Adapting to Survive or Thrive: Civil Society, the Third Sector and Social Movements in ‘Post-Socialist’ Spaces

Call for Papers for a Special Issue in Voluntary Sector Review

Guest editors:
Jo Crotty, Institute for Social Responsibility, Edge Hill University, UK
jo.crotty@edgehill.ac.uk;
Sergej Ljubownikow, Sheffield Management School, UK
s.ljubownikow@sheffield.ac.uk;
Viktoria Sereda, Institute of Ethnology, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Ukraine
sereda.vik@gmail.com

2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the end of the Soviet Union. This marked the end of centrally planned economies in Europe and Central Asia, and at the time, was heralded as a victory for freedom of thought, expression, enterprise and democracy. Initially, supported in many cases by western financing, the third sector in the FSU and CEE countries ballooned – filling a gap that had been severely restricted or prohibited by the regimes of Ceausescu, Honecker and Brezhnev – and optimism was high that functioning democracies with flourishing third sectors would emerge (see for example Bernhard, 1993).

In the 30 years that have followed, these countries have faced unprecedented challenges, including war in the former Yugoslavia, the so-called ‘colour’ revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kirgizstan, and the annexation of Crimea and arising hostilities, to name just a few. Moreover, in many states, including some who chose to join the EU, the third sector has faced an increasingly hostile operating environment that has sought to curtail its activity and ability to challenge the state through regulation and/or intimidation. Such an operating environment has made it harder to respond to needs arising from national crises, hold governments to account and/or bridge the gap between the individual and the state (see for example Szalai & Svensson, 2018; Crotty et. al., 2014). As a result civil society in the post-socialist space is often deemed as being ‘weak’ (Foa & Ekiert, 2017).

To date, how the academy has responded and reflected this has been patchy. The extant literature on Russian (see for example, Salomon et.al. 2020) and Polish (see for example, Jacobsson & Koroiczuk, 2017) civil society development is well developed, but far less is known about the development of civil society in Albania, Ukraine or Uzbekistan. The literature has also challenged dominant conceptualisations of civil society and social movements (see for example Gagyi, 2015; Fagan, 2005; Mishler & Rose, 1997), but again such conceptualisations can be further challenged by expanding the geographical context in which such phenomena are studied. Expanding the geographical focus of research on civil society has the potential to provide further insight into civil society and its manifestations. Thus in this special issue, we are looking to explore the development of civil society, the third sector, social movements and its agents within countries that have to date, received less research attention.

We are particularly keen to receive papers authored or co-authored by academics in-country. Papers can be longitudinal, looking at the development of a particular movement over time, or case study looking at a movement or group of organisations in response to a particular issue. We would particularly welcome papers that speak both to a particular geographical context and theoretical development. Papers that are qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods are all welcome. We also invite papers focused on policy and practice in these contexts, as well as research notes (see Voluntary Sector Review home page here for different types of papers).
Potential areas to explore include but are not limited to:

- The evolution of movements and organisations over time – for example, the environmental, women’s, LGBTQ+, disability rights, veterans, nationalist etc. - and their response to changing operating environments?
- Challenges to western conceptualisation of civil society, third sector, non-profit and the role thereof in the post-communist contexts?
- Case studies of groups or movements responding to national, regional or local issues – how they mobilised, success or failure, and the extent to which this reflects the prevailing environment in that context?
- Relationships between third sector groups/organisations and state/regulators and/or other stakeholders. How to groups form coalitions? How to they navigate the regulator environment? How do they raise money and access volunteers?
- Comparative papers that look at the determinants of civil society development across more than one national context across CEE/FSU and beyond.
- Papers examining the role and potential influence of diaspora communities and diaspora community organisation on civil society development in relevant contexts.
- The role of formal education programmes and activities of civil society development.
- The role of religion and religious organisations/communities in affecting civil society transformations.

If you are interested in submitting a paper proposal for this special issue, please email a 600-word abstract, outlining the article’s contents, including its methodology and fit with this special issue, alongside a 50-word author biographical statement, to crottyj@edgehill.ac.uk. All submissions must be received by March 1st 2022.

All submissions elected by the editors will be invited to submit a full article through the Voluntary Sector Review submission system, which will then be subject to the journal’s usual double-blind peer review procedures. Invitation to submit a full article does not guarantee publication, and all decisions are ultimately those of the journal editors. The deadline for full papers will be May 31st 2022.

If you have any questions about potential submissions please contact the special issue editors.

References:
Sereda V. (2020). ‘Social Distancing’ and Hierarchies of Belonging: The Case of Displaced Population from Donbas and Crimea. Europe-Asia Studies, online first