstructed on the level of action patterns and interpretative schemes: the qualification and the empowerment type. The article introduces the methodological framework, the discursive construction of civil society and the two interpretative types, illustrated by case studies.

Keywords: biographical research, discourse analysis, triangulation, empowerment, democracy promotion, sociology of knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Civil society is a powerful, yet vague theoretical concept and everyday practice. Whenever members of international organisations refer to democracy promotion or consolidation, local politicians talk about prosperity and welfare in their town

---

    [1] This refers to the concept of "doing gender" introduced by West, Zimmerman [1987].

or any non-governmental organisation (NGO) writes a grant application, civil society, as a sphere between the state, the market and the family, is referenced. The functions ascribed to civil society are rooted in the history of political philosophy and thinking. They range from protection from state power to control over state power, the critique of "un-democratic behaviour", the articulation of opinions, especially those of minorities, to mediation, education, skill enhancement and social inclusion. The action patterns known as civic engagement or social activism are closely related to civil society. They are commonly defined as forms of acting which are non-violent, oriented towards compromise, self-organised, voluntary, pluralistic, public, co-operative, non-profit-making and serving the "common good". Empirically, civil society refers to associations, non-governmental and non-profit organisations (NPOs), trade unions, foundations or citizens' action groups as well as to a vague, but positively attributed project[2] [cf. Klein 2001; Kocka 2004: 32–34; Adloff 2005; Alber 2016a].

As a researcher in the tradition of the sociology of knowledge, I understand civil society as a discursive construction which frames the everyday actions of humans relating to civil society and which is simultaneously re-constructed (and transformed) by these social actors. Civil society engagement is thus neither a totally free decision, nor a totally determined path. It must be analysed empirically in its specific socio-historical context. Displaying theoretical sensitivity to the scientific discourse about the "resurrection of civil society" through East Central European oppositional movements [Cohen, Arato 1995: 15], I looked at human rights and democracy activism in post-socialist Poland in my PhD study. I used a methodological and data triangulation [cf. Denzin 1970] of biographical analysis and discourse analysis in order to reconstruct the social phenomenon of "doing civil society" in Poland after 1989, when the legacy of the Solidarity movement was undergoing profound changes.

In the second part of my paper I outline the methodological framework and the triangulation in the tradition of sociology of knowledge used to analyse the phenomenon of civil society. The third part deals with the diversified discourse about civil society in Poland. The fourth part discusses the two contrasting interpretative types of civic engagement using two case studies. Finally, I will draw conclusions about "doing civil society" in the field of human rights activism in Poland at the level of action patterns and interpretative schemes.

---

2   Jürgen Kocka [2004: 32–34] introduced the analytical model with three dimensions for civil society: 1) space/sphere, 2) action patterns, 3) utopia.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The sociology of knowledge approach [cf. Berger, Luckmann 1967; Schütz, Luckmann 1973] forms the epistemological background to my study, constituting the research question and objectives. This approach presumes that human beings are born and socialised into an intersubjective cultural world. In order to reduce complexity and make this world pragmatically approachable, they use typifications, which depend on relevance systems developed during their life courses. These typifications are "recipes" that help to make sense of the social world, while at the same time constantly (re-)constructing it. On higher levels of aggregation, they become objectified and socially construct human reality [Nathanson 1970; Schütz, Luckmann 1973]. They appear as collectively shared action patterns (recipes for how to do something) and interpretative schemes (recipes for how to interpret something). Typifications, patterns and schemes are sedimented in biographically individual stocks of knowledge and yet at the same time collectively shared [Schütz, Luckmann 1973; Alber 2016a: 54–63]. These proto-sociological thoughts create the framework for interpretative biographical research and for the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (SKAD), which were triangulated in my analysis of "doing civil society".

Biographical analysis

Biographical research in the tradition of the sociology of knowledge concentrates on biographically sedimented experiences, memories and narrations as well as on the interdependency of collective and individual stocks of knowledge. In my research, I built on the biographical methodology introduced by German sociologist Gabriele Rosenthal [2004, 2006]. Key to this approach is the reconstruction of the biography and the case-based analysis. My data was collected through biographical narrative interviews using the framework developed by Fritz Schütze [1976, 1983] and Gabriele Rosenthal [2004]. Here, the interview starts with an open question to the interviewee to tell their life story. During the main narration the interviewer only takes notes and does not intervene. Only in the second part of the narrative questioning is the interviewee further encouraged to talk about the situations, people and experiences mentioned during the first main narration. The third part of the interview may touch on previously undeveloped topics. During the narrative questioning no how-, why- or what-questions are posed. Biographical narrative interviewing allows us to reconstruct social events from the perspectives of the actors and to pay attention to their relevance systems. According to Fritz Schütze [1976], story-telling is an everyday competence of

ordinary people that does not require specific education and can therefore be used in various fields. A narration works through self-generating schemes: we must select details, impose limits and bring it to a conclusion in order for it to make sense to us. At the same time, evoking narrations also stimulates memories.

> Because the interlocutors are first encouraged to tell a longer narration about self-lived experiences, they can structure the narration according to the criteria they themselves find relevant; the memory process is supported [Rosenthal 2003: 92].

In contrast to semi-structured interviews, narrative interviewing often brings out new topics and further information that the researchers had not thought about in advance [Schütze 1976, 1983; Rosenthal 2003; Alber 2016a: 94–99].

Most of the interviews in my PhD study lasted for three to five hours. I met some interviewees twice (n = 13). The sampling of my interviews was based on GTM and on minimal/maximal case contrasting [Glaser, Strauss 1967/2006]. Each interview was firstly analysed in a memo, the first stage in theoretical sampling. Central to Gabriele Rosenthal's biographical case reconstruction process is the analytical division between the lived life history (the chronology of experiences) and the narrated life story (the chronology of narration) [Rosenthal 2004]. This was already done in the memo, in which objective biographical data and narrated life story were analytically separated, enabling attention to be paid to the interdependency of experience, memory and narration.

The first step in a biographical case reconstruction is the biographical data analysis. It builds on the objective hermeneutics approach pioneered by Ulrich Oevermann et al. [1979] and focusses on the objective data of the experienced life history. At this stage one abstains from interpretation or considering the way in which certain life events were narrated during the interview. The result is the reconstruction of the genesis and structure of action patterns. The second step of the analysis is the text and thematic field analysis which reconstructs the gestalt of the narration and the self-presentation of the person. At this stage the interpretative schemes and the way in which biographical experiences and interpretations are narrated are reconstructed. The third and culminating stage of the biographical case reconstruction is the contrasting and bringing together of these two levels of analysis [Rosenthal 2004; Alber 2016a: 94–99].

The aim of the sociological reconstruction of biographies is thus not to collect the memories of a specific historical person (of interest), but to understand the triad of experience, memory and narration from a phenomenological point

of view[3] as a dialectical relation between the individual and collective action patterns and interpretative schemes [Schütz, Luckmann 1973; Rosenthal 2006]. The appropriate sociological conclusions and theoretical generalisations may be drawn from a detailed case reconstruction which takes into consideration not only the biographical narrative interview text, but also other sources such as archive material, newspaper articles, history text books and scientific literature [Rosenthal 2004]. In my study, the biographical case reconstructions already involved a data triangulation. However, I also applied a further, methodological, triangulation when the interview texts were used for discourse analysis. I will first explain the SKAD before saying more about triangulation.

Sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis

The original writings by Schütz, Luckmann and Berger have been criticised for not taking into account power relations and assuming a social world of equality. However, their ideas are proto-sociological and can be further developed. The German sociologist Reiner Keller [2012, 2013] merged social constructivism with the discourse theory of French philosopher Michel Foucault to create the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (German: *wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse*). SKAD is not a method *per se*, but a research programme and perspective on social phenomena. In SKAD, discourses are treated not only as ways of speaking and communication. They are understood,

> as historically situated real social practices, not representing external objects, but constituting them. This implies looking at concrete data – oral and written texts, articles, books, discussions, institutions, disciplines – in order to analyze "bottom up" how discourses are structured and how they are structuring knowledge domains and claims [Keller 2012: 53].

Discourses are also closely linked with social actors, who re-create them through their everyday action. In the case of my study, activists re-create civil society through taking part in demonstrations, joining organisations, writing letters on behalf of Amnesty International (AI) or blogging about human rights on the internet. Scientists like myself, in writing and talking about civil society, also reproduce, transform and create it as a historically situated real social

---

[3]   This involves the application of Edmund Husserl's idea that there is only a *noema* of memory, not a static, single and eternal pattern. Memories appear as different phenomena depending on the *noesis* of the person remembering, i.e. how someone approaches the phenomenon. The context of the present day situation of narrating therefore structures the way in which the experience is remembered and told. The aim of biographical research is therefore to understand the genesis of today's *noesis* [Rosenthal 2006].

practice. In order to systematically analyse source materials as well as the interview texts, I used GTM and its sampling strategy of contrasting cases and writing memos. I also conducted sequential hermeneutical micro analyses of text fragments, some of them in interpretation groups together with other scholars. Starting from the biographical cases, I analysed the interview texts and other sources relating to civic engagement in Poland after 1989, for example scientific literature about civil society (in Poland), bulletins from NGOs and governments, websites and blogs of activists as well as media contributions about civil society [Alber 2016a: 99–103]. Data and results from both discourse and biographical analysis were systematically triangulated to produce an understanding of the social phenomenon of "doing civil society" from the perspectives of discourses and actors.

Triangulation

"Triangulation" refers to the concept as systematised by Norman Denzin [1970]. In his work about "The Research Act" he states:

> The four basic types of triangulation are *data*, with these types; (1) time, (2) space, (3) person, and these levels (1) aggregate (person), (2) interactive (person), (3) collectivity (person); *investigator* (multiple vs. single observers of same object); *theory* (multiple vs. single perspectives in relation to the same set of objects); and *methodological* (within-method triangulation and between-method triangulation) [Denzin 1970: 301, emphasis added].

The aim of triangulation is to link different perspectives on a certain social phenomenon in order to grasp its complexity. In scientific debates triangulation has been understood as a means to validate "subjective methods" in qualitative research [cf. Flick 2004], but Norman Denzin has [2012] recently insisted that this was not his intention. Triangulation should rather be seen as a way of approaching social complexity from different perspectives in order not to analytically flatten a multidimensional phenomenon [cf. Fielding, Fielding 1986; Knoblauch 2010]. Triangulation could be compared to a kaleidoscope showing various aspects of social phenomena [Köckeis-Stangl 1980: 363]. The approach can be theoretically justified and integrated into research *designs* at their inception. This was the case with my research design, in which civil society as both a vague and powerful discursive construction was viewed as just such a complex phenomenon to be approached both through biographical and discourse analysis. However, triangulation may also be needed during the research *process* when planned methods do not produce data material or a new perspective seems required to understand a social phenomenon. Additionally, an important question to be asked

and answered relates to the level at which the data, methods or theories will be combined when triangulating them.

Often, as qualitative researchers, we apply data triangulation during the collection process. We are exploring life worlds. When conducting biographical narrative interviews in the offices of civil society activists I also wrote field notes about their organisation's premises and collected information brochures or books from them. But when I moved on to the analysis of the data, I began by applying SKAD separately from biographical case reconstruction. Only in the process of analysis did I start to focus more on action patterns and interpretative schemes. I understand interpretative schemes as typifications that are closely linked to action problems and action patterns [Oevermann 2001; Soeffner 2004: 23–24]. These problems of everyday life have been solved by our ancestors and the interpretation of the problem is sedimented in interpretative schemes. They are connected to action patterns that offer the solution to these problems in an abstract way. Discourses only become relevant in everyday life through interpretative schemes [Schetsche, Schmied-Knittel 2013: 25]. The biographical approach allows the reconstruction of the genesis of the individual sedimentation of the collectively shared action patterns and interpretative schemes. At this "process" stage, the methodological triangulation of action patterns and interpretative schemes in relation to "doing civil society" enabled me to connect the perspective on discourses and actors with their specific biographical background [Alber 2016a]. The results of the analysis were generalised into two interpretative types of civic engagement – the qualification and the empowerment type. Before discussing the types I will elaborate on the diversified discourse about civil society in Poland as this is the stock of knowledge available to civil society activists entering the discourse.

DIVERSIFIED DISCOURSE ABOUT CIVIL SOCIETY

The discourse on civil society is closely linked to other powerful, yet vague discourses on democracy, power, public and private sphere, society and community. Especially in historical perspective, the discourse revolves around war and peace, violence and civic virtues, empires and national sovereignty. Such interpretative schemes constitute the framework within which civil society activists in Poland perform their engagement. To briefly summarise the scientific discourse about civil society: in Western political thought bourgeois citizens are the main actors in promoting civil society. Developments in the 18th and 19th century brought forth the bourgeois division of society into separate spheres:

state, market, family and civil society as the linkage between private and public life [cf. Cohen, Arato 1995; Keane 1988; Kocka 2004]. In East Central Europe, however, the politics of empires hindered the development of a bourgeoisie and thus also of a civil society as a sphere between state, market and private life. The state was equal to the empire and Polish concepts of the relations between state and society were dichotomously organised into *us*, the people/society, against *them*, the occupiers. The interpretative scheme of civil society was neither powerful nor well-known. However, the idea of society as a dichotomy was discursively established due to the action problem of perceived occupation [Alber 2016a: 112–122; cf. Słodkowska 2006].

After the First World War, the establishment of sovereign nation states throughout East Central Europe led to the introduction of democratic rule. Organisations which had often operated as underground oppositional movements, for example, the Scouts, emerged openly into the public sphere to form a vibrant civil society. The action problem of perceived occupation led to the establishment of a civil society and a democratic culture. The action patterns and interpretative schemes ranged from the old "us against them" to more compromise-oriented actions. With the beginning of the Second World War these structures were destroyed and civil society as well as all democratic structures ceased to exist publicly under Nazi German and Soviet occupation. In Poland, many organisations moved their activities to the underground and many activists lost their lives [Słodkowska 2006: 39ff; Borodziej 2010: 102ff]. The pattern of "us against them" was (once again) framed as a battle for national sovereignty. Civic engagement not only involved peaceful and compromise oriented actions, but also militant action including the use of armed force.

In the late 1940s civil society was discursively overruled by the establishment of the Polish People's Republic (PPR) and the imposition of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Many organisations existed that displayed some of the characteristics of civil society, such as socially integrating people, working for the common good and socialising young people politically. But PPR civil society lacked the aspects of voluntariness – most people were forced to participate – and pluralistic order. Even though there were many different organisations, they all promoted the same political opinion. Organisational involvement and "voluntary work" as they existed in this historical period remain a pejorative reference in the discourse about civil society. Other organisations (still) worked underground and in opposition. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s, civil society was used as a concept drawn from Western discourses in order to promote the notion of society against the state [cf. Arndt 2013]. It was now "us, the people" against "them, not the occupiers but

the Communist Party and its members". Instead of weapons, peaceful strikes and grassroots participation were to be used. The scientific analysis of these events offers a variety of interpretations: the idea of a resurrection of civil society in theory and practice is suggested by Cohen, Arato [1995] while other researchers doubt that the Solidarity intellectuals really drew on this Western political thought framework [cf. Załęski 2013]. Both the scientific and the everyday discourse contain these interpretative schemes, which shape the framework within which civil society activists still position themselves today.

But it is not only intellectuals and scientists who produce and re-produce the civil society discourse. In the early 1990s many international democracy promoters started working in Poland. US-American, mostly private, foundations, of which George Soros' Open Society Foundations and the Stefan Batory Foundation were the most prominent, sent their democracy promoters to Poland to give trainings. These actions were often limited in time and focussed on infrastructural aid. That is, they offered training on how to create an NGO or trade union, how to set up a board and statutes and how to manage finances and work democratically. They also gave and still give grants to project-based organisations [Kubik, Ekiert 2000; Quigley 2000; Freise 2004]. By the late 1990s most of these US-American democracy promoters had moved on from Poland, heading further East. However, they had brought their interpretative schemes and action patterns of civil society with them and knowledge transfer happened in terms not only of management skills, but also of interpretations of civil society. These interpretative schemes relate mainly to liberal models of civil society as the sphere protected from state influence and allowing citizens to strive for their private happiness – in cooperation with others [cf. Alber 2016a]. These schemes are closely linked to liberal market economy ideas and some scholars have accused democracy promoters of using their mission to support neoliberal market policies [cf. Wedel 1998].

The German political party foundations are another main actor in democracy promotion in Poland. They have settled more permanently, with all the big political parties setting up offices in Warsaw. They promote democracy as conceived in the ideology of the parties they are affiliated with. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation, for instance, had already worked together with trade unions and workers in the 1980s and could build on its support for social democracy and workers' rights. The Heinrich Böll Foundation, linked to the Green Party in Germany, promotes both gender democracy and ecology. The party foundations bring a pluralistic variety of interpretative schemes and action patterns to civil society. They cooperate closely with local partners, but also promote future political and economic elites, for example by offering scholarships. However, it should be stressed that

democracy promotion does not work through the hypodermic needle. It can only promote actors who negotiate about interpretative schemes and action patterns and thereby (re-)create structures of their own [cf. Alber 2015].

The vigorous growth of civil society organisations both in terms of numbers and the range of their interests after 1989 in Poland led to a diversification of the civil society discourse. In 1989 there were 277 foundations [Gliński 2002: 60]. In 2004 a report by Klon/Jawor, itself a civil society organisation, counted 45,891 associations and 7,210 foundations. However, many of the registered organisations were no longer active [Klon/Jawor 2004]. For the year 2015 Klon/Jawor [2015] reported 86,000 associations and 17,000 foundations. About 70,000 people were involved. The fields of operation of these organisations were: sports and leisure time (34%), education (15%), culture and art (13%). Other areas of activity included: social services and charity as well as local development. Many organisations had a rather small budget and relied mainly on volunteers, with only a few employed members of staff [Klon/Jawor 2015].

With institutionalisation, civil society in Poland gradually disappeared from the scientific and political agenda. After the EU accession of post-socialist countries like Poland, Hungary and the Baltic States, issues such as integration into the union, economic developments and free market access dominated both the scientific and media debates. However, in November 2015 the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (Polish: *Komitet Obrony Demokracji* – KOD) emerged in Poland to fight as an extra-parliamentary opposition against the government and policies of the Law and Justice Party (Polish: *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS). They are perceived nationally and internationally as the powerful Polish civil society appearing on the streets again. KOD's name refers directly to the legacy of the Committee for the Defence of Workers (Polish: *Komitet Obrony Robotników – KOR*) of the 1970s. The subject of defence is the democratic order, for instance in the shape of the Supreme Court, whose independence has been endangered by PiS-introduced laws [Deutsche Welle 2015]. The empirical data for my study was collected and analysed before PiS came to power and KOD emerged. Yet the current actions of civil society activists reflect its results quite well; indeed, one of my 2010 interviewees is now an active member of KOD. But this is just one aspect of the civil society discourse in Poland. In the next paragraph, I will illustrate how the interdependence of discourse and actors can be theoretically generalised in the form of a typology.

TWO INTERPRETATIVE TYPES OF CIVIL SOCIETY
AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Although the civil society discourse offers a variety of interpretative schemes and action patterns due to a long history and different influences, the combination of biographical and discourse analyses has revealed only two major interpretative types: the empowerment and the qualification type.

The empowerment type

The first type can be characterised as the empowerment type. The representatives of this type perceive their civic engagement as a form of emancipation and empowerment. Emancipation refers to a concept on the macro-level which is connected to the struggle against social inequality and for participation for excluded social groups [cf. Quesel 1994]. On the micro-level, empowerment relates to individual abilities and is found in the discourses of social work and psychology. Within the civil society discourse, empowerment links both the micro- and macro aspects and suggests positive democratic qualities. The notion of civic engagement serving as empowerment and a form of participation by and on behalf of minorities can also be found in democracy promotion efforts by NGOs or through UN programmes [Craig, Mayo 1995; UN Women – Headquarters 2016]. The representatives of the empowerment type reproduce this interpretative scheme and transform it (gradually) at the same time.

I will illustrate this type using the case of Edyta Truszkowska.[4] Edyta was born in Upper Silesia in 1962. Her parents had been sent to this part of Poland on work assignment (Polish: *nakaz pracy*) in the 1950s. The social structure of Edyta's home town as well as the surrounding region were undergoing radical change. The former German/Prussian parts of post-war Poland were being industrialised and "Polish culture" encouraged. Many people were sent to these towns to work in newly established factories and in mining. A lot of effort was also put into educating young people from the working class and peasantry [cf. Irgang 1995]. Edyta's mother took her chance, attending university classes in the evening and achieving a management position in her firm. Edyta's father, however, did not manage to adapt to the post-war working conditions. According to Edyta, he never felt at home in the place he was sent to and suffered from alcoholism. She talks about bad experiences as a child because of her father. She experienced

---

[4]   The name and some personal information of the interviewees have been changed for the purpose of data protection.

discrimination and social exclusion because of her father's behaviour. However, her mother got a divorce when Edyta was eight years old and thereafter they lived together with her stepfather. Edyta considers this to have been very positive for her and that she now had a tranquil time and life at home.

Edyta had a "normal" childhood, going to school, joining the Scout movement and getting good grades. She talked vividly about the emergence of Solidarity in summer 1980 when the grey everyday life suddenly become colourful and when the public sphere became pluralistic [cf. Alber 2016b]. She also remembers a teacher who was arrested. However, nobody in her family or herself were active opposition members during the first Solidarity period. She continued along a normal career path, studying Polish and becoming a secondary school teacher. While at the university she got to know her husband. In her final year of studies Edyta became pregnant. The couple got married before the first child arrived. Their second was born two years later. During the time of transition, 1989–1991, Edyta was busy with her two small children and her job as a teacher. However, soon afterwards she used her social network to get a summer job in the West, finding work on a farm in the UK. Having worked there for one summer, her husband joined her the following year while the grandmother took care of the children. With the money they earned they bought a flat in their home town. Only after Edyta had secured "a good life" and the same quiet and safe home she had herself enjoyed with her stepfather did she start getting civically involved in the mid-1990s, when she became interested in human rights issues and joined AI. She says about her engagement:

> It was so, well, very important for me because of my daughter. Something can always happen to anyone. But you should do something about it. You can't leave it, you can't put your head in the sand and agree, right, you need to go protest and change [Interview Edyta Truszkowska 2010, p.30; translation from Polish into English I.A.].

The topics that Edyta addresses in her civil society activities are closely related to this idea of being able to speak out and change things. Even though she is a member of an international organisation, AI, she prefers to focus on the local level. She writes letters not only to call attention to international cases as AI does, but also to point out inequalities and injustice in her home town. Pupils of hers that have problems with unwanted pregnancies, abortions or homosexuality trust Edyta as a teacher. She not only listens to them, but also discusses rather private problems (anonymously) as public issues within a broader interpretative realm. In her case the interdependency of emancipation and empowerment and the private/micro and public/macro spheres can be reconstructed in her civic engagement.

Edyta's overall action pattern is to secure her own position first and then get involved. Her interpretative scheme for problematic social situations is to understand them as something that she and others can change. She "does civil society" through local activities with AI which also become important globally. Her activities usually transfer social problems which are often perceived as private ones into the public sphere in order to discuss them and effect change. Her action pattern might be influenced by the experiences of the first Solidarity and the temporarily pluralistic public sphere in 1980/81.[5] Certainly in her own evaluation of her life course she stresses the importance of experiencing Solidarity with its symbols and colours.

In November 2015, almost five years after I had conducted the biographical narrative interview with Edyta, I happened to find a long media article about her work with KOD in her home town. She organises demonstrations, writes open letters and posts online "in defence of democracy". Given her experience of the Solidarity movement in her youth, her idea of being able to change one's situation and her previous civil society activities, her involvement with KOD fits very well with her action patterns and interpretative schemes.

To summarise the empowerment type: "Doing civil society" empowers the activists as well as others, for instance, women, the LGBT movement or ethnic minorities. The empowerment of individuals and smaller groups contributes to collective emancipation. Civic engagement functions as a powerful resource for doing biographical work and overcoming bad past experiences. The memories of being an outsiders and suffering discrimination are re-interpreted when fighting for inclusion, participation and resources for others. The individual negative experiences are negotiated at a public political level of human rights and ideals of tolerance and democracy. The civic engagement is mostly organised informally with friends and private network partners on an *ad hoc* basis. Posting and blogging on the internet are powerful instruments in promoting idea(l)s and political messages. Striving to become politically influential is part of the engagement as well, but unlike the representatives of the qualification type the "empowermentalists" do not aim to achieve high political positions but to fight against discrimination and for solidarity with minorities. They experience social inclusion through their local civic engagement, mainly within private networks, but they also refer to global movements like AI. "Think global, act local" could serve as a motto for this type [Alber 2016a: 264–266].

---

[5]   Writing open letters was also a means of oppositional activities in pre-1989 Poland. Perhaps Edyta also relates to this action pattern [cf. Stegmann 2016].

The qualification type

The second interpretative type is the qualification type. Representatives of this type interpret themselves as experts in a newly established social phenomenon: civic engagement in a democratic society. They relate to the post-socialist discourse about civil society according to which Polish people lack a sense of "civilizational competence" [Sztompka 1993] resulting in a weak civil society [Howard 2002]. In scientific and political discourse this is also linked to some of the positive ascriptions to civil society. It serves as a sphere in which individuals get socially included and learn important (soft) skills which can also be useful in the job market [Herbst 2011; Alber 2016a: 198].

My empirical example, that of Wojtek Wejda, has similar socio-structural characteristics to that of Edyta Truszkowska. Both were born and socialised in the 1960s in Silesia in Poland, became school teachers in the PPR in the 1980s and after 1989 were local leaders of civil society organisations. Yet, their actions in and reasons for "doing civil society" are different. The biographical method of case reconstruction allows us to analysis the genesis of the relevant action patterns and interpretative schemes and to explain why Wojtek Wejda is a representative of the qualification type and Edyta Truszkowska of the empowerment type.

Analysing his experienced life history, the first important biographical date is 1962: Wojtek Wejda was born as the second child into an average Polish family. It is important for his family history that his ancestors – having lived in the same town in Silesia for more than three generations – experienced many regime and border changes. The family seems to have adapted rather well to changing historical circumstances. Both female and male family members worked at the factory of a Prussian industrialist. They were able to maintain their working-class life despite the sweeping political changes of the first half of the 20th century. Wojtek was socialised in the PPR. The whole family accepted the political system and Wojtek made his career within it. In the 1980s, he became a secondary school chemistry teacher. Only after civil society organisations had been legalised in 1989 did Wojtek get involved with the Solidarity trade union at his school. Some other teachers had formed a local Solidarity group and Wojtek was asked to join them. After a few months, he became a local leader. First he attended training courses by external democracy promoters, mainly from the United States, before going on to organise and lead them himself. He made a typical career as a multiplier. From his work for the teachers' trade union he gradually evolved into one of the leaders of a democracy-promotion NGO in Warsaw. He gave democracy-education courses and training sessions not only in Poland, but also

in Ukraine or Belarus. In the second meeting of our interview I asked Wojtek to tell me more about the time he got the offer to work part-time in the democracy promotion organisation in the 1990s. He elaborated on the conditions and background of his decision and said:

> Non-governmental organisations in Poland were a rather young creation well, really, there is such a fear. For example, in my family they didn't have any idea, well, there was no social awareness about what is that – non-governmental organisations? Well, people they talk but they don't know. And my uncle who is a person of higher education, well, when I told him and explained what a foundation is, he asked me: 'But is this not a sect?' ((interviewee and interviewer laugh)). Well, because the term 'sect' had already started to work in society. People were afraid and they had already heard about it in the media and that people could get caught into these sects. And I told my uncle: 'Listen, that ain't no sect! Well, I think it's not, I've been working with them for almost ten years and they didn't force me into anything or ask me for money. Well, we do provide trainings! We sow the idea of democracy and it seems that this is right and necessary' [Interview 2 with Wojtek Wejda, 2008, p. 3f.; translation from Polish into English I.A.].

In this fragment from the interview, Wojtek refers to the discourse mentioned above according to which NGOs are almost unknown in Poland and civil society is weak. But Wojtek also stresses the qualifications that he himself got from "doing civil society" and which at the same time qualify him to do it again. He also links democracy and civil society. In his own interpretation of his life story he stresses how much he owed to the initial workshops: social acceptance and inclusion as well as new techniques and methods for adapting to the new liberal job market and pluralistic democracy, i.e. the public sphere. Taking into consideration Wojtek's family history, in which adapting to changing circumstances has been an action pattern passed on down the generations, his positive experiences with democracy promotion can be seen as continuing and transforming the pattern. In the 2000s he got involved with the European Union accession process and organised trainings and workshops. As a qualified expert in the field he found many jobs, got connected with local and regional political and economic elites and experienced social inclusion on a more power-related level. It is not the "us against them" pattern, but rather "us together with them" [Alber 2015, 2016]. Today he is still a democracy promoter for an NGO in Warsaw, but also a freelancer in the field of civil society and democracy promotion.

To summarise the qualification type: The representatives of the type do civil society because of and as a special qualification. They see their expertise as the key to their successful career within the civil society sector. Their civic engagement started – before or directly after 1989 – with voluntary work, for instance, in the Scouts or with Western democracy promoters. The skills acquired

in voluntary work (management skills etc.) were useful for institutionalising NGOs and foundations and the actors moved from voluntary to paid work. The civic engagement of this type is usually highly professionalised and formalised. Civic engagement as a qualification serves as a solution to the new social problem of democratic transition and unemployment. The representatives of this type perceive themselves as experts qualified to educate others on democracy, human rights and the liberal job market. The reconstruction of the biographical genesis of this pattern shows that civic engagement functions as a means of social inclusion in terms of political and societal power. Within certain elite networks in major towns, civil society activists can reach highly influential political positions. In many cases the subjects continued their family tradition of adapting quickly to new political frameworks and of keeping or achieving high social positions [Alber 2016a: 222–224].

CONCLUSION

Using the biographical and discourse analytical approach to civil society, I focussed on the intersubjective life world, in which, through everyday actions, this vague, yet powerful social phenomenon is constantly being re-constructed and transformed. Triangulation of biographical analysis and discourse analysis proved very fruitful for the analysis of "doing civil society" in Poland after 1989 from different perspectives. Through SKAD, the stock of knowledge, interpretative schemes and action patterns organised in discourses could be reconstructed. Although the discourse on civil society in post-socialist Poland can be characterised as diversified due to historical developments, only two interpretative types of civic engagement were found within the sample of democracy and human rights activists: qualification and empowerment. The theoretical generalisation in terms of GTM applies only to these types of activists. Further research on different fields of civil society like charity, sports or cultural organisations would therefore be valuable.

Within the field of democracy and human rights activism, the biographical geneses of action patterns and interpretative schemes show that civic engagement functions as a means for social inclusion at different levels for both the qualification and empowerment types. The reconstruction of the biographical cases illustrates that abstract terms like peace, democracy or national sovereignty are not the main incentives for involvement. The biographical functions of engagement are: to become socially included, do biographical work or gain influence. The "high ideals" serve more as an interpretative scheme which activists

can refer to when presenting their activities, for instance, to a young German female researcher in an interview. Through various offline and online activities like organising workshops and demonstrations, blogging or writing open letters civil society activists reproduce and transform the civil society discourse, which simultaneously structures their civic engagement within "knowledge domains and claims" [Keller 2012: 53]. They "are doing civil society" on several levels, but within certain discursive limits. And, of course, my own study also contributes to the reproduction of the powerful, yet unclear discourse of civil society – but hopefully to its transformation at certain points as well.

REFERENCES

Adloff Frank. 2005. *Zivilgesellschaft. Theorie und politische Praxis*. Frankfurt/Main: Campus.

Alber Ina. 2015. Creating civil society. Democracy promotion in transnational contexts. In: *Society and nation in transnational processes in Europe*, R. Schattkowsky, M. Řezník (eds.), 281–299. Cambridge/UK: Cambridge Scholars.

Alber Ina. 2016a. *Zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement in Polen. Ein biographietheoretischer und diskursanalytischer Zugang*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Alber Ina. 2016b. "Die diskursive Konstruktion von Samizdat. Erfahrungen und Erzählungen polnischer Zivilgesellschaftsaktivistinnen und -aktivisten". *Journal of East Central European Studies (ZfO)* 65(1): 108–126.

Arndt Agnes. 2013. Renaissance or reconstruction? Intellectual transfer of civil society discourses between Eastern and Western Europe. In: *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond. Transnational MediaDuring and after Socialism*, F. Kind-Kovács, J. Labov (eds.), 156–171. New York: Berghahn Books.

Berger Peter L., **Thomas Luckmann**. 1967. *The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor books.

Borodziej Włodzimierz. 2010. *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert*. München: Beck.

Cohen Jean L., **Andrew Arato**. 1995. *Civil society and political theory*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Craig Gary, **Marjorie Mayo**. 1995. Community participation and empowerment. The human face of structural adjustment or tools for democratic transition? In: *Community empowerment. A reader in participation and development*, G. Craig, M. Mayo (eds.), 1–11. London: Zed Books.

Denzin Norman K. 1970. *The research act. A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Chicago, Ill: Aldine.

Denzin Norman K. 2012. "Triangulation 2.0". *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 6(2): 80–88.

Deutsche Welle. 2015. EU warns Poland on rule of law as constitutional crisis escalates. http://www.dw.com/en/eu-warns-poland-on-rule-of-law-as-constitutional-crisis-escalates/a-18937977 [access: 17.11.2016].

Fielding Nigel G., **Jane L. Fielding**. 1986. *Linking data.* London: SAGE.

Flick Uwe. 2004. *Triangulation. Eine Einführung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Freise Matthias. 2004. *Externe Demokratieförderung in postsozialistischen Transformationsstaaten*. Münster: LIT.

Glaser Barney G., **Anselm L. Strauss**. 1967/2006. *The discovery of grounded theory. Strategies for qualitative research*. Reprint. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction.

Gliński Piotr. 2002. The shaping of civil society in Poland. The trends and an outlook. In: *Postsocialist transformations and civil society in a globalizing world*, H.-P. Meier-Dallach, J. Juchler (eds.), 57–74. Huntington, NY: Nova Science.

Herbst Jan. 2011. Po co są organizacje? http://osektorze.ngo.pl/x/631719 [access: 17.11.2016].

Howard Marc Morjé. 2002. *The weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irgang Winfried. 1995. Schlesien nach 1945. In: *Schlesien. Geschichte, Kultur und Wirtschaft*, W. Irgang, W. Bein, H. Neubach (eds.), 246–250. Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik.

Keane John. 1988. *Civil society and the state. New European perspectives*. London: Verso.

Keller Reiner. 2012. "Entering discourses. A new agenda for qualitative research and sociology of knowledge". *Qualitative Sociology Review* 3(2): 46–75.

Keller Reiner. 2013. *Doing discourse research. An introduction for social scientists*. London: SAGE.

Klein Ansgar. 2001. *Der Diskurs der Zivilgesellschaft. Politische Kontexte und demokratietheoretische Bezüge der neueren Begriffsverwendung*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Klon/Jawor. 2004. NGOs in Poland. Basic facts. http://www.ngo.pl/files/01english.ngo.pl/public/Basic_facts_2004.pdf [access: 17.11.2016].

Klon/Jawor. 2015. Polskie organizacje pozarządowe 2015. http://fakty.ngo.pl/files/wiadomosci.ngo.pl/public/civicpedia/KondycjaNGO2015.pdf [access: 17.11.2016].

Knoblauch Hubert. 2010. Subjekt, Interaktion und Institution. Vorschläge zur Triangulation in Theorie und Methodologie. In: *Fragile Sozialität. Inszenierungen, Sinnwelten, Existenzbastler*, A. Honer, M. Meuser, M. Pfadenhauer (eds.), 115–128. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Kocka Jürgen. 2004. Zivilgesellschaft in Historischer Perspektive. In: *Zivilgesellschaft als Geschichte. Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, R. Jessen, S. Reichardt, A. Klein (eds.), 29–42. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Köckeis-Stangl Eva. 1980. Methoden der Sozialisationsforschung. In: *Handbuch der Sozialisationsforschung*. K. Hurrelmann, D. Ulich (eds.), 321–370. Weinheim: Beltz.

Kubik Jan, Grzegorz Ekiert. 2000. Civil society from Abroad. The role of foreign assistance in the democratization of Poland. Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. http://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/91_2000-01_ekiertfinal2.pdf [access: 16.11.16].

Nathanson Maurice. 1970. "Phenomenology and typification. A study in the philosophy of Alfred Schutz". *Social Research* 37(1): 1–22.

Oevermann Ulrich. 2001. "Die Struktur sozialer Deutungsmuster. Versuch einer Aktualisierung". *Sozialer Sinn* 2(1): 35–81.

Oevermann Ulrich, **Tilmann Allert**, **Elisabeth Konau**, **Jürgen Krambeck**. 1979. Die Methodologie einer "objektiven Hermeneutik" und ihre allgemeine Bedeutung in den Sozialwissenschaften. In: *Interpretative Verfahren in den Sozial- und Textwissenschaften*, H.-G. Soeffner (ed.), 352–434. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Quesel Carsten. 1994. *Soziale Emanzipation. Kollektivismus und Demokratie im Umbruch von der ständischen zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in Deutschland*. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang.

Quigley Kevin F. 2000. Lofty goals, modest results. Assisting civil society in Eastern Europe. In: *Funding virtue. Civil society aid and democracy promotion*, M. Ottaway, T. Carothers (eds.), 191–215. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Rosenthal Gabriele. 2003. "The healing effects of storytelling. On the conditions of curative storytelling in the context of research and counseling". *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(6): 915–933.

Rosenthal Gabriele. 2004. Biographical research. In: *Qualitative research practice*, C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, D. Silverman (eds.), 48–64. London: SAGE.

Rosenthal Gabriele. 2006. The narrated life story. On the Interrelation between experience, memory and narration. In: *Narrative, memory & knowledge. Representations, aesthetics, contexts*, K. Milnes, C. Horrocks, N. Kelly, B. Roberts (eds.), 1–15. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press.

Schetsche Michael, **Ina Schmied-Knittel**. 2013. "Deutungsmuster im Diskurs. Zur Möglich-keit der Integration der Deutungsmusteranalyse in die Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse". *Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung* 1(1): 24–45.

Schütz Alfred, **Thomas Luckmann**. 1973. *The structures of the life-world*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Schütze Fritz. 1976. Zur Hervorlockung und Analyse von Erzählungen thematisch relevanter Geschichten im Rahmen soziologischer Feldforschung. In: *Kommunikative Sozialforschung. Alltagswissen und Alltagshandeln, Gemeindemachtforschung, Polizei, politische Erwachse-nenbildung*, Arbeitsgruppe Bielefelder Soziologen (eds.), 159–260. München: Fink.

Schütze Fritz. 1983. "Biographieforschung und narratives Interview" *Neue Praxis. Kritische Zeitschrift für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik* 13(3): 283–293.

Słodkowska Inka. 2006. *Społeczeństwo obywatelskie na tle historycznego przełomu. Polska 1980–89*. Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk.

Soeffner Hans-Georg. 2004. *Auslegung des Alltags. Der Alltag der Auslegung*. 2nd edition. Konstanz: UVK.

Stegmann Natali. 2016. "Open letters. Substance and circumstances of communication process-es in late socialist Czechoslovakia and Poland", *Journal of East Central European Studies (ZfO)* 65(1): 43–63.

Sztompka Piotr. 1993. "Civilizational incompetence. The trap of post-communist societies", *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 22 (2): 85–95.

UN Women-Headquarters. 2016. Women's empowerment principles. http://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/businesses-and-foundations/womens-empowerment-principles [acess: 16.11.2016].

Wedel Janine R. 1998. *Collision and collusion. The strange case of Western aid to Eastern Europe 1989–1998*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

West Candace, **Don H. Zimmerman**. 1987. "Doing Gender". *Gender & Society* 1(2): 125–151.

Załęski Paweł Stefan. 2013. Self-governing republic in the thought of the solidarity movement in Poland. Why Solidarity was not a civil society, working papers on the solidarity movement 07/2013. http://solidarnosc.collegium.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/WPSM-7.pdf [access: 17.11.2016].

Ina Alber

DOING CIVIL SOCIETY (PRAKTYKOWANIE SPOŁECZEŃSTWA OBYWATELSKIEGO) W POSTSOCJALISTYCZNEJ POLSCE. TRIANGULACJA ANALIZY BIOGRAFICZNEJ I ANALIZY DYSKURSU

Streszczenie

Artykuł ten traktuje o wzajemnym wpływie dyskursów oraz aktorów społecznych w ramach „praktykowania społeczeństwa obywatelskiego" (*doing civil society*) w codziennym życiu. Autorka koncentruje się na zróżnicowanym dyskursie społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Polsce, uwzględniając kontekst społeczno-historyczny tego zjawiska. Empiryczną podstawę prezentowanych w tekście badań jakościowych stanowią wywiady z działaczami na rzecz demokracji i praw człowieka. By ukazać analizowane zjawisko społeczne z różnych perspektyw, w ramach metodologii teorii ugruntowanej zastosowana została triangulacja analizy dyskursu i analizy biograficznej. Na poziomie wzorów działania oraz schematów interpretacyjnych zrekonstruowano dwa typy działających aktorów – typ zaangażowania opartego na kompetencjach i typ zaangażowania opartego na upełnomocnieniu. W artykule przedstawione zostały kolejno ramy metodologiczne, uwagi dotyczące konstrukcji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w dyskursie oraz – tytułem ilustracji – dwa studia przypadków odnoszące się do wspomnianych, modelowych kategorii działaczy społeczeństwa obywatelskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: badania biograficzne, analiza dyskursu, triangulacja, upełnomocnienie, promocja demokracji, socjologia wiedzy