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List of Abbreviations

AMO – administered mass organisation
BDG – Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta (Belarusian Business Newspaper)
BHHRG – British Helsinki Human Rights Group
BPF – Belarusian Popular Front
BR – Belorusy i Rynok (Belarusians and the Market)
BSSR – Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
BRSM – Belorussskii respublikanskii soiuz molodiozhi (Belarusian Republical Youth Union)
CC CPB – Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia
CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis
CEE – Central and Eastern Europe
CPB – Communist Party of Belorussia
CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EaP – Eastern Partnership programme
FSU – former Soviet Union
GKChP – Gosudarstvenyi komitet po chrezvychainomu polozheniiu (State Committee for the State of Emergency)
IISEPS – Independent Institute for Social, Economic and Political Studies
KGB – Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
NGO – nongovernmental organisation
NN – Nasha Niva (Our Field)
NV – Narodnaia Volia (People’s Will)
OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
RQ – research question
SB – Sovetskaia Belorussiia (Soviet Belorussia)
UN – United Nations
Abstract

The thesis evaluates existing discourses on ‘civil society’ as mediated in the Belarusian press from 1991 until 2010, the former date corresponding with the country’s independence after the collapse of the USSR. It provides a chronological account of the concept’s use in Belarusian print media, an objective not addressed previously, and demonstrates how the articulations of ‘civil society’ in the media shifted over time and in response to contextual conditions. Drawing on the notion of ‘dialogue’ derived from Bakhtin’s studies, it reports on the multiplicity of voices and points of view that formed and informed ‘civil society’ discourses. By highlighting the different semantics given to the concept of ‘civil society’ when used in the Belarusian press, the thesis emphasises the ambiguity of the term that allows it to be used by various actors holding disparate ideological views. It argues that while the use of the concept can instil ideas that facilitate the promotion of democracy, it can also serve as an ideological foundation for authoritarian regimes. It may serve as a tool to promote nation-building and solidarity, the concept may also provoke divisions and alienation in society.

Another key argument of this thesis, which has been overlooked in research, is that the meaning of ‘civil society’ is determined by the type of its mediating institutions and their communication practices circumscribed by contextual factors. Drawing on a diverse representative selection of Belarusian print media, the thesis examines the style and discursive practices employed in the mediation of ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press whilst locating the debate in a broader socio-political context. It is within this context where the concept of civil society is constructed, legitimised, transformed, and deconstructed. In view of this, the discourse of civil society constitutes a language system that can be understood through Critical Discourse Analysis. It is these contextual factors and discursive practices that shaped the unique media environment that make my case different from other post-Soviet nations, while allowing comparisons to be drawn with the developments witnessed in the post-Socialist regions and globally.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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A Note on Transliteration and Translation

This thesis follows the Library of Congress system for the Russian and Belarusian languages. The Library of Congress system for both languages is available online: www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html. Conventional English spellings of Russian and Belarusian names, such as ‘Yeltsin’ or ‘Kolas’, have been retained. Further exceptions include the use of direct quotations, names and titles in both languages that are spelled out according to a differing system of transliteration in their original sources.

For reasons of consistency, transliterations are generally based on Russian spellings throughout the thesis (e.g. Lukashenko rather than Lukashenka). The Belarusian spelling is used when transliterating from Belarusian primary sources as well as citing directly sources transliterated in Belarusian. Also, all names of titles including the bibliography and primary references have been translated into English. All Russian to English and Belarusian to English translations are the author’s own, unless otherwise indicated. For the sake of clarity, all the translated primary sources used for the analysis in the chapters are provided in their original language in Appendix 2.
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Introduction

Civil society remains a topic of debate among politicians, scholars and the wider public in both established western democracies and increasingly, in countries in which non-liberal governments curtail societal freedoms. The ideas of civil society can be found in the aspirations of the United Kingdom Conservative and Liberal-Democratic Coalition of 2010 under the slogan of the ‘big society’. The new wave of democratisation of the Arab world referred to as the Arab Spring caused a sense of optimism regarding greater citizen participation, devolution, and local empowerment across the world. The political activism in Russia in response to the parliamentary elections in 2011 created hopes for awakening society, reviving the spirit of solidarity known in the 1990s and for bringing changes in society.1 The current events in Ukraine raise further questions about citizens’ ability to mobilise civil society to protest and change the future course of their country (Way, 2014). Differences apart, the problem of defining ‘civil society’ remains a common dilemma for many researchers in differing contexts. ‘Civil society’ has different meanings in different traditions; it serves different purposes at different times and places and constitutes both a means and an end (Edwards, 2009). The ambiguity of the concept makes it an object of study in its own right. This study is primarily concerned with evaluating the existing ideas of civil society and its uses with reference to the Belarusian press, since it is the press that represents the most diverse and accessible points of view on social and political issues. It provides a discursive space where meanings are shaped, transformed and deconstructed. The thesis seeks to provide a theoretical and analytical insight into country-specific terms used to describe civil society within the Belarusian media environment. It also aims to demonstrate how the articulation of ‘civil society’ has shifted over time and in response to contextual conditions in post-Communist regions focusing on the Republic of Belarus.

There are a number of reasons that make Belarus a case worth exploring beyond its own merits. Belarus shares a border with Russia to its east and the European Union to its west. It shares common values and history with both its western and eastern neighbours. Following the opposite route to that of its western neighbours – ‘from a limited free market economy to more state control, and from the promise of democracy, back to a regime of authoritarianism’ (Trantidis, 2008: 2), Belarus makes a distinctive and therefore important object of study. Western commentators use various definitions to explain social, cultural and political processes in the country, as the following book titles and comments suggest: ‘Belarus: A Denationalised Nation’ (Marples, 1999); ‘The Last Dictatorship in Europe’

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1 Refer to www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2011/12/111210_russia_rallies.shtml (accessed 5 April 2013).
Regardless of their arguably controversial and reductionist nature, these accounts mediate a broader political, cultural and historical context shaped by the complicated path the country has pursued over the period since its independence in 1991. It is these contextual factors that shape the unique media environment and civil society discourse that make this case different from other post-Soviet nations. Furthermore, Belarus remains an under-researched country in Europe primarily due to its isolationist policies. Independent research institutions face serious problems in Belarus (Heyken, 2003: 149). By drawing on a wide range of theories from social, political and cultural studies as well as on a variety of primary resources, my work attempts to provide analysis of the ways in which the concept of ‘civil society’ is utilised in Belarus’s specific media environment. Given the role civil society was expected to play in the post-Communist transition and in democratisation elsewhere, this thesis goes beyond the normative rationale and provides an insight into the complexity of the social, cultural and political contexts that determine the uneven and complicated path of post-Soviet development. By examining the case of Belarus, a country frequently bypassed in research, the thesis offers analysis on one of the possible trajectories of the transition while allowing parallels to be drawn with broader tendencies witnessed in the post-Soviet region.

**Research objectives and questions**

The media and civil society have been identified as an important paradigm in research in Belarus and elsewhere. Most scholars acknowledge that the media play an important role in developing civil society and they are necessary institutions to civil society. As Alexis de Tocqueville (1840, para.1) stated, ‘nothing but a newspaper can drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment’, conveying the idea that media foster civil society, freedom, and democracy. More recently, it was acknowledged that the media are crucial for ‘transmitting values, problem definitions and images of people in society that provide resources for people in thinking about their lives and their relations to government, politics and society’ (Bennett, 2000, as cited in Oates 2007: 1282). It shapes and structures public beliefs, attitudes and understandings of politics and social life in general. The understanding of media as an essential part of opinion-forming institutions is closely associated with what Habermas (1989) referred to as ‘the public sphere’. Consequently, the media have an important public role both in information provision and also in offering a forum for debate. Moreover, an independent media are considered one of civil society’s key elements, ‘part of an array of nongovernmental institutions making up the varied
outlets through which citizenship is carried out’ (Gross, 2002: 8). In such a role, the media act as a ‘watchdog’ holding government to account, monitoring misuses of state power or flows in policies (Voltmer, 2013: 26). Yet, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, it is also important to acknowledge that the media may play differing roles in various political systems.

The ‘media’ are a plural and collective term that denotes a space shaped and maintained by numerous actors (Green, 2009: 59-60) and it is associated with the social sites or arenas where meanings are ‘articulated, distributed and negotiated’ (Koller and Wodak, 2008: 1). Accordingly, meanings are created through ‘the social interactions of mediated communication’ (Green, 2009: 60) that involves the interplay of various institutions, practices and actors. ‘Mediation’ is an increasingly popular notion used by scholars to address how meanings are created and negotiated, while locating the media at the centre of cultural, political and social developments (Schulz, 2004: 90-2). Amongst an array of definitions, the following provides an adequate summary of this: ‘[m]ediation is movement of meaning from context to context, culture to culture, institution to institution, and person to person’ (Silverstone, 1999: 13). In each such movement reproduced by the media, a shift in meaning occurs as it moves through various social and cultural contexts that infiltrate and change it.

Importantly, a number of critical discourse scholars (for example, Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak) have successfully demonstrated the embeddedness of media in power relations. They have demonstrated how language used in the media by various actors transmits knowledge and represents and shapes our understanding of the world. As an example, Heller (2010: 277-83) sees the media as a discursive space, where social relations, legitimising ideologies and their authority are debated, re-defined and re-imagined by means of linguistic practice. She accentuates the importance of understanding how discursive resources are mobilised in the service of constructing or ‘imagining’ a community. In view of this, there is a clear link between the media’s potential for conceptual legitimisation and its impact on political culture within a society. The media reflect and influence the formation and expression of social life, politics and culture, including the understanding of ‘civil society’, democracy and civic participation. Such an understanding is useful for analysing how mass communication works in a post-Soviet environment and specifically in Belarus, how meanings are shaped and established, and how they reflect wider social, political and cultural issues.
Similar to a number of post-Soviet countries, Belarus saw the emergence of interest towards civil society. It became an important analytical and discursive category for many actors. However, as the following sections attest, despite the proliferation of interest, the challenge of defining the term as used in both post-Soviet scholarly debates and media discourses remains unaddressed. Existing literature suggests that ‘civil society’ in Belarus appears to be a well-researched phenomenon whilst the meaning of the term itself and how it is articulated by various actors in various contexts has largely been ignored. A major focus has been placed on structural factors and national interests, which inhibited or fostered the development of civil society. Furthermore, the study of civil society often emerged from a normative concern for democratic politics and has been associated with the positive influence of civil society on democracy and democratisation. This tends to lead to the substitution of ‘descriptive or explanatory concepts with prescriptive categories’, which over-simplifies any analysis (Koltsova, 2006: 4).

There is clearly a lack of research about the situation-specific understanding of ‘civil society’ in a Belarusian context; about the notion’s particular applicability and use, together with its discursive construction and deconstruction in public discourse. A more complex approach than suggested by normatively oriented perspectives is needed. We need to acknowledge further that meanings attributed to the concept of civil society vary depending on differing conceptual traditions, forms of governance and social order, the voice of the actor broadcast by the media, or simply on the connotations implied by the native language. As Jensen (2006: 41) states, ‘there is no general concept picked out by the expression ‘civil society’: uses of ‘civil society’ are theory-laden such that they can only be understood from within the theoretical, practical, and historical contexts in which they originate. [...] The idea of ‘civil society’ still retains critical value, provided that the theorist locates it in a particular context’. Therefore, instead of pursuing a universal idea of ‘civil society’, the study of the term should be focused on its particular application and its uses. At the same time, the study should not be entirely disconnected from the normative position of what ‘civil society’ should signify. It should integrate the theory and theoretical models with a particular social reality in a balanced and pluralistic way. In this view, we should treat Belarusian civil society as an individual case due to the multifaceted nature of post-Soviet transition (Titarenko, 1998: 416-21). At the same time, we should take into account a common vector that can be observed in the evolution of the concept of civil society in post-Soviet regions and globally.
Media provide a crucial platform for such an investigation. Examining media texts permits the analysis of use of the term ‘civil society’, together with reflexion on the social, cultural and political realm it describes, in the very arena in which its meaning principally unfolds. ‘Each way of “speaking civil society” reflects […] a way of distinct life and relations particular to that life’ (Roginsky and Shortall, 2009: 475). Yet, as we shall see in the following sections, the media in Belarus and beyond have been primarily analysed through functionalist or structural approaches that tend to ignore the media’s role in meaning formation and its impact on social life. We have yet to see research focusing on how the concept of civil society is operationalised within the specific conditions provided by the Belarusian media environment: what terminological resources for its conceptualisation are utilised, by whom and with what purpose; and how these articulations represent social and political development and its obstacles in Belarus. Investigating the actors using the concept can help us see what is at stake in its use, and what opinions and voices have become explicit or domineering in society. Looking into the context may indicate whether the term serves to transform or preserve the political status quo, whether the term is tolerant or supportive of authoritarian rule, or favours and fosters liberal democratic polity. Finally, the analysis of the language used in the media to express the idea not only has the potential to explain the multiple semantics applied to the concept, but also to show how social and political power may be exercised through its use. In short, as White (2007: 380) notes, any claims that a flourishing civil society leads to democratisation would be pointless unless one examined the actual content of this concept.

Accordingly, this work aims to map the continual reshaping and reinterpretation of the ideas of ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press and how it is used and sometimes abused by new actors in new and evolving contexts circumscribed by media environment. In contrast to other research, based on normative and structural perspectives, this thesis approaches media as a discursive space for investigating the production of a mediated discourse as a result of the complex interaction between various actors (politicians, academics, public figures, journalists, etc.), socio-political events and discursive practices within the context of media influence. I have divided my research questions into the three major sections. Each of the sections is headed by one key question followed by a more specific description of my enquiry:
1) What discourses on ‘civil society’ have been shaped and appropriated in the Belarusian press between the years 1991 and 2010 and for what purposes? With what theoretical traditions and influences can these discourses be associated and what terminology has been utilised? Who has constructed it, with what purpose and in whose interest? How have the definitions of ‘civil society’ changed over the time frame?

2) What contextual factors influenced the choice of the term’s use? What power relations accompanied these discursive practices? How did these power relations manifest themselves in media texts? What impact did these factors make on the term’s meaning?

3) What mediating practices and strategies have been involved in these processes? How has the legitimisation/delegitimisation of the concept occurred in the Belarusian media space? What further conclusions can be drawn from these practices with regards to the media and political culture in Belarus? How does this media culture compare to that of the post-Soviet states and a broader geographical context?

To track the complexity of the dynamic in the term’s use as well as the evolution of its meaning in media discourse, I adopt a diachronic approach. Such an approach allows me to gain a deeper and more systematic insight into the problem. I have divided my research into periods according to major socio-political developments that brought significant changes into the country’s political, social and cultural life. These changes, I believe, find their reflection in the understanding and use of the term ‘civil society’. Accordingly, I have identified the following periods:

- 1991 to 1993 - the formation of the new Belarusian state;
- 1994 to 2000 - the decline of democracy;
- 2001 to 2004 - state-building and the consolidation of presidential power;
- 2005 to 2007 - electoral politics of 2006 in the context of ‘colour revolutions’;
- 2008 to 2010 - ‘normalisation’ period or ‘limited liberalisation’, followed by the protests of December 2010.
Starting my investigation in 1991, a point chosen for its historical significance as it marked the beginning of the formation of independent Belarus following the collapse of the USSR, I consider each period separately and structure my chapters accordingly. In each chapter I analyse how the concept of civil society is operationalised in the press over a particular period, unpacking the concept’s content, structures, theoretical traditions and influences while together reflecting on the nature and style of its mediation.

**Outline of the Belarusian media landscape and primary sources**

Belarus, in contrast to other post-Soviet states, has seen no real privatisation of the media.\(^2\) While state subsidisation of the state-managed media is considerable, the independent media have undergone a number of hardships, from financial to legislative.\(^3\) The state was found to exercise wide mechanisms of censorship despite the constitutional prohibition of censorship in Belarus. Amongst the tools highlighted that curb media freedom in Belarus were: refusal by state printing houses and state distribution agents to serve alternative outlets; abuse of criminal defamation and extremism laws; restrictive access to information and advertising for alternative media; abuse of state subsidies and the persecution of journalists (Richter, 2008; Aliaksandraŭ and Bastunets, 2014). These practices were particularly prominent in the context of parliamentary and presidential elections. As a result, a number of periodicals and broadcasting outlets had no choice but to close down or move to neighbouring countries. Thus, having lost its licence to transmit from Belarus, BelSat, an independent television channel, is broadcast from Poland. In the print sector, the administrative control of the publishing and distribution system provides an environment allowing the state-owned press to outperform its competitors in terms of circulation (see Table 1, p. 20). A number of independent periodicals were banned from the state distribution system between 2005 and 2008 and systematically received warnings from the government. Out of the 1403\(^4\) registered periodicals, less than thirty can be referred to as independent and also political. They provide a platform for diverse social groups producing alternative content. However, they may defer to the official media in both a professional and technological sense. The lack of impartial and objective journalism is frequently acknowledged (Klaskoŭski, 2007: 27-9; Manaev, 1993: 79). The small circulation of the independent media and the limited opportunities for professional development mean the alternative media have little impact on addressing the informational

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\(^2\) Refer to Manaev (2003) for further detail.


imbalance in the country. Yet, whilst restricted, over-politicised and struggling to survive, it provides a channel for alternative opinion and information.

As indicated, the media provide a valuable empirical platform for my research. An opinion poll conducted in May 2011 indicated that 75.7 percent of the respondents in Belarus receive their information from television, 34 percent from newspapers, 33.4 percent from the Internet, 28 percent from friends and other people, and 20.5 percent from the radio. As the poll demonstrates, broadcast media in Belarus have a primary position in terms of audience reach in comparison to other sources and this makes television the object of strict control by the government. The majority of broadcast media in Belarus are state-owned (Aliaksandraŭ and Bastunets, 2014:6) and it is well documented that TV frequently serves as an instrument of official propaganda (Manaev, 2014: 210). While the overall access to the Internet has seen significant increase (63 percent), only a fraction of those (21.8 percent of all Internet users) go on-line to obtain political information, with the majority using the Internet for communication and entertainment, according to a poll conducted by Independent Institute for Social, Economic and Political Studies in March 2013 (Manaev, 2014: 212). Therefore, it is the press that represents the most accessible source of diverse views on the Belarusian state of affairs; this fact determines the choice of my sources.

The largest of the print sources is the daily Sovetskaia Belorussiia – Belarus Segodnia (Soviet Belarus – Belarus’ Segodnia), issued by the presidential administration. Sovetskaia Belorussiia has been a popular object of analysis and its role in supporting the ideology and propaganda of the state is well documented (Miazhevič, 2007; Furs, 2008). To compensate for the circulation imbalance and to also sample a wider spectrum of views within society I refer to a number of sources of the independent press. Firstly, the leading independent Narodnaia Volia (People’s Will), founded by Iosif Seredich in 1995, is published twice weekly. The newspaper positions itself as oppositional to the current regime providing space for a wide spectrum of political opponents and ensuring political communication for most political campaigns since 1996. It is one of the most popular sources of oppositional print, although it is often criticised for its over politicised views. Secondly, I will examine the independent weekly Nasha Niva (literally Our Field). According to the newspaper’s mission statement, it is ‘a cultural symbol and a living

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5 Available at www.iiseps.org/data11-151.html (accessed 15 January 2012). A similar conclusion can be reached from a more recent report on media in Belarus by Aliaksandraŭ and Bastunets (2014: 6-9), where it was indicated that broadcast media remained the primary source of information for most Belarusians with the overall reach of television being 98.4% of the population aged over 15.
tradition. Now, as [more than] a hundred years ago, it is the voice of Belarusian independent society’. It represents a national tradition of publicity that takes roots from the original *Nasha Niva*, the first legal Belarusian newspaper that functioned from 1906-1915.\(^6\)

The newspaper has always been in private ownership and is currently funded by private donations. The majority of the newspaper’s content is published in Belarusian, and both *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaia Volia* aim their publications at the national intelligentsia and various democratic groups.

I also include *Belorusy i Rynok* (Belarussians and the Market) amongst my primary sources. The newspaper (originally *Belorusskii Rynok* (Belarusian Market)) was founded in 1990. It claims to be the first independent newspaper providing complex analysis of the emergence of the free market economy and fledgling businesses in the country. Its stated aim is to promote the development of democratic institutions in society. The structure of the newspaper comprises three main sections: ‘current affairs’, ‘economics’, and ‘society’. The latter section includes ‘civil society’ as a separate theme. With businessmen and entrepreneurs as its prime audience, the newspaper gained a reputation for providing neutral, objective and analytical data not only on market issues, but also on societal and cultural processes in the country. Furthermore, *Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta* (Belarusian Business Paper, also known as *BDG*) offers a useful platform for analysis and compensates for possible gaps in the availability of data in some of the sources. *BDG* was founded in 1992 and its readership is not limited to the business community, as suggested by its name. As stated by one of the leading alternative civic campaigns ‘Speak the Truth!’ (*Havary praudu!*), *Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta* ‘has always presented its own point of view to its readers, the point of view of journalists, specialists and experts, and not the views of certain political forces. This is why *BDG* was read by both authorities and the opposition’.\(^7\)

Its Editors in Chief were Aleksandr Volvachev, Pavel Sheremet and Svetlana Kalinkina and its team included Valentin Zhdanko (Editor-in-Chief of ‘*Svaboda*’); special correspondent Andrei Makhovsky of ‘Reiter’; publicists Aleksandr Feduta and Roman Iakovlevsky; together with Victor Martinovich and Irina Khalip. All these are prominent figures known in Belarus, hold international awards and represent the ‘real school of Belarusian journalism’.\(^8\) *BDG* is known for its critical attitudes towards the authorities. In 2004 the newspaper was forced to begin printing in the neighbouring Russian town of Smolensk and disappeared from the newsstands, remaining only online.

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\(^6\) Refer to Zaprudnik (1998: 159-160) for further detail.

\(^7\) ‘*Speak the Truth!*’ (07.02.2012) ‘*BDG* is twenty years old’. Available at http://zapraudu.info/bdg-20-let/ (accessed 15 February 2012).

\(^8\) *Ibid.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Founded in</th>
<th>Archive online from</th>
<th>Online from</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasha Niva (Our Soil)</td>
<td>Independent (Editors; run on public donations)</td>
<td>1906 (1991)</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Mostly in Belarusian</td>
<td>7 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narodnaia Volia (People’s Will)</td>
<td>Independent (Editor in Chief Iosif Seredich)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Belarusian and Russian</td>
<td>27 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovetskaia Belorussiia – Belarus’ Segodnia (Soviet Belorussia-Belarus Today)</td>
<td>State-owned (The president’s administration)</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beloruskaia Deloavaia Gazeta (Belarusian Business Newspaper)</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>20 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belorusy i Rynok (Belarusians and the Market)</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>12 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the twenty-first century saw the global increased use of computers and the Internet, and Belarus was no exception. This fact provided global channels of communication offering Belarusian society a greater choice of opinion and information. As indicated above, many alternative sources were forced to go online. State media also followed the trend, with *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* functioning online from 2008. Interestingly, the distribution of online access to print media produces a different picture to ‘hard-copy’ circulation, the independent press taking the greater share (see Table 2).

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The data was gathered in February 2012 from various sources and does not capture the circulation dynamics during the two decades.
Table 2: Belarus’s print media online by 02.02.12, 15: 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>All visitors</th>
<th>From Belarus</th>
<th>Page reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Komsomolskaia Pravda v Belarusi</td>
<td>39864</td>
<td>27897 (69%)</td>
<td>185278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nasha Niva</td>
<td>11955</td>
<td>9465 (79%)</td>
<td>72272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Narodnaia Volia</td>
<td>3866</td>
<td>3168 (81%)</td>
<td>16742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sovetskaia Belorussiia</td>
<td>3194</td>
<td>2134 (66%)</td>
<td>10802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Belorusy i Rynok</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>394 (78%)</td>
<td>1177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 demonstrates, according to Akavita.by’s ratings on 02.02.12 (15: 28), out of 276 online print media sources, Nasha Niva was second on the list (11,955 site visitors), immediately followed by Narodnaia Volia (3,866 site visitors) and Sovetskaia Belorussiia – Belarus’ Segodnia with (3,194 visitors). With these recent ‘web’ developments, the newspapers realised further opportunities to provide an alternative point of view, but such developments cannot guarantee the involvement and interest of the public in socio-political issues as demonstrated by Morozov (2011). Table 2 also attests to this with Komsomolskaia Pravda v Belarusi, the Russian based tabloid style periodical taking primary position in the ratings. While taking into account these limitations and restrictions, I chose the press as the object of my analysis with the focus of investigation on the uses of the term ‘civil society’ for the reasons stated. My research is guided by a number of theoretical assumptions and disciplines that are outlined in the following sections.

The evolution of the concept of civil society in historical and geographical contexts

Shifting theoretical paradigms of ‘civil society’

‘Civil society’ is a ‘historically-embedded’ (Anjum, 2010: 148), polysemous, and ambiguous concept since it has been given different meanings in differing historical-temporal contexts in Europe and beyond. The concept of civil society has its origins in Ancient Greece. According to Cohen and Arato (1997: 84), the first version of the concept of civil society appeared in Aristotle’s work and was referred to as politike koinonia, political society or community. Politike koinonia was defined as ‘a public ethical-political community of free and equal citizens under a legally defined system of rule’ (Cohen and Arato, 1997: 84). The term was translated into Latin as societas civilis. Aristotle’s notion is

The data is available at www.akavita.by (accessed 2 February 2012).
believed to be a prototype of the understanding of ‘civil society’ that entered into European political philosophy. The idea re-emerged in the later-seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries as the result of a crisis in social order \(^{11}\) and as an attempt to overcome newly perceived tensions between public and private realms, and between the existing models of social order and authority (Seligman, 2002: 13-14). The European thinkers and theorists of the Enlightenment and early modern period understood ‘civil society’ in a variety of ways. It was seen as a sphere of collective public life and self-interest or political realm, in contrast to ‘the state of nature’ by Hobbes and Locke (Anjum, 2010: 152). It was understood as ‘a critique of absolutism or monarchy by Montesquieu and Kant’, and as ‘a self-regulatory and self-governing society in opposition to the state by Ferguson’ (Anjum, 2010: 152). It was perceived as ‘motivating force of economic activity’ by Smith (Seligman, 2002: 19). It was approached as ‘a legal sphere of the state’ by Hegel, and as ‘an economic structure in a polity’ by Marx (Anjum, 2010: 152).

In modern times, a number of traditions and perspectives can be identified in scholarly research regarding ‘civil society’. Conceptually, ‘civil society’ is often analysed in terms of ‘associational life’, a realm of intermediary organizations that exist between the individual and the state (Edwards, 2009: 18-24). This approach takes roots in the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville on democracy in early nineteenth century America. Tocqueville (1840) saw a viable civil society comprised of independent associations as a safe-guard against a centralised and powerful state, as a means of promoting democratic equality, and also as a service provider for people’s needs. His views became a source of inspiration for the contemporary liberal theory of ‘civil society’. The theory stresses that autonomous voluntary organisations and associational activities are the core of civil society. The contemporary advocates of such a definition emphasise the key role civil society may play in achieving democracy. Following this tradition, Robert Putnam (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, 1993) further established the association between the density of civic associations and good governance, promoting the idea of active or responsible citizenship through community participation. He saw ‘social capital’, the diversity of links and bonds within society, as an essential factor in the development of a civic culture leading to democratisation.

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\(^{11}\) Among the crises, Seligman (2002: 14) listed ‘the commercialisation of land, labour, and capital, the growth of market economies, the age of discoveries, and the English and later North American and continental revolutions’.
In contemporary understanding, there is also a strong theoretical tradition of associating ‘civil society’ with a space and an arena for debate and contestation derived from Hegel, Marx, Gramsci and Habermas. The special metaphor of ‘sphere’ frequently used to define the notion, emphasises the autonomy of civil society from other realms such as the state and the market that together form a whole society (Jensen, 2006: 41). This definition is reminiscent of Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato’s (Cohen and Arato, 1997: ix-x) tripartite model, which approaches ‘civil society’ as ‘a sphere of interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere […], a sphere of associations […], social movements, and forms of public communication’. Their insights provided a crucial ground in social and political theory by linking ‘civil society’ and democratisation. Drawing on the work of Habermas, they also referred to ‘mediating spheres created by civil society’ through which various members of society can influence political and economic processes. Such an ideal of public communication was identified by Habermas (2006) as a potential forum in which the public interest could be rationally and critically discussed. By participating in debate, citizens could impact on matters of public concern. From a slightly different perspective, ‘civil society’ is interpreted as a sphere that emerges as a result of the failure of the state to respond to the needs or claims of its citizens. In this view, ‘civil society’ provides the political space, the ‘political and ideological arena’, where, according to Gramsci, ‘the control that the dominant class has over society can be overturned through the development of counter-hegemonic associations that represent alternative norms’ (Hyden, 1997: 9). Thus, according to this perspective, ‘civil society’ is a domain of voluntary associations juxtaposed to the state; it is the space outside the state where alternative hegemonies are established and where political culture is shaped. After Gramsci, the concept was sidelined to the margins of academic and public discourse (Anjum, 2010: 157) to be revived in the 1970s and the 1990s by Central and East European dissidents, as the following sections demonstrate.

This brief historical overview of the development of the notion has demonstrated that the idea of civil society produces multiple discourses and debates and encompasses a range of theoretical traditions and historical influences. What unites these traditions is the fact that followers of these approaches often see civil society as a means of progressing towards a better society (Edwards, 2009: 45-9; 82-4); as a source of positive ends and ideals (Seligman, 1992: 197-8); as one of the crucial premises of democracy, pluralism, good governance, and successful social and economic development (Edwards, 2011: 4-7).
As demonstrated, the concept of civil society is continually being reshaped and reinterpreted by new actors in new contexts. During the 1980s-1990s, a period mostly associated with struggles in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) against Soviet rule, civil society provided an arena for mass collective contestation, raising hopes for a new form of politics. The idea of civil society was rediscovered by Central and Eastern European dissident intellectuals, of which key representatives were Vaclav Havel, Gyorgy Konrad and Adam Michnik. However, the Eastern European political opposition did not initially use the term ‘civil society’. Instead, the ideas of ‘parallel structures’, ‘alternative society’ and ‘underground society’ free of Party supervision were proposed and elaborated (Bugajski and Pollack, 1989: 97-8). The dissident intellectuals shared an oppositional stance towards the state, a state ‘which should be protested against’ (‘living the truth’), escaped (‘antipolitics’) or fought against (‘new evolutionism’) (Celichowski, 2004: 72). These views were recognised and referred to as the ‘return to the idea of civil society’ by western intellectuals (Glinski, 2011: 272). Not without reason, Fine (1997: 10) referred to Eastern European civil society as ‘the most radical version of civil society theory’ and also ‘the most romantic’.

Nowhere was this more applicable than in Poland. According to Glinski (2011), the conceptual roots of the Polish notion of civil society originate in the programme for a Self-governing Republic adopted by the Solidarity movement in 1981. One of the key postulates promoted ‘the self-organisation of society in all its areas, branches and segments’ (Glinski, 2011: 272). Following this oppositional perspective, ‘civil society’ was defined as ‘a sphere different, independent, and opposed to the state’ (Mastnak, 2005: 324). This approach, in which ‘civil society’ is understood as antagonistic to the state and also as a space where alternative hegemonies can be established, is derived from Gramsci. It is sometimes referred to as the East European political tradition (Seligman, 1992: 3-4; Chebankova, 2013: 102-3). However, the interpretive ideas of civil society, derived from the works of the Polish Solidarity scholars and intellectuals in describing their resistance to the repressive state, when viewed in purely Gramscian terms, fail to represent the overall diversity of social life constituted by civil society. Alternative interpretations of Polish ‘civil society’ included arguments that the idea of civil society was primarily associated...
with the Catholic roots of Polish culture (Kharkhordin, 2005: 48). In a similar vein, Michal Buchowski (1996) by employing an anthropological approach, explored multifaceted civic society structures, overlooked by political scientists. He identified the church, family, an underground press, and many other associations, both official and unofficial, that flourished in Communist Poland as an essential part of civil society. He demonstrated how other ‘level of co-operation based upon informal networks deeply embedded in the local community’ (Buchowski, 1996: 81), sometimes also referred to as ‘independent society’, challenged the legitimacy of the state and eventually led to structural changes and the transformation of Communist governmentality.

Importantly, some discussions have focused on communication and the role of media in the demise of communism and the transition to democracy in CEE. In this context, the media, acted as ‘a critic of a monopolised power of the state’; they were ‘agents of revolutionary political changes’ (Spichal, 1994: 24). The close relationship between Poland’s oppositional movement and media has been acknowledged. An array of underground print media, including periodicals and books, together with underground radio broadcasts played a crucial role in Polish politics (Voltmer, 2013: 83-4; Jakubowicz, 1996: 40). This relationship can be further exemplified by the fact that Poland’s largest newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (The Electoral Gazette) was established by Solidarity in 1989 with Adam Michnik becoming its editor-in-chief (Voltmer, 2013: 83). Furthermore, as Slavko Splichal (1994: 3-8) noted, democratisation in CEE signified more than the demise of nondemocratic government. It also concerned ‘the management and control of information within and between groups’ with the idea of ‘society communicating freely [being] in the centre of the democratic struggles in East Europe in late 1980s’ (Splichal, 1994: 8). Yet, challenges remained with introducing the conditions required for such communication and also ensuring the consolidation of democracy. The questions of ‘seizing power from the former socialist authorities’ over media and society (Splichal, 1994: 5) and adapting ‘Western models’ of economy, policy and media to the specific contexts of CEE (Splichal, 1994: 30-45) was found to be a complex task. Nevertheless, the Eastern European ideas of ‘civil society’ and free public sphere played a significant role in the collapse of communism. It also provided a crucial foundation for the promotion of civil society globally following the period of the Cold War (Mastnak, 2005: 324). The idea of associating ‘civil society’ with dissent and opposition found wide resonance in the countries of the former Soviet Union, as the next section demonstrates.
Civil society and the media in a Soviet and post-Soviet context

The media were central to questions of political change, democratisation and fostering civil society in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The significance of the media, and particularly television, to the democratisation processes of the early 1990s was widely acknowledged. Television was at the core of Gorbachev’s reform policy, which he believed to be instrumental in changing people’s beliefs and behaviours (Voltmer, 2013: 87). *Glasnost* was a policy designed to improve media credibility and engage non-involved audiences, which resulted in reduced regulation and consequently in the deterioration of institutions of power, fostering pluralism (Mickiewicz, 2000: 85-95). One of the significant changes witnessed at the time was the broadcasting of a greater diversity of views including reports on public opinion and the dissenting views of political elites (Mickiewicz, 2000: 87). Furthermore, new ideas and new formats were required to enable the local media to compete against the novel formats of the Western media messages, which, although restricted, penetrated the Soviet space. This resulted in the media sampling audience demand through the use of public opinion surveys and then structuring and styling its messages now containing social and political content, relevant to its readership, in contemporary forms (Mickiewicz, 2000: 95-7). This change in the content, form, and language of the media was important to the development of democracy, with the media acting as a catalyst in the radical change in political discourse. ‘Mikhail Gorbachev started a revolution in speech, and it was communicated through television’ (Mickiewicz, 2000: 119). With the decades of Soviet history, political issues were the prerogative of the Party’s leaders who imposed the truth upon an alienated population. Gorbachev began changing this structure by engaging and empowering the public and by mobilising it through the notion of citizenship (Mickiewicz, 2000: 119). In fact, according to some sources (Buckley, 1993: 188-9), it was Gorbachev who introduced the notion of civil society into public discourse, although his understanding was socialist. Nevertheless, the term saw its increasing presence in media and public discourse, with the term acquiring new meanings.

The emergence of civil society in the Soviet Union was closely associated with the process of democratisation witnessed during the *perestroika* period of the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Tismaneanu and Turner (1991) (in Killingsworth, 2012: 16-17), whilst analysing the process that they describe as ‘Gorbachevism’, identified the importance of civil society as a force for revolutionary change whilst conversely being key to liberal democratic
stability. The Gramscian framework of analysing ‘civil society’ originating from East European interpretations saw its application to Russia and former Soviet states. As Oleg Kharkhordin (2005: 43) noted, ‘[t]he clash of the authoritarian state of the Soviet type and the semi- or quasi-independent associations of what was called “civil society” in Eastern Europe at that time seemed to be the fundamental political dynamic of the epoch’. However, these ideas have their limitations when applied both to the former USSR and Eastern European regions. Firstly, applying them to the study of dissent in Communist regimes results in dichotomies associated with the Cold War, leading to simplistic conclusions based on the juxtaposition of an authoritarian state and democratic civil society. They ignore the fact that changes in the Soviet Union were initiated from both above and, to a lesser degree, from below. Furthermore, this perspective implies that the establishment of a viable and active post-revolution civil society is a given (Killingsworth, 2012: 18). However, some scholars (Howard, 2011) raised concerns about the capacity of post-Communist communities to organize themselves and establish vibrant civil societies following the demise of Communist rule.

In contrast, there is a context-specific approach to ‘civil society’ applied to the analysis of the post-Soviet regions. This approach proposes that the conceptualization of ‘civil society’ should be expanded to ‘all forms of social organization and practices as different manifestations of the same general phenomenon’ (Howard, 2011: 142). Accordingly, various countries have their own traditions of social solidarity and civil society that take their roots in the local contexts. Thus, Kharkhordin (1997: 55-7) paid attention to links and bonds within Soviet society, such as friendship networks, considering them as a basis for civil society. According to White (2007: 379), a context-specific approach recognises ‘actually existing civil society’ as opposed to a normative model of civil society and captures the consequent diversity of its ‘associational life’. In his analysis of the Russian idea of civil society, Anderson (1996) demonstrated that the idea of *grazhdanskoе obshchestvo* (civil society in Russian) is broader than the normative accounts suggest. As the researcher pointed out, the notion of ‘citizen’ (*grazhdanin*) is at the core of the Russian term ‘civil society’, which may literally be rendered as ‘citizen society’ (Anderson, 1996: 102). For some social scientists, such as Volkov (1997, as cited in Belokurova 2010: 461) it is impossible to apply the Western notion of civil society to Russia. Instead, the researcher proposed the Russian term ‘*obshchestvennost*’ (the public; community; the general public; society) as a Russian functional equivalent for ‘civil society’. The notion encompasses elements of both a normative framework and context specific aspects. The
former is closely related to the notion of a public sphere in Habermas’s sense together with ideas of protecting civic rights and liberties. The latter is associated with the ‘progressive’ and ‘leading’ part of a society, forming and representing public opinion as well as with the social self-organisation bonded by ‘the spirit of community’ (*dukh obshchestvennosti*).  

Furthermore, the proponents of the context-specific approach saw the pre-emergence of post-Soviet civil society in the intelligentsia and dissidence that began expanding in the 1960s across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Evans, 2006; Buckley, 1993; Lane, 1990). Lane (1990: 91) points out three components in the definition of dissidence. ‘First, dissenters espoused values that are in disagreement with the regime. Second, dissent is a demand that is expressed outside the formal political arrangements of the state. Third, political authorities consider dissent to be a threat to the legitimacy and process of the socialist regime’. Furthermore, according to Lane (1990: 94), in Soviet society, dissidents had a particular social status: ‘[t]hey were identified not only for their political point of view, but by the marginalised status they were given by the political authorities. They constituted a social community’. Indeed, despite harassment and imprisonment, the dissident movement raised issues of human rights and civil liberties. Dissidents acted independently of the state by gathering signatures on petitions and disseminated multiple copies of *samizdat* writings. In the late 1980s, however, the social structure of dissidence saw a transformation. Gorbachev’s programme of limited democratisation allowed the establishment of ‘informal’ groups comprised of wider citizenry who openly demanded changes in the state system and policy. These alternative voices contributed to the mobilisation of political movements and the recognition of the interests and autonomy of civil society. Many previous dissident activities became normalised. Political prisoners were pardoned or freed. Andrei Sakharov, a renowned Soviet dissident and human rights advocate, was publicly welcomed back to Moscow by Gorbachev in 1986 from his exile in the Russian city of Gorky (Lane, 1990: 93).  

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and with the processes of the post-Soviet transition, the concept of civil society fully entered into scholarly and public discourse. According to Uhlin (2006: 27), post-Soviet societies witnessed the transformation of civil society from a ‘movement society’ under *perestroika* to an ‘NGO-society’ in the post-transition period. In

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13 Now Nizhnii Novgorod.
the latter case, ‘civil society’ was understood in the context of normative Western models. The growing interventions of the Western aid community aimed at stimulating the development of non-governmental organizations in the former Soviet Union helped to drive this change (Way, 2014: 27). The promotion of civil society became a policy objective in the development of capitalism and a pluralist democracy (Lane, 2010: 311). Similarly, the role of the media was undergoing transformation during the post-Soviet period. The Glasnost’ years under Gorbachev were the heyday of the free and vibrant public expression of ideas that ended during the 1990s when the media became dependent on rival political and economic players (Voltmer, 2013: 87). It was increasingly becoming an instrument for political forces to promote their agendas (Zassoursky, 2004). And yet, as I briefly demonstrate here and explore further in my work, the term ‘dissidents’ has not been banished to history and is frequently re-applied in post-Soviet contexts, and in Belarus in particular. Neither did the media, at least some part of it, abandon the idea of serving as a public forum and fostering change, ‘alter[ing] the information environment of ordinary people and elites alike’ and ‘afford[ing] them a genuine, if limited, choice’ (Mickiewicz, 2000: 88, 121).

Emergence of interest in civil society and the media in Belarus

It has sometimes been argued that there was no conspicuous dissident movement or samizdat activity in Soviet Belorussia, unlike Russia, the Baltic republics or Central and Eastern Europe (Hill, 2005: 3). A similar note was made during an interview by Tatsiana Reviako, a Belarusian human rights activist, who referred to a book ‘The History of Dissent in the USSR’ by Liudmila Alekseeva (1983), a prominent Russian human rights activist. Alekseeva discusses national movements in various Soviet republics, but Belarus is notable by its absence. In other sources, this lack of dissenting opposition is explained by weak or divided national consciousness, also referred to as ‘national nihilism’ (Mihalisko, 1997: 236). Further arguments point to the economic success the country enjoyed during the Soviet period (Ioffe, 2004), by loyalty to Soviet values (White and McAllister, 2005), and by the fact that most Belarusians saw themselves as partners in building the Socialist state. Perhaps voices of opposition in Soviet Belorussia were not as pronounced as in neighbouring republics. However, these voices constituted themselves in

14 We can take the Washington Post’s referral to Garry Kasparov, Eduard Limonov and Boris Nemtsov, who represented the anti-Putin opposition, as ‘Russia’s new old dissidents’ by Applebaum (2007), as an example. Available at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/26/AR2007112601850.html (accessed 10 May 2012).

uncommon ways. As an example, several writers, including Vasil’ Bykau and Ales Adamovich expressed their disagreement with the official line by adopting a non-conventional literary approach to World War II. Their approach differed from the mainstream ideological perspective, focusing on human suffering and moral dilemmas. Furthermore, according to Zaprudnik (1998: 97), national concerns and demands for greater attention to the Belarusian language and culture were at the core of dissent. The key figures in this dissent were Mikhal Kukabaka, Mikola Prashkovich, Vasil’ Bykaŭ, and Aleh Bembel’.

Similarly, attempts have been made to look at the historical perspective of public associations that existed in Soviet Belorussia. As Juri and Galina Drakokhroust (1996: Section 3, para. 1) pointed out, Soviet Belorussian society enjoyed a diversity of public associations. However, like other Soviet republics, these organisations were neither voluntary citizens’ organisations nor independent from the state structures of civil society. They resembled what Kasza (1995: 4) referred to as Administered Mass Organisations (AMOs), which existed in ‘single-party and military regimes’ across the world, including the former Soviet Union. However, this does not mean that these organisations played no role in Soviet society. According to Drakokhroust (1996: *ibid.*), they channelled the public activity of citizens allowing the authorities to keep society under control. In a similar vein, Kasza (1995: 3-5) noted, that ‘[t]he AMO [was] a tool of policy implementation’. They were deployed by the regimes for three general purposes: ‘to curb political opposition’; ‘to mobilize for war’, and ‘to effect socioeconomic change’. During *perestroika*, in some former Soviet republics, such as Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic States, such organisations became independent, sometimes becoming a driving force for change in the early state of national and democratic revival movements. In Belarus, according to Drakokhroust (1996: Section 3, para. 2), the transformation of these organisations was rather ambiguous. Having been freed from Party control, they remained dependent on their management, which privatised their material and financial resources and did not become democratic in their culture and purpose. As in Soviet times, they were still perceived, even by their members, not as independent associations but rather as part of the state’s apparatus. Yet eventually, in the early 1990s, independent structures started to emerge, such as independent labour unions, based on and transformed from the Soviet labour union. In addition, the early 1990s saw the creation of numerous new independent civic associations, reminiscent of NGOs in the Western sense.
In Belarus, the democratic tenure seen in the early 1990s was brief and by the time Belarus hit the new century an authoritarian style of leadership could be seen dominating political life. Pro-democratic civil society attempted to act as a watch-dog to this new political order and its growing use of police and Special Forces, censorship and the tight control of the media. This gave reason for some researchers to claim that contemporary Belarus civil society could not be differentiated from political society (Rouda, 2007; Marples, 2004). This argument is supported by Diamond’s (1994) idea that this process is common in the context of authoritarian regimes and such politicisation galvanises the consolidation of various forces against non-democratic rule. Some referred to Belarusian civil society as ‘the new dissidents keeping alive a vision of democracy’ (Ottoway and Carothers, 2000: 310). The use of force by the authorities against challengers to the president’s rule and the circulation of alternative ideas have resulted in some leading politicians, journalists, and political activists being forced to flee the country. The former leader of the Belarusian National Front, Zianon Pazniak, fled to the United States in August 1996. Vasil Bykau, the distinguished writer, left for Finland in June 1998. Pavel Sheremet, a journalist, known for his criticism of the government and the president personally, left for Russia and was deprived of Belarusian citizenship. Following the 2010 election protests, a number of political opponents were imprisoned (Andrei Sannikov, Nicolai Statkevich, Dmitrii Uss and others) or managed to escape the pursuing KGB and flee the country. Among them were the producer and writer Natalia Koliada and the playwright Nikolai Khalezin of the Belarus Free Theatre. Independent or foreign media often portray these cases as ‘new dissidents’. Officialdom, however, revised the Soviet practice of ‘equating “thinking differently” (inakomyslie) with “dissent”, “dissidence”, and “opposition”, and as such something to be rooted out’ (Hill, 2005: 8).

Generally, these processes bear similarity to a number of post-Soviet states and can be located within the framework of non-liberal regimes (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Diamond, 2002). A number of common features can be seen in the political structures of the states that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union such as Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia. The countries had at their centre a purposeful political nucleus of the old elite able to maintain their dominance in an environment devoid of a strong civil society and a continuous democratic history together with the rule of law. The controlling elites progressively gained wealth through shadow privatisations and control through coercion by

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18 Refer to www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b01jhjcp/Afternoon_Drama_Belarus/ (accessed 7 June 2012).
manipulating elections, media and using force against opponents (Way, 2005). A number of works explore how non-liberal governments and corrupt business powers destroyed the editorial independence of the media in the early 1990s (Oates, 2006; Evans, 2006). It is also generally agreed that the ideal of public service broadcasting found in the West is absent from post-Communist culture (Corner, Schlesinger, and Silverstone, 1998: 15). Oates (2006: 64) explores the reasons why Russian media, in particular television, failed to develop as ‘a pillar for civil society’ and ‘an aid to democratisation’, concluding that Russian television inherits from its history as a part of Soviet mass media, continuing to act as a tool of the political elite rather than as an independent actor in informing the public. She discovered a paradox: while state television enjoys a high level of trust among its audience, the public is aware of bias and distortion but is complicit, not willing to change the status quo. The author concludes that in such an environment, the opportunity for Russian mass media to foster civil society is limited (Oates, 2006: 69).

Similarly, in Belarus, according to Marples (2004), the state media serve as an instrument of statehood. Depicting President Lukashenko as a ‘parliamentary deputy who bitterly regretted the end of the Soviet Union’, as ‘a paternal president surrounded by enemies’, and as ‘a defender of Belarusian values’, ‘[s]tate television publicizes the president’s successes, and the official press, especially the largest daily newspaper, Sovetskaia Belorussiia, features his announcements and endless speeches’ (Marples, 2004: 32). On the other hand, the Belarusian opposition (which includes political parties, social-political movements and pro-democratic NGOs) are continuously shown as a ‘fifth column’ (Marples, 2004: 32). Counter-discourses in Belarus as elsewhere are produced and circulated by alternative media, providing a platform for members of diverse social groups. Alternative media a priori should ‘offer a perspective from ‘below’ and to say the ‘unspoken’ (Harcup, as cited in Groshek, 2011: 1528), ‘offer a counter hegemonic public sphere unique from that facilitated by the mainstream media’ (Groshek, 2011: 1528), and provide an alternative media content challenging the status quo. According to Manaev (2011), it is the alternative press, which to a larger extent stimulates the development of civil society. However, in the Belarusian context (as well as in other CIS countries) it may fall behind the official media in a professional and technological sense. In addition, there is a problem of trust with both official and non-official discourses. In the former, officialdom still employs a Soviet approach to the media, using it as a tool of propaganda and manipulation. In the latter case, there is a danger of independent media slipping into the paradigm of counter-propaganda (Bykoûski, 2010).
A significant amount of research has been undertaken with regards to media ownership, its impact on the development of civil society, and on what constitutes an independent press in the former Soviet states and Belarus (Manaev 1995, Oates 2006, McIntosh Sundstrom and Henry 2006) and initial attempts have been made to analyse Belarusian media discourse and communication practices (Furs, 2008; Prekevichus, 2005; Miazhevich, 2007; Vidanova, 2011). As an example, Miazhevich (2007) investigates the question of how the state’s discursive practice within the printed periodical *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* contributed to the representation of entrepreneurial identity. Miazhevich demonstrates that official discourse inhibited the possibility of collective action and policy negotiation on the part of the entrepreneurs, and ‘render[ed] problematic the accumulation of a critical mass of business people able to generate and promote new [social] capital’ (Miazhevich, 2007: 1348). Dryzek and Holmes (2002) focused on the way democracy was conceptualised and practiced in post-Communist societies, including Belarus, regarding the media. They argue that the discourses can shed explanatory light on political-economic situations and how they change. Having identified three main discourses in Belarus, ‘Liberal Democracy’, ‘Presidential Populism’ and ‘Reluctant Authoritarianism’, they emphasise the ambiguity of the situation regarding democratic development in the country (Dryzek and Holmes, 2002: 79-92). While at first sight the prospects for democratisation appeared to be weak due to the authoritarian presidency, all three of the discourses ‘[were] committed to democracy of a sort’ (Dryzek and Holmes, 2002: 90).

My literature review has summarised the significant works and debates, both theoretical and methodological, that have substantially contributed to the exploration of the social and political issues with regards to the media and society in a post-Communist context, with the emphasis placed on Belarus. Whilst these attempts were successful in exploring media institutions and landscape in which they operate, together with covering some aspects of discursive practices in Belarus, further research is required to understand what modes of communication function in a post-Soviet environment and specifically in Belarus. As Silverstone (1999: 5) pointed out, ‘institutions do not make meanings. They offer them’. These meanings are further subject to mediation, which is ‘the circulation of meaning’ in media spaces (Silverstone, 1999: 13). It is the media which ‘filter and frame everyday realities’ (Silverstone, 1999: 6). Further analysis is needed to explore how the media contribute to shaping meanings with regard to ‘civil society’; how these meanings travel in space and time and how they engage with each other; and how these mediating practices and discursive constructs reflect and interact with wider social, political and cultural life.
To address these issues a complex methodological framework was designed, as the next section outlines.

Method

My research questions and theoretical framework are underpinned by my main assumption that the media play a crucial role in the understanding of ‘civil society’. The media create a discursive space where meanings and discourses are negotiated and shaped by various actors, ‘where mediated meanings circulate in primary and secondary texts, through endless intertextualities, […] in constant replay, and in the interminable discourses’ (Silverstone, 1999: 13). These meanings and discourses resonate with a society’s political and social culture, and culture in general. It is within this space that the concept of civil society is constructed, legitimised, transformed and deconstructed as well as used and abused. Given this, the discourse of civil society constitutes a language system that can be understood through Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach studying discourse associated with a network of scholars that share an interest in the critical exploration of social and cultural issues. The existence of a wide spectrum of perspectives to CDA - socio-cognitive (van Dijk, 1998), socio-cultural (Fairclough, 2003), discourse-historical (Wodak et al., 1999), socio-psychological (Potter and Wetherell, 2001) and socio-political (Shapiro, 2001), implies that CDA is not a homogeneous method of discourse analysis. While it is important to outline a general theoretical background, assumptions and overall goals for all schools and models, it is crucial to select and create a methodology with reference to particular approaches which suit best the aims and goals of my work.

General Principles of CDA

Here, I outline general principles from wide sources of literature relevant to the method. Firstly, CDA is a ‘critical’ method. It is based on the ideas of critical social science and shares a tradition with critical linguistics. A common feature of these traditions is ‘[a] critical engagement with the contemporary world recognising that the existing state of affairs does not exhaust what is possible’ (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 35). Secondly, power relations are often the focus of CDA (Foucault, 1982; Fairclough, 1989) and critical social scientists study power within discourse and power over discourse. Accordingly, ‘the aim of CDA is to unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use’ (Wodak et al, 1999: 8). Thirdly,
CDA is distinguished from other discourse analyses types by relating discourse to social issues and structures such as race, gender, citizenship and class – and not with language per se. CDA conceptualises language as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1999). Consequently, CDA is essentially interdisciplinary. Fourthly, CDA recognises that discourses are set within a historical context and can only be understood in their circumstance. Foucault (see Hall, 2001: 76) acknowledges this seeing power and knowledge as always positioned in a particular historical environment. Fifthly, discourses are not only embedded in culture and history, but are also linked intertextually to other discourses. This principle is related directly to Bakhtin’s (1981) theory of the dialogic properties of texts, which will be further considered in this thesis. Finally, discourse theory has its dangers. It is often criticised for seeing the social as nothing but discourse, referred to as ‘discourse idealism’ (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 28). It may be considered ‘as somewhat tangential’ unless it also includes issues of ‘economics, history, law, and organisation structure’ (Pauly, 2004: 250). Whilst it may be true for some types of discourse analysis, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 28) argue that it is crucial to engage with the analysis of discourse in a non-idealistic way, not reducing social life to discourse. Accordingly, CDA develops a theoretical practice and a systematic and interdisciplinary methodology that is oriented to the analysis of the interaction of text, the social context, ideologies and power, and their socially transformative effects.

**Particular aspects of CDA theory utilised in my research**

While taking all these general principles into account, I specifically concentrate on some features of CDA that, I believe, are particularly relevant for my analysis. These are a theory of power, closely linked to it the notion of social change and a contextual perspective. These principles can be further located within the dialogic perspective of media discourse analysis, the perspective grouped under the title of ‘communication-based studies of dialogue’ by Anderson, Baxter and Cissna (2004: 2). The dialogic perspective applied to media and communication studies diverges from dominant structural and institutional approaches that tend to emphasise the organisational structure of institutions, economic relations, law and policy as determining factors in media production. Instead, dialogism originates from a communication-centred approach that highlights the interdependence of society, culture and language (Strine, 2004: 226-7). In contrast to the dominant approaches, dialogism posits that communication occurs in a non-linear way, it is fragmented and multivocal; it is fluid as opposed to static; performative rather than simply
representational (Austin, 1962) and is open-ended, ‘never fully finished’ (Wood, 2004: xvii).

The studies of ‘dialogue’ are rooted in the academic traditions of Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas (Anderson et al., 2004). Particularly influential within this approach are the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) and Valentin Voloshinov (1973). According to this approach, meaning is produced in dialogic interaction between ‘multiple voices of a given culture, people and epoch’ (Bakhtin 1981: 60) providing a richer account of interaction between social, political, historical and linguistic contexts. Based predominantly on qualitative and interpretative analyses this dialogic approach to communication and media recognises and addresses a more fundamental question of ‘how reality is not unitary and given, but pluralised and constituted through communication practices themselves’ (Anderson et al., 2004: 10). It looks into how power embedded in these interactions together with meta-linguistic and linguistic processes are involved in meaning production. Dialogue, manifest through principles as outlined below, links cultural, mass media and linguistic studies that address communication in ways that are not explained by linear and structural accounts.

Questions of power are of central interest to CDA scholars. Fairclough (Fairclough, 1989 and 1998; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) explores the effects power and ideologies may have on meaning. Referring to Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Fairclough (1998: 142-5) proceeds from a connection between discourse and hegemony and views the control over discursive practices as a struggle for predominance over ‘orders of discourse’. While the concept of hegemony may have some truth for certain aspects of Belarusian media practice, it may prove controversial when applied to my analysis. Hegemony implies that ‘power and domination are exercised through achieving consent rather than through coercion, and depends upon a particular articulation of plurality of practices’ (Fairclough, 1995: 67). However, the Belarusian media are to a large extent dominated by unitary practices imposed from above and power is often exercised in a coercive way. I suggest that power is embedded in Belarusian media discourse in a less naturalised way when compared to Western media. This straightforward presence of power relations in Belarusian media discourse produces a more explicit struggle over the production of forms and meanings. In accordance with this, the theoretical approach of Bakhtin and Voloshinov\(^\text{19}\) is instrumental in my research. In Bakhtin’s (1981) and Voloshinov’s (1973)

\(^{19}\) It is a well-known fact that Voloshinov was closely associated with Bakhtin and for some scholars the former was just a pseudonym for the latter.
writings, dialogue is characterised as originating in social tensions and struggle and that these are always implicated in language use and meaning (Maybin, 2001: 64). Social conflict can be evident in the manner language is used to express a particular viewpoint on an experience or context. It can also be observed ‘at the level of the sign itself in the struggle over meaning’ (Voloshinov, 1973: 103) - in what Voloshinov (ibid.) called the ‘evaluative accent’ of particular words and phrases. This conflictual nature of language is also evident in what Bakhtin (1981: 324) termed as ‘heteroglossia’, referring to the dynamic multiplicity of voices, genres and social languages present within discourse.\(^{20}\)

This struggle within language is further conceptualised by Bakhtin (1981: 272-274) in terms of a conflict between the ‘centripetal’ forces (producing ‘centralising’, ‘unitary’, ‘official’ discourses) and ‘centrifugal’ forces (producing ‘decentralising’, ‘dispersing’, diverse discourses associated with different genres, historical periods, social groups, views and evaluations of the social world). Trying to capture a particular balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces, Fairclough (1995: 66) believes that typical of a settled and conservative society are centripetal (‘unitary and stable’) discursive practices whilst centrifugal (‘variable and changeable’) discursive practices are more typical of an unsettled society. ‘Where there is variability, selection between alternatives may, for instance, involve political and ideological differences and struggles, attempts to cater for different ‘niche’ audiences, as well as differences of professional or artistic judgement’ (Fairclough, 1995: 66). This perspective is very relevant to my work since dialogic theory approaches the issue of power in a particular way. As observed in my literature review, in Belarusian media discourse, dissident discourses attempt to challenge ‘unitary and stable’ forms and practices. If we are to believe Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 28), it is out of such contestations that social change may arise.

Bakhtin and Voloshinov highlighted the importance of a focus on discourse in the analysis of social practices, seeing the connection between language and social change. Voloshinov, (1973: 19) claimed that language is ‘the most sensitive index of social changes’, as it registers transformations in other elements of the social. Fairclough (Fairclough, 1989 and 1998; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) further develops this idea and in his contemporary analysis he captures the changes that occur in discourse and consequently in society. In his analysis of media texts, Fairclough (1998: 142-6) focuses on the combination of discourses and genres, which lead to the restructuring of the relationship between different discursive practices, institutions and orders of discourse. The ideas of

\(^{20}\) Bakhtin originally used the term ‘slovo’ (word), which can also be interpreted as ‘language’ or ‘discourse’. 37
‘intertextuality’ and ‘interdiscursivity’ (which are utilised in my work and described later) are extremely relevant for observing discursive and societal change.

Apart from the theory of power embedded in dialogue and the closely linked notion of social change, it is important to spell out another methodological principle of CDA – the interdependency between discourse and context. This will allow us to see that the meaning of the notion of ‘civil society’ is context-dependent rather than universal and prescriptive. As Bakhtin (1981: 293) stated, ‘each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life’. This principle is underpinned by the premise that discourses are positioned in time and can only be fully appreciated with reference to their context. While other methods also take context into account, the notion of context is broadest in CDA, since this includes socio-cognitive, political, ideological and linguistic components and can thereby be described as an interdisciplinary analysis (Titscher et al., 2000: 166). As an example, Schegloff (1992, as cited in Wood and Kroger, 2000: 127) understood the context in two ways. The first was referred to as an ‘extrinsic context’ that is ‘a general way to information that is outside the text that is being analysed’. The second was understood as an ‘intrinsic context’ that is ‘the parts of the text that are outside the particular segment that is analysed at any particular moment’ (Schegloff, 1992 in Wood and Kroger, 2000: 127). Both of these perspectives are important. The former case implies that the analysis of the term ‘civil society’ cannot be separated from the social, political and cultural events occurring at the time. The latter case establishes the link between the term ‘civil society’ and the broader discursive formations in which it is placed. Whilst at the same time when placed in a particular context, ‘civil society’ also ‘embodies and expresses ideologies and values, often expressed through the dominant culture or dominant political projects’ (Fowler, 1996: 16).

**Applying CDA principles in practice**

In terms of the practical applicability of these principles to my work, Ruth Wodak and her colleagues’ approach (Wodak et al., 1999; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter, 2000) is be highly relevant to my analysis. It offers a very clear and structured apparatus, in which the scholars distinguished between three interrelated dimensions when analysing discourse:

1. Contents;
2. Strategies;
3. Linguistic means and forms of realisation.
In my data analysis, I follow this structure and I draw selectively on the dialogic theory and concepts discussed above. I introduce some changes to the content of the framework, producing my own heuristic device for the analysis of contextual uses of ‘civil society’ in Belarusian media discourse.

**Discursive content**

The issue of content is broader in discourse analysis than it is in other methods, such as content analysis, as an example. Content can be viewed not only in terms of themes and topics of the text but also in terms of its ideas, meanings, functions and styles (Wood and Kroger, 2000: 32, 109). On the basis of a critical survey of the theoretical literature and a pilot analysis of data related to the uses of ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press, I distinguished between a number of discourses of ‘civil society’: nationalist; democratic; neo-liberal and official discourses. The term discourse is used here, first, in a narrow sense, as a ‘way of signifying experience from a particular perspective’ (Fairclough, 1998: 148), or as a point of view. It can also sometimes be associated with Bakhtin’s notion of ‘ideology’ in the broadest sense, to mean any idea system (Holquist, 1990), or a particular worldview. This classification is volatile and loose and the number of these discourses may not be exclusive. Some of the discourses may overlap (e.g. nationalist and democratic), while others are comprised of other discursive elements constituting a ‘hybridised’ or ‘double-voiced’ discourse (Bakhtin, 1981: 429).

Secondly, I will refer to ‘discourse’ in a wider sense, as in ‘civil society’s discourse’, associated with a major thematic area, as a particular kind of discourse, as defined by Dryzek (2006: 1):

[A] shared set of concepts, categories, and ideas that provide its adherents with a framework for making sense of situations, embodying judgements, assumptions, capabilities, dispositions, and intentions. It provides basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements, and disagreements.

This thematic perspective will allow me to analyse the term in multiple manifestations and cover a wide range of issues and debated with regard to the idea of ‘civil society’. It also helps to approach ‘civil society’ as a phenomenon constructed discursively. While keeping the outlined principles in mind, as my work proceeds, I will organise my data according to
the themes and terms associated with the concept of ‘civil society’ that were given prominence by politicians, activists and journalists in the Belarusian press.

A third definition of ‘discourse’ is highly valuable for the analysis. Drawing on pragmatic theories that focus on communicative functions of language, which received particular attention from CDA scholars (Wodak, 1989; Fairclough 1989; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), I define ‘discourse’ as a socio-political use of language. Such an understanding is also associated with Bakhtin’s notion of ‘utterance’, which emphasised a socially and contextually determined substance, ‘enacted language in use (la parole)’. It contrasts with Saussure’s understanding of ‘language as an abstract system (la langue)’ (Voloshinov, as cited in Baxter, 2004: 120). Accordingly, placing emphasis on the use of the term ‘civil society’ permits the analysis of particular meanings expressed by the term in particular situations and for particular purposes.

Computer assisted methods are utilised to code and identify key perspectives, topics, themes, terms and voices prominent and recurrent in the discourse. NVIVO 10, an application for qualitative document analysis, is used chronologically to organise, integrate and interpret data in a systematic way. Frequency and intensity searches are implemented to analyse the discursive content in detail to identify what terms and ideas are given greater prominence and significance, whose voices and points of view are better represented and which topics and debates are circulated in the Belarusian press.

**Discursive practices**

As indicated, the question of how reality is constructed and constituted through communication practice is a matter of concern for CDA scholars, including those adopting the dialogic paradigm. I distinguish between macro-level and micro level discursive mechanisms, referring to a wide scope of heuristic tools originating in dialogic theory and the CDA framework that would meet the aims and goals of this research. I provide a brief description of these mechanisms below.

21 ‘Intensity’ is the total number of instances (references) of the term ‘civil society’ as opposed to ‘frequency’, total number of sources containing the term.
Macro-level discursive mechanisms

Drawing on dialogic theory, I approach the Belarusian public sphere as a space in which internal structures and discursive practices are organised through complex meta-linguistic mechanisms (macro-level) of ‘centrifugal’ and ‘centripetal tendencies’, ‘style’, ‘voicing’, ‘intertextuality’, ‘interdiscursivity’ and ‘addressivity’ that together constitute the dialogic nature of communication. These mechanisms are not exclusive and as my analysis proceeds I may include a wider range of tools with their description provided on an ad hoc basis.

Accordingly, discursive practice is frequently accomplished through the dynamic interaction of opposing forces: on the one hand, by the promotion of unification, homogeneity, identification, and solidarity – centralising tendencies; and, on the other, by the creation of differentiation and dispersion – de-centralising tendencies. Together they constitute a dialectical interplay of forces, according to which ‘dialogue is simultaneously unity and difference’ (Baxter, 2004: 114). This dialectic is dynamic and fluid and sometimes centripetal forces predominate. Drawing on Bakhtin, Baxter (2004: 118) observed that not all forms of unification are aesthetic, specifically when the unity is achieved through a domination of a singular voice over others, the tendency is sometimes described as a monologic style of communication. Distinguishing between monologism and dialogism, the former is often described by Bakhtin himself and his followers through the notions of ‘monoglossia’, ‘authoritarian’ or ‘authoritative’ discourse, the ‘language of poetry and epic’. In contrast, ‘dialogism’ is addressed through ‘polyglossic’, ‘heteroglossic’, ‘polyphonic’ and sometimes ‘novelistic’ forms and representations.

While taking this notion of ‘style’ into account, I also approach ‘dialogism’ in a wider sense, as manifested by the concept of internal dialogism (Bakhtin, 1984: 32; 183-4). As a strategy it involves invoking different ‘voices’, i.e. positions, evaluations, intentions and views, or the way in which these viewpoints are reported, as is further outlined below. It can be additionally associated with the practice of assigning ‘evaluative accent’ to specific words and phrases. The notion of ‘evaluative orientation’ or ‘evaluative accent’ originates in Bakhtin’s and Voloshinov’s writings, meaning the kind of judgement that words or phrases convey. According to Voloshinov (1973: 105), ‘[e]very utterance is above all an evaluative orientation’. For example, the word ‘opposition’ used in Belarusian media discourse may carry a strong positive connotation for one section of the community and strong negative associations for another. The choice in the utilisation of the toponym
‘Belarus’ and ‘Belorussia’ also encompasses a strong evaluative socio-political accent. This evaluative property of a word may play a crucial role in meaning transformation. ‘A change in meaning is, essentially, always a re-evaluation: the transposition of some particular word from one evaluative context to another’ (Voloshinov, 1973: 105).

The dialogism of discourse is further manifested by a number of terms widely employed within CDA theory: ‘interdiscursivity’ (Fairclough, 1995) and ‘intertextuality’ (Kristeva, 1986). As a result of these practices, each discourse internalises others and it is the selective appropriation and ordering of other discourses that produce meaning (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 119). It involves establishing links between other texts and discourses, a strategy that emphasises the historical and cyclical nature of discourse. Intertextuality, according to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 49), who draw on Bakhtin’s theory, can be understood as: firstly, ‘the presence in my discourse of the specific words of the ‘other’, mixed with my words’; secondly, the combination in discourse of different genres. Following these definitions, Fairclough (1998: 145) adds a third element; the combination of different discourses and applies the term ‘interdiscursivity’. As a result of these processes, each discourse internalises others so that its development is inflected by others without it being reduced to them. As a strategy, these mechanisms are useful for in-depth analysis of the construction of discourse. Specifically, parallels can be drawn to ‘civil society’ discourses internalising liberal, nationalist, citizenship or Soviet discursive elements.

Finally, for the purposes of critical analysis of media discourse, dialogism can be approached through the notion of ‘addressivity’ (obtrashchennost). An utterance was seen by Bakhtin and Voloshinov as a product of a dialogue between an addresser and addressee. As Voloshinov (1973: 86) stated, ‘A word is a two-sided act. […] [I]t is precisely a product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener’. The way a real or imagined reader is addressed in the texts may be indicative of power relations embedded in society as well as journalistic culture.

Micro-level mechanisms: linguistic means and forms of realisation

There are multiple linguistic devices (micro-level) that include lexical units, syntactical means and grammatical structures available to discourse analysis. I consider only a subset of them directly related to the macro-strategies and in a similar way, as my research proceeds, I extend this list. The relationship between strategies and means of realisation are not necessarily exclusive; the same tool of realisation may serve a number of functions.
According to Wodak et al. (1999: 160), persuasive linguistic mechanisms, which promote ‘identification and solidarity with the “we-group”’, are important components of constructive strategies. The use of the personal pronoun ‘we’ and the corresponding possessive pronouns are often utilised in the discourses of social identity. The creation of such unity and sameness, however, at the same time presupposes a distancing from and exclusion of others. The tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and personification may also be used to similar effect (their comprehensive account is provided in Wodak et al., 1999: 43). These tropes are especially evident when constructive strategies are used. However, it can also serve other purposes; the justification or dismantling of existing representations, constituting non-dialogic modes of interaction.

Other micro-mechanisms preventing a dialogic mode of communication, ‘include strategic, rhetorical and confrontational communication’, which can be more empowering for groups who are denied access to mainstream communication and dialogue controlled by a dominant group (Wood, 2004: xxiii). In such a context, the concept of antagonism becomes central, and the representation of ‘Self’ and ‘Others’ is included. According to van Dijk (1998: 25), when conflicting interests are involved, representations appear to be particularly polarised with the attribution of positive qualities to Self and negative qualities to Others, a technique termed by van Dijk (1998: 33) as the ‘ideological square’. The technique is often employed for transformative and destructive purposes.

Other mechanisms that foster or prevent dialogic forms of communication can be realised through the linguistic category of reported speech. Voloshinov (1973: 115) suggested that we can identify two main directions in the way speech is reported: 1) a linear style of reporting, ‘when the words are reproduced verbatim, and there is a clear and obvious boundary between the voice of the reporter, and the voice being reported’; 2) a pictorial style, where ‘the reported speech is infiltrated with the reporter’s speech, and the boundaries become blurred’. Voloshinov maintained that the reporting mode was linked both to the nature of the voice being reported and to prevailing ideological practices within a society. Whether the voice is represented ‘linearly’ or through a narrator, ‘pictorially’, it may serve a significant role in promoting some voices and suppressing others.

Intertextual and interdiscursive analysis involve unravelling various voices, genres, discourses and themes, which are articulated together in the text and ‘realized linguistically
in the heterogeneity of meaning and form’ (Fairclough, 1995: 61). Such an analysis is highly interpretive and is dependent upon social and cultural understanding. A major concern here is the capture of distinctive discourse types, hidden quotations and borrowings from historical or political science publications or statements, stereotypical formulations, arguments, illustrative examples, anecdotes or narratives from other discourses or domains (for example, political debate, the spoken word, or legislative documents). Further analysis of discursive mechanisms and linguistic forms of realisation is conducted as my thesis proceeds.

**Conclusion**

My literature review has demonstrated that despite the proliferation of research on civil society in Belarus, the challenge of analysing the term and its conceptual apparatus as deployed in both post-Soviet scholarly debates and media discourses remains unaddressed. It provided justification of why more emphasis should be placed on discourse and its mediation in the analyses of ‘civil society’. This proposition was underpinned by the assumption that meaning is never fixed; it is the product of dialogic communication embedded in the media. Such a perspective is closely related to the question of communication style and format and it permits reflection of the broader cultural, social and political factors that shape and determine the meanings of ‘civil society’. Accordingly, I proposed an analytical framework that involves a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary assessment that crosses the boundaries of social and political science, media studies, and linguistics. Theoretical perspectives on power, social change and contextual variables outlined in this chapter are instrumental in answering the questions *who* uses the concept civil society and *when* is the concept used? The section on discursive content described my analytical tools for assessing *what* views of ‘civil society’ exist in the Belarusian press. The section referring to strategies provided further insight into examining the purpose (*why?*) served by the use of the concept of civil society. The means of realisation is helpful in addressing the questions *how* does the construction, transformation and destruction of the concept of civil society occur on a textual level, *whose* voices on ‘civil society’ are presented and *how* does the struggle between these voices manifest itself? This framework provides a systematic methodology for the analysis of the relationship between discourse and social, political and cultural context, as well as the power relations it inhabits.
1. **Civil society discourse, 1991-1993: the formation of the new Belarusian state**

1.1. **Introduction**

The late 1980s and the early 1990s saw a dramatic transformation in social, political and cultural life across the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union that brought an end to Communist rule. What was commonly known as a ‘wave of democratisation’ followed across the regions due to varying causes as well as varying levels and commitment to change. There is some evidence (Arato, 2000; Glenn, 2001) that in CEE (in particular, in Poland and Hungary) the concept of ‘civil society’ played a crucial role in the transition to democracy, both ‘in the formulation of strategies of democratisation and in journalistic, historical and social scientific analyses of the relevant processes’ (Arato, 2000: 45). In Belarus the use of the concept had a nuanced application, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. This chapter begins my analysis of the term ‘civil society’ and its uses in the Belarusian media space during the period 1991-1993; the period is associated with the inertia resulting from the fading policy of radical restructuring (*perestroika*) in the final days of Soviet power and with the uneasy path travelled in the formation of a new independent state. My main questions in this chapter are as follows. What were the initial uses of the term ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press, by whom and in what context? What role (if any) did the mediation of ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press play during this period of transformation? What can the style and structure of the language of ‘civil society’ as mediated in the press inform us about the nature of change in Belarus? These questions are directly related to the principal concern of my thesis. They help to evaluate existing discourses on ‘civil society’ as mediated in the Belarusian press; firstly, taking a synchronic perspective, revealing the nature of public dialogue taking place in media over a particular moment of time; secondly, with a diachronic perspective, demonstrating how the articulation of ‘civil society’ shifted over time and in response to contextual conditions.

There is ample research dedicated to this period mainly focusing on the political and institutional aspects of transformation in the post-Soviet societies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Sakwa, 1990; Arato, 1993; Marples, 1996; Parrott, 1997; Mihalisko, 1997) that trace changes and continuities in elite and mass participation and also analyse the paths of democratic and non-democratic transition. I will distance myself from these ‘normative’ perspectives of democratisation studies. I will place a specific emphasis on discursive change, locating my investigation in the media domain by
analysing how change manifested itself in the language of the press with regard to the notion of ‘civil society’. Exploration of the tendencies of change within media discourse, focusing on the mediation of the term, can make a significant contribution to the debate on social and political change. The notion of ‘mediation’ is a valuable heuristic tool to explore the role of mass media in societal transformations and there is growing research on this issue (Couldry, 2008; Deacon and Stanyer, 2014; Schulz, 2004). As a term, it is used to refer to ‘the intervening role that the process of communication plays in the making of meaning’ (Couldry, 2008:379); it focuses on a particular transformative ‘media logic’ and it allows the changes in society to be seen together with reflection on political culture and society (Schulz, 2004:90). The framework of mediation frequently locates the media at the centre of significant cultural, political and social developments. However, it is important to consider non-media factors as drivers of changing communicative practice while taking into account the diversity of ‘agents of mediation’ together with other cultural, political and social variables (Deacon and Stanyer, 2014:1035). Applying this analytical tool in my research, I specifically focus on the discursive aspect of mediation, emphasising the interconnectedness between media texts, context and power embedded in the processes of meaning making. In a discursive approach, this requires more than ‘just deciphering overt content’(Horsfield, 2008: 118); it involves the study of language use, societal conditions and discursive practices in the construction and communication of ‘civil society’ meaning.

According to Fairclough (1992: 93), ‘change leaves traces in texts in the form of the co-occurrence of contradictory or inconsistent elements - mixtures of formal and informal styles, technical and non-technical vocabularies, markers of authority and familiarity, more typically written and more typically spoken syntactic forms, and so forth’. Such a concept of change that results from a power struggle in terms of the articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of voices, points of view and discursive elements is in accord with Bakhtin’s dialogic theory. Approaching media texts as internally dialogical\textsuperscript{22}, I engage with complex metalinguistic mechanisms, such as ‘intertextuality’, ‘heteroglossia’, ‘centrifugal’ and ‘centripetal’ tendencies, ‘style’ and ‘voicing’, which are central to the entire methodology of my research. As acknowledged previously, media space is subject to the power relations and hierarchy in which dominant discourses impose themselves on others. It can be argued

\textsuperscript{22}Bakhtin (1981) and Voloshinov (1973) approached dialogue in a broad sense, as ‘not only direct and viva voce verbal communication between two persons’ (Voloshinov, 1973: 113). The authors recognised the property of a discourse to contain many voices, or view-points, one’s own and voices of others, referring to it as a ‘double-voiced’ (Bakhtin, 1981:429) discourse. It is a ‘potential dialogue’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 325) within a single utterance in which speakers may reproduce the voices of others through an act of appropriation, the property termed ‘intertextuality’ by Julia Kristeva (1986).
that in the Belarusian media space such an imposition of power frequently takes explicit forms, ‘in which domination is achieved by an uncompromising imposition of rules, norms and conventions’ (Fairclough, 1992: 94). This domination is in turn confronted by counter-forces. Such a power model, based on Bakhtin’s idea of struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces, however, is not the only one. There is another type of domination in discourse exercised by naturalised, non-coercive means through ‘constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent’ (Fairclough 1992: 93). The dialogic theory provides a framework to examine change with regards to shifting power relations as well as the dependence of such relations on wider contextual factors. In other words, power dynamics enable discursive change to occur, but at the same time these dynamics are also shaped by wider contextual processes of change. In this respect, points of tensions and contradiction are indexes of change. The dialogic theory is also helpful in demonstrating that ‘mediation’ is ‘a non-linear process’. Media have the capacity to generate change ‘not merely by transmitting discrete textual units for discrete moments of reception, but through a process of environmental transformation which, in turn, transforms the conditions under which any future media can be produced and understood’ (Couldry, 2008:380).

Finally, with regards to the micro-strategies tracing discursive change specific to this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate that mediation is useful in the critical assessment of social change, as it allows the exploration of a certain attitude or political position (Schulz, 2004: 88). I engage a further, less investigated aspect of dialogic theory within Bakhtin’s studies, the theory of speech acts. Strikingly, my data selected for the period of investigation contained multiple examples of references that conveyed some intentional aspect, performativity, through the use of verbs used to describe the act of speech. These verbs are referred to as ‘performatives’ or ‘illocutionary acts’ in Austin’s (1962: 6-7) terms and they perform an act that they describe. Together with conveying the stance of the reporter with respect to the statement that followed, these speech verbs also had the status of an action (Bell, 1991: 206). Whilst the theories of communicative action and dialogism are different phenomena, I attempt to integrate what is termed by Bakhtin and Voloshinov as ‘evaluative accent’ (a reporter’s intonational evaluation of what is said) with the illocutionary force of what is said, as this may be useful in analysing how discursive change occurred on a micro-level in media texts. I do not engage with any particular

23 Like Searle and Austin, Bakhtin (1986, cited in Stewart, 1983:269) aimed to explore ‘little behavioural genres’ of speech situations - question, exclamation, command, request’. In contrast to the ‘atemporality’ and ‘linearity’ of the former approach, Bakhtin demonstrated that communicative actions should be seen as essentially being embedded in dialogical contexts (Hassell and Christensen, 1996: 2).
classification of speech acts, since this would restrict my contextual investigation of particular instances of the use of ‘civil society’. However, as my analysis proceeds, I provide their ad hoc description together with the description of other tools and techniques from discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; von Seth, 2011; Voltmer, 2000).

I employed a selective approach when collecting articles for this chapter, as it was not practically possible due to a lack of online resources, to review the full collection over the period. Therefore, I decided to choose one quarter of each year from Sovetskaia Belorussiia’s archives for 1991-1993, the choice determined by its affinity with significant socio-political events. As a result, a dataset was created containing seventy five articles in total. Hardcopies of twenty three articles were further selected and digitised for closer investigation. Nasha Niva’s dataset is comprised of nineteen issues, and after an initial review of the database, twenty one articles were analysed in detail. A similar selective approach to data management was utilised. In addition, I included a number of articles from the periodical Svaboda (Freedom), affiliated with the Belarusian Popular Front movement (BPF hereafter) to present a fuller picture of the period. The choice for the selected periodicals will be further justified in a wider social and political context during the following subsection.

1.2. Context: perestroika and its aftermath in the former Soviet Union and in Belarus

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s the restricted but steadily expanding pluralism and glasnost’ (the politics of openness and publicness (Voltmer, 2000; Koltsova, 2006)) initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev shifted significantly the relationship between the state, media and society across the republics of the Soviet Union. The reforms were seen ‘as part of a broadening struggle’ aimed at ‘growing the autonomy of society from party-state structures’, for the ‘pluralisation of society’, ‘overcoming the atomisation of society’ (Sakwa, 1990: 200). Initially, however, according to Ushanov (2013: 234), glasnost’ was initiated by the Communist Party Central Committee in the form of an information policy the aim of which was to subdue the conservative forces within the Party apparatus. Whilst it was a tool for democratisation and political reform, it was supposed to advance the socialist system in the USSR (Zassoursky, 2004: 3-4). In accordance with the Soviet vision, mass media were utilized as a means to achieve a set of goals, even though these goals were grouped under the slogan of perestroika. However, the policy had a wider impact on the Soviet political and media landscape, with the liberalisation of mass
communication becoming a powerful force for the transition to democracy and the transformation of social and political life (Voltmer, 2000: 470).

In Belarus, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of an independent press that acted as a centrifugal force to contest centralising tendencies. The periodicals such as *Naviny BNF* (BPF News) (1988) and *Svaboda* (Freedom) (1990) became the drivers for freedom and social change. In the earlier period, when the party still controlled the media, the tradition of Soviet *samizdat* had an impact on the Belarusian independent periodicals. The periodicals provided alternative views, covering issues that were silenced in the official press that served as ‘a medium for Soviet ideology’ (Zassoursky, 2004: 8). Later, in the early 1990s, the press became more independent and the ownership of print sources shifted to a wider range of social actors, such as political parties, independent labour unions, social movements, non-state businesses and the church (Manaev, 1993: 76-8). The new periodicals, such as *Belorusy i Rynok* (1990), *Narodnaia Gazeta* (1992), *BDG* (1993) contributed to providing differing opinions, a diversified public sphere and the emergence of the ideas of media as ‘the fourth estate’ (Manaev, 1995: para. 1; see also Zassoursky, 2004:11).24 There were also attempts to revive the traditions of the national press and its interest in promoting national culture and language. In 1991, a group of journalists in Vilnius and Minsk founded a newspaper *Nasha Niva*, having declared themselves to be inheritors of the original *Nasha Niva*, the first legal Belarusian newspaper that functioned from 1906-1915 (Zaprudnik, 1998: 159-160). The original periodical pursued the promotion and development of Belarusian culture, language and literature. It was associated with what is known as the first wave of national revival; among its contributors were outstanding writers, including Ianka Kupala, Iakub Kolas, Maksim Bahdanovich, Maksim Haretski, Ales’ Harun, and Alaiza Pashkevich (Vakar, 1956: 88-92). These new media had to co-exist with the official Belarusian sources (such as *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*) and also with Russian media broadcasts.

It is commonly acknowledged that in the Soviet Union, unlike elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the change had to come from above rather from within a community. The emergence of civil society and social change is frequently considered as a Gorbachev phenomenon (Arato, 1993, 2000; Buckley, 1993; Sakwa, 1990). As Arato (2000: 45) stated, the policy of *glasnost’* in the Soviet Union was ‘an attempt to stimulate the

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24 According to this concept, media are considered as ‘an independent, self-sufficient institution’, which acts in parallel with the three branches of power (legislative, executive, and judicial) that take part in governing society and participates in the ‘system of checks and balances’ (Zassoursky, 2004: 11).
reconstruction of the public sphere and of civil actors, who were to be allies in a project of reform carried out from above (perestroika)’. Consequently, a national movement is not always given due credit in the literature on popular movements in the former Soviet regions, Belarus included. However, the movement for social and political change outgrew the initiators of perestroika, releasing forces they could no longer control (Sakwa, 1990: 390). Belarus witnessed a growth of informal groups in the late 1980s whose central concern was Belarus’s history, ecology and national revival. 1987 saw a number of these organisations working together to formulate a petition to Mikhail Gorbachev pleading for the prevention of the ‘spiritual extinction’ of the Belarusian nation (Korosteleva, 2005: 36).

There were a number of factors that contributed to the emergence of grassroots movements across the USSR republics, such as the development of public opinion, the ending of the war in Afghanistan, the rehabilitation of most of the victims of Stalin’s purges. In Belarus the pressure from below was circumscribed by a number of context-specific conditions. Firstly, after the Chernobyl disaster, which occurred sixteen months after Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the CC CPSU, and the belated release of information regarding the disaster, the regime was not able to entirely control the grassroots initiatives it had helped to create (Marples, 1996: 135). Secondly, the unofficial archaeological excavation in 1988 of the NKVD’s execution site in Kuropaty, which provided the first forensic evidence of Stalinist purges ever published in the Soviet Union, generated anti-Soviet sentiments in Belarus (Mihalisko, 1997: 238). Thirdly, the formation of Popular fronts in the neighbouring Baltic States had an impact on the social and political environment in Belarus and contributed to the formation of a similar movement, the Belarusian Popular Front. ‘Zyanon Paznyak, the archaeologist responsible for the Kuropaty discovery and the leader of BPF, formulated a platform the pillars of which were national revival and sovereignty (later independence), democratic reforms, human rights, and restitution for the crime of Chernobyl’ (Mihalisko, 1997: 238). The Front became an alternative voice to the Communist Party. Finally, workers’ movements and protest that provoked unrest in Belarus in the final period of Soviet power, as a result of the economic crisis gave rise to independent trade unions and established a precondition for collective action, articulating political and economic demands. All these ecologic, cultural and democratic initiatives together with workers’ movements created a pretext for the formation of civil society.
1991 saw a radical restructuring of the political landscape in Belarus. August 25th saw the declaration of an independent Belarus and the creation of a Commonwealth of Independent States, following a meeting between Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine, and Stanislav Shushkevich on behalf of Belarus at the Belaia Vezha in western Belarus (Hill, 2005: 5). The newly independent Belarus sought to distance itself from its Soviet past, adopting the Belarusian language and a new red and white flag and a coat-of-arms symbolising continuity rooted in the historical past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. New political parties emerged (Korosteleva, 2005); the Belarusian Popular Front turned itself into a political party. Nevertheless, the Communists and their allies retained a dominant position, and this had a retarding effect on reform. Two political leaders emerged with differing ideologies; the parliamentary leader Shushkevich, a proponent of a pro-western approach supported by pro-national intelligentsia, and the prime minister Kebich, who preferred to see the country taking a more conservative line with Belarus’s Eastern neighbour, signing preliminary agreements on monetary union and free trade with Russia (Hill, 2005: 5-6). This dynamic and often conflicting socio-political environment established a context in which public debate took place and in which the terms ‘democracy’, ‘civil society’ and the ‘market’ acquired salience. What follows below is the analysis of how these transformations were reflected in the language of the press and the influence the media had on these transformations whilst being transformed by them. Focusing on the references to the term ‘civil society’, the aim of the next sections is to map the qualitative change that occurred on a discursive level, on the degree of public debate and reporting.

1.3. Qualitative transformation of Belarusian media discourse: ‘civil society’ as an index of social change

The periodicals saw a growing use of the terms ‘democracy’, ‘pluralism’, ‘glasnost’ and ‘civil society’, which gradually replaced the old socio-political vocabulary derived from socialist doctrine. To some extent, in Belarus, similar to the earlier experiences observed in Central and Eastern Europe, the use of the term emerged as part of a discourse promoting democratisation, a tool ‘for the successful achievement of radical regime change through political negotiations’ (Arato, 2000: 45). It became a language of the new age; an index of social change. There was extensive dialogue, understood in Bakhtin’s sense of the word, with regards to the perestroika processes and the notion of civil society in the Belarusian media space. For structural clarity, I will pay greatest attention to the salient voices with
regards to the issue identified within my database by dividing my analysis into three sub-
sections. However, all these responses constituted a common dialogue in the media space
that occurred on an ideational and discursive level across multiple sources of the press,
over time and space and between persons who were not necessarily present at a particular
discursive event.

1.3.1. Gorbachev’s speeches in Sovetskaia Belorussiia

According to Buckley (1993), it was Gorbachev who linked the processes of
democratisation to the concept of civil society in the USSR. At the twenty-eighth Party
Congress, Gorbachev announced that ‘the Stalinist model of socialism’ had been replaced
by ‘a civil society of free people’ (Materialy XXVIII S’ezda KPSS, 1990, as cited in
Buckley, 1993: 189). However, Gorbachev did not provide an operational definition for the
term. There is also some evidence that prior to Gorbachev there were some earlier attempts
to pursue change and references to the term. As Sakwa (1990: 201) acknowledges,
‘Gorbachev is often given credit for ideas that originated elsewhere’, pointing to the earlier
demands for democratisation by dissidents Lev Timofeev and Andrei Sakharov.
Furthermore, Pomar (1990: 55) demonstrated that the term ‘civil society’ circulated in
social and political science discourse prior to Gorbachev’s usage. The author drew
attention to A. Migranian, an adviser to Gorbachev, who wrote two crucial articles about
civil society in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, regardless of ownership, the term ‘civil
society’ became apparent in the Soviet media in 1990-91, Belarus included. My dataset of
Sovetskaia Belorussiia revealed a number of direct references to the notion of ‘civil
society’ in speeches given by Mikhail Gorbachev published in the periodical. In one such
report ‘On the project of a new CPSU Programme. A report by M.S. Gorbachev at the CC
CPSU Plenum on 25 July 1991’, Gorbachev stated:

Finally, what is crucially important today, - is that the market economy will
allow the country to become an organic part of the global economy. For this to
happen, common rules for entrepreneurial activity, the freedom of exchange of
goods and resources, a stable currency, and most importantly, a law governed
civil society are needed. Only by meeting all these conditions we will be able to
take a worthy place in the global division of labour and, thereby to a larger
extent meet our own needs and use our natural resources more economically.

Talking about the new programme of the CPSU, a discursive shift is observed from the
Soviet realm of Marxist-Leninist ideology to the Western, liberal realm of the free market,
law-governed state and sustainable development. The creation of a law-governed civil
society, ‘where rights are effectively secured and in which interest groups can assert
themselves’ (Sakwa, 1990: 200), was seen as a crucial pre-condition for the implementation of radical market reform aimed at the creation of market economies and incorporation into the global market. Discursively, change in the extract is constituted by the new space and time dimension embedded in the discourse. The shift in the spatial order of the discourse from a local to a global dimension (‘global economy’, ‘global division of labour’) associated with ‘civil society’ and market capitalism became a common formula of the post-Communist epoch prescribing the way to achieve democratic life (Sparks, 1997: 104). The temporal change is achieved through communicative action that is oriented forward. Future tense and comparatives (‘more economically’) are at the core of the discourse of change, revealing tensions between past and future, old and new, local and global. The illocutionary force of the extract is ‘asserting’ (‘[o]nly by having met all these conditions’); ‘explaining’ (‘[f]or this to happen […] we need a law-governed civil society’); ‘persuading’ (‘crucially important’). Accordingly, the power in relation to a reader’s position is persuasive, not coercive, indicating a more equal relationship with the reader. Authority is derived from powers of argument and is therefore open to challenge and negotiation (von Seth, 2011: 69). ‘We’ is used here in a wide sense including multiple audiences across the USSR. Therefore, change is delivered by consent, seeking consensus, rather than coercion.

In the new CPSU Programme adopted by the Party and published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (09.08.1991), the notions of democracy, freedom, civil society, free market and a law-governed state were approved by the Party and were identified as key principles in the political development of the country:

With the aim of expressing the expectations of the people, retrieving lessons from its own history and taking into consideration global experience, CPSU will be guarded in its political activity by […] the principles of democracy and freedom in its multiple manifestations – public and personal, economic and political, intellectual and spiritual. Freedom is inseparable from civic responsibility and is inconceivable without establishing civil society and a law governed state, based on the rule of the people (narodovlastie).

The extract demonstrates that there was a radical change in the content of the Party’s programme published in the periodical, the old ideological doctrine being replaced by liberalised rhetoric. However, while becoming democratic in its content, such articulations retained some old features of the Soviet era. On a lexical level, tensions remain between old and new: ‘narodovlastie’ (the rule of the people), a word that comes from another, ‘alien’ in Bakhtin’s terms, Soviet discourse in contrast to the liberal origins of ‘civil society’,
‘democracy’ and law-governed state. Stylistically, media discourse continued to display ‘monologic’ features, as official messages were broadcast hierarchically from above. The party leaders’ speeches and programmes with references to the term, found within my database, were still predominantly published in the periodical as direct discourse, as an authoritative word, with no attached commentary and critical evaluation by journalists and commentators. Continuing the Soviet tradition, party leaders were talking on behalf of the people (narod). The utterance expresses a categorical modality, imposing a truth upon the reader through a declarative illocutionary force (‘Freedom […] is inconceivable without establishing civil society’). Therefore the power model of such a communicative event remained asymmetrical.

The processes of transformation presuppose that the elements of the old system will remain and compete with new values and sometimes predominate. The implication derived from Gorbachev’s speech on 25 July 1991 indicate that his understanding of ‘civil society’ was still rooted in a socialist model:

An acute question remains with regards to the influence of the party in the arena populated by the youth. Banished to the past are the times when influence was ensured by issuing directives and mandates to Komsomol. The organisation finds itself in a difficult position searching for its place in the youth movement. Surely, one cannot talk about returning to the old type of relationship, but it is the primary duty of all party organisations to pay constant attention to Komsomol and to spread Socialist consciousness within the youth movement. The Programme provides a good opportunity for such work. The orientation towards the free development of a person, initiative, enterprise, and openness to the world provide an opportunity for the younger generations to experience a fulfilled and active life.

Talking about youth movements, Gorbachev referred to the Komsomol, the Soviet youth organisation. The understanding rooted in a Soviet approach towards mass organisations as an essential part of the regime and the subordinate of the Party, dependent on its directives and resources, is implied in the extract. The party was still viewed as a guardian of civil society. The use of directives (‘to spread Socialist consciousness within the youth movement’, ‘to pay constant attention to Komsomol’) imply unequal, top-down power relations between the two entities. Such an understanding reveals tension and contradictions with the democratic values proclaimed in the new programme, such as ‘orientation towards free development of a person, initiative, [and] enterprise’. This equivocality, or ‘double-voiced’ property in Bakhtin’s terms of civil society discourse remained a feature of the period of transition. The new, democratic, values and new language coexisted and competed with the old system, resulting in a transformation of
societal meanings. Yet, at times, the centripetal forces, hostile to change were able to impose relative inertia proving that the societal transformation associated with the perestroika reforms and its aftermath were only partial, as will be further demonstrated in the next subsections.

1.3.2. Local responses to Gorbachev in Sovetskaia Belorussiia: the battle for hegemony

The responses to change and Gorbachev’s reforms by the Belarusian political and intellectual elites were varied in the first years of the country’s independence. On the one hand, the pluralisation of society and the policy of glasnost’ could not pass unnoticed. The periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia, originally the official medium of the CPB, underwent a significant shift allowing the pluralisation of voices. It saw a growing diversity of themes and topics that were previously taboo, such as the atrocities of Stalinism or the Chernobyl disaster, and it permitted the presence of critical views concerning these issues. Accordingly, some voices representing segments of the Belarusian political elite found within the periodical demonstrated an alignment with Gorbachev’s reforms. Democratic voices referencing the term ‘civil society’ became prominent in ‘The Declaration by the Movement for Democratic Reforms in Belorussia’, published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (13.09.1991):

Fellow citizens! Our country is getting rid of the social and spiritual slavedom that lasted for more than seventy years. Nonviable theories, economic experiments, suppression of personal rights and freedoms are being confined to the past. However, the way towards redemption is complicated. We are still ill with our past, we have not removed fear, and we have become accustomed to injustice. A lot is still to be done in order for a man to truly stand tall in our society. Towards this goal, we declare the creation of the ‘Movement for Democratic Reforms’ in Belorussia. The specific tasks of the movement are as follows: the replacing of the aged totalitarian state structures by modern democratic structures; the creation of civil society in the republic based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related laws, and the protection of sovereignty.

The extract represents a case presupposing a radical transformation of public discourse. Similar to Gorbachev’s reports, the tensions between old and new represent the dynamics of how a new discourse becomes established. The former is associated with negative connotations and strong criticism (‘social and spiritual slavedom’, ‘nonviable theories’). These are juxtaposed to the new values that are yet to replace the elements of the old system; the new priorities are ‘modern democratic structures’, ‘civil society’ and ‘human
rights’ oriented towards universal, global values. The term ‘fellow citizens’ is used to address the reader (instead of the ‘people’ (narod), ‘comrades’ or ‘party members’), in contrast with Soviet tradition. The transformation of traditional relations in media discourse can be further traced through the use of nouns denoting actions that produce ‘declarative’ illocutionary force oriented to the future (‘the replacement of the aged totalitarian state’; ‘the creation of civil society’). Such linguistic structures appear to elevate the relations of subordinations when compared to the use of verb forms (e.g. to replace) that are likely to produce directives. The directive illocutionary force is associated with the hierarchical style found in the speeches of the Communist party leaders.

On the other hand, the democratic processes in Belarus were complicated and controversial. With the Belarusian nomenklatura apparently unwilling to embrace social change, the centripetal, unifying tendencies became pronounced in the official media discourse producing tensions between democrats and traditionalists. The authorities represented by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belorussia displayed half-hearted support for change at best, disagreement sometimes growing into open controversy between the two sides. A speech, ‘We must not become hostages’, given by the Party Secretary V. Atroshchenko, in which the Secretary criticised the social and political changes in the country was published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (09.07.1991) in direct, unedited form:

Today, a very measured approach is needed towards the evaluation of both, the established socio-political situation within the country and the republic and the condition of the party pushed by six years of perestroika to the backyard of a society, sometimes shamefacedly called socialist. Unlike many, I do not wish to think that all our misfortunes come from the centre. However, it is a source of bitterness for all of us, including the party, to turn out to be the hostages of ‘perestroika’ s architects’.

Regardless of the initial attempts in the extract to mask an open antagonism towards Gorbachev’s reforms (‘a very measured approach is needed’; ‘a society, sometimes shamefacedly called socialist’), the speaker descends into straightforward criticism. A negative modality and a negative evaluative accent are attributed to the reforms (‘[w]e must not become hostages’) in an attempt to limit change, to resist the centrifugal forces. The phrase ‘perestroika’s architects’ embraced in quotation marks signifies a distance in the CPB from the reformers.
Guided by the reactionary line from the CPB leaders, open criticism towards the
reformers took place in the periodical and it was promoted by some of the intellectual
elite who embraced Marxist-Leninist views. In their article published in *Sovetskaia
Belorussiia* (16.08.1991), ‘Has the ideological struggle disappeared yet?’, Philosophy
scholars Dr Galko and Dr Karpenko stated:

The confusion in theory [...] is transferred into practice. It appears that there is
no one either in the centre or locally who could deal with this seriously and
responsibly. Here we are: ‘perestroika’, ‘revolutionary perestroika’,
‘qualitatively new condition of society’, ‘the ideology of renewal’, ‘Communist
perspective’, ‘more socialism, more democracy’, ‘intellectual impoverishment of
values’ and other extrapolations proposed after the April (1985) Plenum of CC
CPSU.

The new terminology that was recently introduced by the democrats, including ‘civil
society’, is placed in quotation marks, emphasising the distancing from the democratic
reformers’ position. The reporting frame (‘here we are’) contains an evaluative accent,
expressing scepticism and an ironical attitude towards the new vocabulary introduced
by the CPSU leader at the Plenum. The evaluative accent conveyed by the term
‘extrapolation’ (*ekstrapoliatsia*) re-accentuates the discourse resisting the new, de-
centralising processes.

Most explicit, however, was the antagonism towards the new social movements and
political parties emerging from below as a result of *perestroika* in their attempts to resist
change, which will be explored in detail in subsection 2.3. As the leaders of the
Belarusian Popular Front and other democratic parties, openly called for ‘de-party-
isation’, i.e. the disbanding of the Communist Party structures, the CPB Secretary V. G.
Tikhinia responded with a counter-argument in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* (Tikhinia,
02.07.1991):

These mottoes have been artificially brought into the workers’ movement during
the April events in Minsk and some other regions of our republic. Consideration
of the question of ‘de-party-isation’ was similarly imposed during the IV Session
of the BSSR Supreme Soviet. [...] A particular goal is pursued – to eliminate the
Communist party from political structures of society, to get rid of the
Communists’ influence upon workers’ collectives with the aim of replacing the
party by certain political forces to implement policies that are against workers’
interests. Advocating ‘de-party-isation’, new political parties (in particular the
Belorussian Peasants Party, Belorussian Social-Democratic Hramada (union),
and the Belorussian Popular Front) in their programme manifestos, reserved the
right to create primary units (supolki) [communities in Belarusian] in enterprises, institutions and organisations.

Discursive struggle became common practice in the media space, which was frequently manifested by ‘argument and counterargument’ logic, resulting in straightforward confrontation (policies that are against workers’ interests; the question of ‘de-party-isation’ was imposed). The use of the Belarusian word ‘supolki’ (communities) has a functional aspect in the utterance. It originated from the new national-democratic discourse implying the ideas of emerging civil society (hramadzianskaia supol’nasts’) that supported Belarusisation and frequently expressed themselves in Belarusian. Being re-articulated by the Party representative in this immediate context, the Belarusian word acquires an almost derogatory meaning. It appears to be alien within the context of a speech given in Russian. The use of Belarusian became a means of ‘othering’ the emerging new structures of civil society from the wider ‘de-nationalised’ population. As a result, the legitimacy of the group was questioned.

However, the inevitability of change that came with the reforms was evident in the CPB’s attempts to transform the programme and reinvent themselves. The CPB was not able to entirely control either the initiative of Moscow’s democratic reformers or the social movements from below that emerged in the country. With the public space becoming too heteroglossic and with the potential for the undermining of the party’s mere existence, its leadership required the formation of compromise and establishment of consensus to create what may appear as a common project. To make their conservative project more acceptable, the party leadership employed not only straightforward means to battle the new contradictory discourses, but also sought transformation utilising more subtle, hegemonic means. To demonstrate this, I cite an extract from the Report by the CPB Secretary V. G. Tikhinia at the IV CPB Plenum 29 June 1991 ‘On the work of Communists in Councils of People’s Deputies’ published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (02.07.1991):

Of course, all this does not mean that we should not improve our political order. Efforts in this direction are crucially required today. The laws on the main principles of the rule of the people (narodovlastie) and local self-governance (mestnoe samoupravlenie) together with the local economy in the Belorussian SSR adopted by the Supreme Council of our republic will without a doubt play a positive role here. The current situation dictates the quest for more effective methods of work by the party committees and organisations. […] This is why it is important for the Communist Party of Belorussia to work out and master the features of a parliamentary party. We need to learn to carry the political struggle
tactically and correctly within a multiparty environment. We must acquire the art of polemics and of rational compromise.

The intention of the party leadership, implied in the extract to diminish the centralising power of the party and to attribute some powers to local self-governance, can be seen as indicative of its willingness to transform. The communicative action directed towards the future implies the party’s intention to embrace partial changes (‘[w]e need to learn…’; [w]e must acquire…’). However, the discursive change in this case serves as a contribution ‘to preserving and reproducing traditional relations and hegemonies’ (Fairclough, 1992: 97), rather than genuine attempts to accept liberal reforms. The inertia produced by the centripetal forces involved in the transformation process appeared to be strong, as the understanding of ‘civil society’ remained atavistic and was articulated in Soviet terms embracing Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Directive issued by the CPB ‘On the work of Communists in the Councils of People’s Deputies’, which was published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (05.07.1991), claimed that ‘the functions of the party and state organs were separated and the foundations of BSSR as a law-governed sovereign state were established’. Simultaneously, according to the Directive, the party was obliged to:

provide support to the Communist-deputies necessary for the implementation of their duties in their constituencies; to facilitate the formation of a wide resource from members of labour, peasants, women and youth movements, as well as socio-political organisations of socialist orientation. […] In consolidation with labour unions, Komsomol, public organisations and movements of socialist orientation, to strive for wide representation of workers, peasants, youth and women in Councils of People’s Deputies. […] For the ideological unit of CC CPB to coordinate the activity of the party press. To help journalists form public opinion, aimed to support the position of Communists-deputies; to provide prompt and reasoned rebuke to anti-socialist insults and moral terror towards Communists.

Whilst a minor discursive shift can be observed in the attempts to limit the role of the party in decision-making by delineating it from the state, now proclaimed to be ‘law governed’, the old Soviet doctrine remained at the core of official ‘civil society’ discourse. The party leaders still saw their role as encouraging the formation of ‘civil society’ as ‘a wide resource from members of labour, peasants, women and youth movements, as well as socio-political organisations of socialist orientation’ that constituted the Communist Party’s constituency. The illocutionary force in the utterance is ‘commanding’. The use of directives and commands addressed to the party cadres and the people, a feature of Soviet discourse, signifies the unequal power relations between the party and society. In this view, such a model can be described by what Kasza (1995: 7) referred to as ‘administered mass
organisations’ (AMOs), a mass civilian organization created and managed by a political regime to expand its control over society. In such a role, official organisations do not constitute an independent societal realm or ‘associational life’ in the Western sense. Instead, AMOs are a constituent part of the state; they are strategically and financially dependent on the political elites in power. By creating AMOs, Soviet leaders were able to control women, labour, youth and other collectives of people that were not party organisations. Such organisations are delineated from the party, primarily due to the fact that, the AMO’s key purpose is not to take over or to influence the government, but to maintain the power of officials (Kasza, 1995: 8-9). The participatory civic structures bequeathed by Communism based on a state-centric approach were still dominant in the official discourse of ‘civil society’. The party leaders persistently saw the organisations as their subordinates. Their attitude towards the media was similar. As the extract attests, the media were continuously perceived as the party’s tool whose aim was to ‘help journalists form public opinion’ and provide counter-arguments to ideological positions contradicting Communist doctrine.

Interestingly, the dependency of the official media on the official line became apparent during the events known as the *putsch* (coup), which unfolded in Moscow in August 1991. As demonstrated by Kathleen Mihalisko (1997: 241), during the coup, on 21st August the CPB Central Committee adopted a resolution in support of the State of Emergency Committee and awaited its success. Following instructions issued by the Belarussian government, military and security forces prepared for orders from the GKChP. During this period the government maintained silence, also prohibiting Belarusian TV from reporting on Yeltsin leading the resistance and imposing heavy censorship on the print media. When the coup attempts failed and the Communist Party appeared on the verge of being suspended over Soviet territory (due to the policy of ‘de-party-isation’), *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* published an article with the self-explaining title ‘People (narod) defended democracy’ by Igor Grishan (23.08.1991) that proclaimed:

*Perestroika* continues, and now it is impossible to turn the clock back, to revive the famous administrative-command system. […] There is no will to return to the past. All of us have managed to inhale the life-giving ozone of democracy, glasnost’, and personal strength.

The point of no return had been passed and the processes of transformation appeared to gradually move on. During its period as a parliamentary republic (1991–94), Belarus made several important steps towards democratisation. The term ‘civil society’ acquired more
normative meaning and connotations in the official discourse, as in ‘The Address of the
Coordinating Council of United People’s Deputies “Belarus” to the citizens and peoples’
deputies of the Republic of Belarus’ (Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 20.10.1992):

The orientations for the activity of the Association of People’s Deputies ‘Belarus’, comprised of more than a hundred deputies; they support social and political stability; prevent a split, confrontation, hostility or violence in society, and gradually implement political and economic reforms. [...] Our priorities in politics are as follows: the creation of an effective, functioning economy [...], the establishment of civil society, the strengthening of state’s power, the fight against growing crime, the spiritual revival of Belarus, the development of Belarusian culture and cultures of other nations residing in the republic’s territory.

The utterances containing references to the term gained more consensual overtones, overcoming confrontation and unifying multiple positions through the use of the inclusive proposition ‘our’ towards a common goal of nation-building and democratic development. Yet, whilst with the processes of the post-Soviet transformation, the concept of civil society entered into scientific and public discourse, the frequency of the term’s use should not be overestimated, as the term remained at the periphery of the periodical’s content. There were only twelve direct references to the term within my dataset. Furthermore, the democratic processes in Belarus were found to be ambiguous. In an attempt to prevent being banned, the CPB resorted to a contingency plan that saw it supporting an initiative of the Belarusian Popular Front to declare independence (Mihalisko, 1997: 242). The newly independent country would be led for the next four years by the same officials, headed by Kebich until 1994, who was ready to accept the GKChP together with a pre-Gorbachev order. Therefore, democratisation was only partially accepted by officialdom that employed both coercive and consensual (hegemonic) power to resist changes in the Belarusian society.

1.3.3. A perspective from below: responses from the political and cultural community

There was another distinctive point of view that clashed sharply with the reactionary voice of the nomenklatura and that did not entirely internalise Gorbachev’s position on social change, demonstrating that the consensus about what constituted ‘civil society’ remained unstable. During Gorbachev’s period in power, the struggle for independence and socio-political transformation stimulated the rise of civil societies across the regions that articulated themselves in a national idiom (Keane, 2006: 107-8). These sentiments were
expressed in the emerging alternative national press that provided one of the crucial sites in which this nationalist idiom was elaborated and channelled, opening alternative space for a public debate.

A definition of the Belarusian Popular Front\(^{25}\) found in the periodical *Svaboda* (Freedom), the movement’s newspaper, implied the manifestation of the idea of civil society in cultural and political movement. As stated in their Manifesto published in the party's newspaper, (*Svaboda*, 1991 a):

> Belarusian National Front ‘Revival’ (*Adradzhenne*) is a broad civic and political movement for the transformation of society and the revival of the Belarusian nation in accordance with the principles of democracy and humanism, the development of culture, at its centre, nationality, as well as all other national communities in Belarus. Our main goal is the establishment of democratic society and the acquisition of Belarus’s independence.

It is clear from the extract that the movement sought radical transformation of the society, with the notion of ‘change’, ‘transformation’ at the core of its discourse. Other central terms in the extract are ‘nation’, ‘revival’, ‘nationality’, ‘culture’, ‘independence’ – the new vocabulary in the public space that became prominent during *perestroika*; its power resulted in the discursive formation of the concepts of national revival (*Adradzhenne*) and ‘civil society’. The ‘Revival’ (*Adradzhenne*) concept was initially articulated in ethno-nationalist terms, focusing on the issues of language, culture and identity that needed to be revived (Bohdan, 2011: 91), but it gradually became politicised during *perestroika*. The Front’s vocabulary developed into a national-democratic perspective with democratisation of social and political life becoming one of the key components of its agenda. The Front leadership saw ‘civil society’ as a catalyst of national consciousness and democratisation and as a primary means by which Revival can be achieved. As an example, in the extract from *Svaboda* (1991b) ‘On the relations of BPF ‘Revival’ towards political parties and civic organisations’ it was stated:

> A new political situation has been established in our Republic. New political parties and civic organisations, independent from the old authority’s structures, emerged as a result of the democratic forces’ struggle against the totalitarian system, with CPB and CPSU at its core. The common goal of these associations is the peaceful establishment of a democratic law-governed state, development of *civil society*, and national-cultural revival.

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\(^{25}\) The Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) was founded in October, 1988, initiated by Pazniak. It became the key representative of the Belarusian National Democratic movement in the 1980s and 1990s, initially as a broad-based civic movement, and from 1993 as a political party (Bohdan, 2011: 88).
In the extract, a key word ‘new’ was used twice. The illocutionary force directed towards the future is a key feature in the construction and establishment of the new discourse. A declarative illocutionary force of the utterance (‘[t]he common goal of these associations is …’) may suggest that the oppositional party equally approached the media as an instrumental force to promote democratisation and the development of national identity.

An explicit dichotomy between new (democratic forces, independent structures of civil society, democratic law governed state, national revival) and old (‘totalitarian system, CPSU, CPB) is central in the extract. The relationships between the new structures of civil society and the old system represented by the CPB and CPSU is articulated through the notion of ‘struggle’. The confrontation was further represented by the alternative historical, political and cultural manifestations circulated in the national press; such as the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the issue of Kuropaty and the alternative vision of history rooted in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that was silenced during the Soviet era.

Anti-communism became another distinguishing feature manifest in the alternative political party press. In contrast to their counterparts in other regions of the Soviet Union, such as Ukraine, where the Popular Front saw a significant incorporation of Communist Party members, in Belarus the national-democrats and Communists could not find a mutually agreeable position. ‘The BCP elite did not find it necessary to co-opt the national-democratic agenda of their opponents’ (Mihalisko, 1997: 240). This resulted in a sharp contestation between the two sides in the media discourse, constituting a dialogic battle, as in the extract from Svaboda (1991, b):

Simultaneously, the consolidation of reactionary forces occurred threatening the further development of democracy in Belarus, its independence and welfare. They aim to restore the unlimited rule of the Communist nomenklatura. In such circumstances the crucial aim is the unity of actions and tolerance in relationships. Our people face a long road towards the final goal which can be overcome only by unity.

BPF’s agenda, published in the alternative party press, was one of the key sources for articulating the idea of civil society and galvanising civic resistance to the Communist system. Such discourse, however, reveals a number of ‘centralising’ features. Similar to the Soviet leaders, the BPF leader talks on behalf of the people. Directive illocutionary force calls the reader to direct action. National ideology appeared to replace the Soviet doctrine without changing the old forms and practices that implied instrumental use of the media. Furthermore, such an uncompromising denial of the old system, associated with the USSR, communism, nomenklatura, and Russification and the radical replacement of the old
system by the new, was frequently unclear and alien for the majority of Belarusians who did not express a strong hostility towards the Soviet rule, as was seen in some other Soviet republics.

The previous extracts together with other examples in my dataset, suggest that the term ‘civil society’ was incorporated into nation-formation rethinking. The idea of civil society was less pronounced qualitatively and quantitatively in discourse and had less leverage than in other CEE countries. Instead, the dissenting voices referred to the notions of ‘адрадзенне’, language, ‘nation’, a common European history and anticommunism to accumulate their hegemonic power and to acquire social and symbolic capital. This nationalising rhetoric at times overlapped and superseded the notion of ‘civil society’ and its discursive role to articulate demands for societal change. It resulted in the attribution of unclear and ambiguous meaning of the term ‘civil society’. This national-democratic sentiment was further legitimated through the language of ‘anti-communism’. As a result, in the early 1990s BPF became one of the largest parties, but the party also gained a rather negative profile, perceived as a specific group alienated from the broader society (Bohdan, 2011: 98). Such rhetoric based on dichotomies and social tensions contributed to a political division of society undermining the prospects for democracy.

Some media, however, attempted to distance themselves from the political party’s periodicals, providing a wider description of the cultural processes rooted in national literary, cultural and historic traditions. Accordingly, differing from the political party’s press, the notion of ‘civil society’ also appeared to emerge as part of the intellectual debate promoted by the re-emerging national media. Intellectualism and culture oriented discourse can be described as a dialogic reaction towards the denationalising tendencies seen during the Soviet era and ‘anti-intellectualism’ (Mihalisko, 1997: 240) in the official press and also from the over-politicised radicalised discourses of the party press. The cultural discourse, created by intellectuals, although sometimes closely overlapping with the national-democratic discourse of the Popular Front, revealed latent tensions with the political use of nationalising semantics. As Babkoŭ (1992, in Nasha Niva) stated when discussing the relationships between ‘civil society’ and ‘national revival’:

Here, there can be mutual contradictions (for example, between Belarusian intellectuals and politicians, as the former does not accept the use of national semantics in the form of ideology)’.
Intellectuals published in the periodical saw the continuity with what is known as *Nasha Niva*’s revival, or the first wave of national revival in 1906-1915 initiated by *Nasha Niva*. The original periodical pursued cultural, not political goals, although ‘it did retain ties with the discontented urban and rural populations’ (Vakar, 1956: 92). Establishing continuity with the original periodical, in its first edition in May 1991, the Editor linked the conception of the new periodical with the idea of promoting a ‘national point of view’:

A reporter, a politician and a historian narrate, not about the actual situation ‘in reality’, but about how they imagine this reality. […] The subjective point of view and people’s feelings gathered in one issue constitute a national point of view.

Subjectivism, the personal opinion of a reporter together with the projection of the ‘national point of view’, became the central principles of the periodical. The periodical pursued its goal to create an imagined community through the ideals of national identity as perceived by intellectuals. In Gramsci’s terms, Belarusian intellectuals, including journalists, writers and academics, together with the national-democratic political elite, had the potential to articulate a different vision of the world, producing hegemonic discourses that envisioned the past, present and future of a society in a new way (Pershai, 2006: 628-30). The media became the channel through which public intellectuals attempted to develop national identity and civil society. In Belarus, intellectuals articulated the search for nationhood and national identity through cultural debate, re-articulating and re-defining the role of language, culture, and history, together with the relationship of ‘national revival’ to ‘civil society’. In such a debate, the concepts of ‘civil society’ and ‘nation’ sometimes intersected, overlapped, coexisted and conflicted with each other. In some cases, the departures from the past meant the emphasis on the closeness to the European path of development and distancing from the Soviet legacy, as in the extract from the article ‘To be called a people’ by Ales’ Kebik (*Nasha Niva*, 1993):

In reality, to be called a people, national revival and the Belarusian way, may be considered as metaphors of place. […] Not only is the country Belarus on its way towards self-determination, it is also approaching its determined place amongst an already established integrated Europe. […] The results of their [Polish, German, French] and our way, are significant in a single metaphysical space. They struggled and established the priority of human rights, civil society and open society – all these that our everyday consciousness agrees with without any formulations. […] All our troubles are to do not so much with self-becoming (*samastanaïlenne*), but with the liberation from other, left stereotypes, primarily – from alien imperial pride.
In the extract, the terms ‘human rights, civil society and open society’ were used by the author to constitute a shared Western identity. ‘National oppression’ sometimes perceived in terms of Soviet or Imperial Russia’s occupation provided the ground for alternative discourses (Gapova, 2010: 206). Anti-imperial sentiments (‘the liberation […] from imperial other’) were further enhanced by establishing links with the Belarusian past, implying that the nation existed. All that was required was to revive its history, culture and language in order ‘to be called a people’. The latter quote (that is not embraced in quotation marks in the utterance) is an intertextual link to the poem by Ianka Kupala, providing a historical reference to the earlier struggle of the Belarusian intelligentsia for national self-determination. There were multiple instances of intertextual links to Belarusian literary and historic texts identified within my database. In Kristeva’s view, intertextuality implies ‘the insertion of history into a text and of this text into history’ (1986, as cited in Fairclough 1992: 102). Such historic references contribute to the re-articulation of discourse contributing to wider processes of social and cultural change. By reworking history, intellectuals had the potential to establish new hegemonic constructions contributing to social and cultural transformation. The major problem for adherents of this approach, however, was the adaptation of those ideas into the contemporary Belarusian context. As Manaev (1995: 54) pointed out, ‘the orientation to the West was declared as the only alternative to Russia, because Western liberal-democratic values and principles were not embedded in the Belarusian society on the whole’. Furthermore, another crucial factor that prevented ‘national revival’ from becoming a widely accepted policy was the powerful cultural hegemony of the Soviet regime (Bohdan, 2011: 104). Therefore, ironically, the more the intellectual and political elite appeared to reinforce the idea of nation, the less possible it was to establish civil society and democracy.

Conversely, a ‘cultural’ concept of civic nation and ‘civil society’ that emphasises the importance of common culture, national symbols and historical memory is not necessarily a challenge for democracy, providing that it is based on a political culture that fosters plurality, tolerance, and solidarity. The supra-national aspect was acknowledged in the debate in Nasha Niva with some voices emphasising the priority of civic over national. In such articulations, ‘national’ and ‘democratic’ sometimes conflicted with each other, as in an editorial note ‘A diary of a private man’ (in Nasha Niva, 1992 (6)):

However, civil society cannot be the subject of a nation or ‘the determining power of history’ during a nation’s establishment due to the fact that its focus is wider. The national problematic deals with only one amongst many, one
manifestation of life amongst thousands. Civil society cannot be a subject of a nation. [...] Nesviadomasts’ [cultural indifference] is not the criterion for civil society [...]. Eventually, everyone has a right to his own nesviadomasts’.

As implied in the extract, the homogenising discourse of nationalism, manifested by the notions of “nation” and “nesviadomasts’” (cultural indifference), did not overcome the decentralising and pluralising notions of ‘civil society’ and individual rights. Implying the idea of multiple national identities within civil society, where ‘national identity is legitimate but only one identity among others’ (Keane, 2006: 107), the Editor conveyed the idea that national identity and historical and cultural tradition should not contradict the principle of the universality of human and civil rights, revealing tension with the ethnocultural perspective. However, this ‘civic’ and cultural articulation of ‘civil society’ also failed to become a hegemonic discourse, due to the fact that it became the vocabulary of a narrow circle of Belarusian intellectuals. As noted by Iuras Z. (Nasha Niva, 1992), one of the intellectuals taking part in the debate, in self-critique, ‘[Adradzhenne] became a literary myth that worked only in a fairly narrow circle of literary and civic activists; however, until now it has not become the ideology of the entire society’. Intellectuals taking part in the debate formed new paradigms with the expectation that the general populace would respond in consensus, but the ordinary people failed to accept this hegemony in part due to the discourse being ‘self-centred, elitist and intellectually oriented’ (Pershai, 2006: 8). Important to this contradiction was the fact that the creation of the new language associated with social and cultural transformation came with new forms of exclusion and domination that were at the core of ‘civil society’ discourse itself. As a result, the mediation of ‘civil society’ in the press appeared to hinder the establishment of civil society in practice.

1.4. Conclusion

Following the period of glasnost’ associated with media freedom and pluralism, the term ‘civil society’ became apparent in the Belarusian media space as part of democratising discourse and nation-building. Initially, the term was introduced through speeches, addresses, programmes and directives of the CPSU and its leaders that were published in a linear style, as direct discourse. The term showed little presence in commentary or other analytical genres. Therefore, the articulation of ‘civil society’ was constrained by the mediational practice of linking the use of the term with a range of voices of officials, political and intellectual elites. Its use was therefore restricted to the debates on ‘civil society’ created by these actors whilst ‘reflecting levels of official conflict and consensus’
(Bennett *et al.*, 2006: 468). In this context, the agreement over what constituted ‘civil society’ remained unstable, as new values and new languages competed with the old system, resulting in a transformation of discourse. Such re-articulations were frequently accompanied by discursive contradictions: authoritarian elements coexisted with democratic and nationalist voices, proving the ambivalent nature of societal transition.

However, these changes, apparently introduced from above, were further encouraged from within the community in the alternative press, acting as a decentralising force. The emerging alternative press saw ‘civil society’ as a symbol of radical change and as part of a new hegemonic project often expressed in terms of ‘anticommunism’ and rapid ‘nationalisation’ by the national-democratic elite. New forms of practices and routines were emerging; deliberation was frequently found in the evaluation of an opinion or statement with regards to the term ‘civil society’; the practice contributed to the development of the public sphere. Some of these traditions were rooted in the national press of the early twentieth century as the practices of *Nasha Niva* demonstrated. The traditions of subjectivism, intellectualism, and personal opinion of the reporter were revived and were becoming a marker of the new epoch, salient in *Nasha Niva* where interpretation and analysis was given prominence over factual reporting.

The described mediation practices reflected the transformation processes enacted by linguistic forms in speech acts. Directive and commissive illocutionary force (speech acts calling into action) were detected in the official and also alternative party press when referring to the term ‘civil society’. In the former case, such a style constituted the delivery of a set of instructions with direct illocutionary force rather than through a dialogue with the reader. As for the latter, ‘civil society’ was frequently used as part of a declarative speech act oriented towards the future (as something to be established). The term appeared to be instrumentalised for the purposes of establishing new political projects and the media became the channel through which political elites and public intellectuals attempted to develop civil society and national identity and to promote their socio-political and cultural projects. This rationale can be explained by the presence of a political and cultural environment where civil society was weak and the media were slow to transition away from the practices of its Soviet tradition in which ‘society could not consume culture of independent dialogue’ (Strovsky, 2013: 305). Instead, the media, whilst undergoing transformation, continued to remain an instrument ‘for mobilizing mass support’ (Voltmer, 2000: 471), although in this case for the goals of democratic transition and nation-building.
However, the role of the concept of ‘civil society’ appeared to be less conspicuous, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, when compared to some CEE cases (see Arato, 2000: 45-70). In Belarus the term ‘civil society’ was fostered by *perestroika*, and was frequently superseded by the rhetoric of national revival or the vocabulary of market capitalism. It still saw frequent use as part of Marxist-Leninist ideological doctrine. Therefore, the change in Belarus can be characterised as only a partial transformation of social life and public sphere. The change was further complicated by the fact that the national and democratic discourses found in the press during the beginning of 1990s did not always reach a desirable breadth of understanding and support among its audiences (Bohdan, 2011: 104). In particular, the rhetoric of ‘extreme anticommunism’, independence and ‘rapid Belarusisation’ were often seen as irrelevant to the newly emerged and still ‘sovietised’, ‘modernized’ and ‘denationalised’ country (Marples, 1996; Ioffe, 2004). The hegemonic project proposed by the national and democratic elite appeared to be rejected by the nation through the election of President Lukashenko in 1994, who signed a reunion pact with Russia proposing the formation of a common state (Gapova, 2010: 206) and rejecting the status of Belarusian as the only official language and re-introducing authoritarian practices. In this context, the term ‘civil society’ acquired new meaning and value; all of which forms the topic for investigation in my next chapter.
2. The mediation of ‘civil society’ during 1994-1999: indexing the past, projecting the future

2.1. Introduction

The period of the early 1990s demonstrated significant transformation in post-Soviet society and media in Belarus, but it was not clear whether this momentum was irrevocable. In hindsight, the democratic period was brief, in many respects ending with the start of the presidency of Aleksandr Lukashenko in 1994. In fact, in 1994 the country witnessed democratic elections based on ‘an impressive use of democratic procedures’ (Hill, 2005: 6), perhaps never observed thereafter. From this point forward the country’s governance gradually evolved towards an authoritarian style of leadership in which individual and societal freedoms were curtailed, the media were once again subject to censorship and tight control, and it was subordinated to the interests of the government. Brutal tactics were employed to suppress the opposition’s protests and civil society’s freedom. The socio-political landscape of post-Soviet Belarus could be further characterised by its determination to maintain links with Russia and avoid market reforms, choosing instead to implement policies more associated with the previous Soviet era (Hill, 2005: 5-7). During the earlier period of Lukashenko’s rule, however, the authoritarian regime was not fully consolidated and many of the processes of change initiated over the previous five years continued.

In this context, a number of tendencies can be observed in the Belarusian media environment, which share commonality with other post-Soviet regions. These features may also be characteristic of what is referred to in socio-political science as ‘hybrid regimes’ (Levitsky and Way, 2002), a form of rule manifest by the ‘selective use of liberalism’ by non-liberal regimes (Richter and Hatch, 2013: 325). Firstly, such regimes ‘maintain greater continuity with the previous command system’ (Jakubowicz, 2004: 58) and in such an environment, the ‘official’ media sphere is more prominent and domineering. Secondly, civil society, media institutions and public opinion are characterised by the fact that they are ‘too weak and disorganized to put real pressure on the government’ (Jakubowicz, 2001: 67). Yet, the alternative media attempt to act as a centrifugal force and becomes an essential part of a counter-hegemonic culture. Thirdly, the media become a site for political struggle between different actors resulting in a public sphere notable for its heteroglossic and conflicting nature. As Toepfl (2013: 9) points out, ‘the ideological diversity of news content, somewhat paradoxically, exceeds that in most developed democratic societies’
where media discourse is governed by a consolidated liberal-democratic consensus. Finally, the media may also become a channel for manipulation, as various political and social forces pragmatically employ mediated communication in the pursuit of their goals (Zassoursky, 2004: 57-115). As a result, the professional and cultural characteristics common to Western media – such as ‘independence, impartiality, detachment from politics, dedication to public interest, commitment to quality and the ability to refrain from pandering to the lowest common denominator’ (Jakubowicz, 2001: 60) became a challenge for the Belarusian (and other specified regions’) media, which did not have the opportunity to become fully developed and established in the earlier part of the 1990s or during the later period.

In such an environment, the notion of ‘mediation’ becomes crucial in the assessment of the intervening role of the media in the processes of making meaning (Couldry, 2008: 379-81). In its simplest form, mediation is concerned with the ability of language to influence attitudes and beliefs within the public forum (Hall, 2012: 7-14). The influence can be manifest, for example, through the processes of agenda setting (McCombs, 2004) or framing (Entman, 2004). Furthermore, Bakhtin’s dialogic theory (Bakhtin, 1981) is instrumental in identifying discursive mechanisms that serve to mediate the production of utterances and impact on meaning systems. Accordingly, the significance of mediated discourse (‘as embodied in the relation between self and other’) is based on the fact that all of our acts are evaluative and at the core of meaning creation (Walter, 2011: 190). In this view, the authorial stance of a journalist becomes important because journalists act as mediators, ‘intermediaries between the reality, itself and the mass audience’ (Annenkova, 2013: 83), taking and conveying a certain perspective and judgement and thereby contributing to the process of creating meaning. Furthermore, the dialogic approach helps to overcome a drawback, acknowledged by Stromback (2008: 232-4), who pointed out the tendency of media effect theories to focus on the content of media messages, without considering the wider context in which communication takes place.

Whilst recognising the reciprocal influence between media, the socio-political and cultural context and meaning creation, in this chapter my aim is to examine how information is mediated to promote a particular evaluation with regard to the term ‘civil society’ with the objective of influencing the term’s meaning. The following questions guide this chapter. What kind of ideas of ‘civil society’ were created and established as a result of mediation in the specific context witnessed during the period under investigation? How was a certain
attitude or political position promoted in the press and what tensions did such mediation produce? Which mediation strategies and power mechanisms were utilised by news producers in the facilitation or restriction of diversity of the ideas of ‘civil society’? These questions are directly linked to the primary concern of this thesis – the evaluation of the existing conceptions of ‘civil society’ and its uses with reference to the Belarusian press.

2.2. Sources and data

Table 3 p. 73 tabulates general references to ‘civil society’ and reflects on the sources used in this chapter. The selection and processing of my data included a number of stages. Initially, one quarter of each year from Sovetskaia Belorussiia’s archives for 1994-1999 was chosen for data gathering, the choice determined by its affinity with significant socio-political events. One hundred and twenty selected articles from the periodical were digitised for closer investigation; they were coded identifying instances of ‘civil society’ use. The data containing references to ‘civil society’ from one of the leading alternative periodicals Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta (Belarusian Business Paper, also known as BDG)\(^{26}\) was generated from the electronic database Integrum. It was coded accordingly, identifying key themes and trends. Finally, forty-eight articles from both periodicals were selected for more detailed qualitative analysis. Accordingly, this chapter will specifically focus on the comparison of data from Sovetskaia Belorussiia (also SB hereafter) and BDG. The analysis of Nasha Niva was not covered in this chapter for practical reasons.\(^{27}\) The data, which included references to the term ‘civil society’, was thematically coded. Amongst the key themes in both periodicals I identified the following: 1) the generic uses of ‘civil society’; 2) human rights discourse; 3) opposition (or political society); 4) the ‘third sector’. My analysis is based predominantly, but not exclusively, on these main themes. What follows is an assessment of the term’s use within the bounds of these specified thematic contexts, whilst taking into account the social and political environment and integrating a wide range of heuristic tools from mediation theory in my analysis.

\(^{26}\)A detailed description of the newspaper’s profile was provided in Chapter 1.

\(^{27}\)The data from both SB and NN from this period cannot be processed electronically. The volume of data derived from BDG was substantial and representative of the Belarusian alternative media. The detailed analysis of Nasha Niva, the periodical representing national-democratic point of view, is covered in the following chapters.
2.3. Generic references to ‘civil society’: indexing official voices

Some of the earliest references found in the press are indicative of the fact that ‘civil society’ was slowly but surely becoming the concern of the media. Its uses gradually increased as the development of civil society became incorporated into the official agenda.

Table 3: Intensity\(^{28}\) of ‘civil society’ use in the press (1994-1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SB</th>
<th>BDG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (references)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (sources)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of articles chosen for qualitative analysis</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 3 attests, initially, when Lukashenko came to power in 1994, the term appeared to have little value in the press’s content. However, 1996 turned out to be a turbulent year in socio-political terms, as the political crisis unfolded in November 1996 both during and after the referendum. As a result, there were changes to the constitutional powers of the President, entrusting him with ‘effective control over all the institutions of authority, including the judiciary, local government, and the legislature’ (Silitski, 2003: 36). Also, his maximum term in office was extended from five to seven years. A reaction to the undemocratic nature and practices of the Belarusian government followed from both civil society and the international community, which refused to recognise the new Constitution and demanded the restoration of its adapted earlier version following the declaration of independence. During this period the country witnessed increased societal activism, the intensity of the use of the term ‘civil society’ grew in both official and alternative media. As the regime became more explicitly authoritarian over the period of 1998 to 1999, the frequency of the use of the term more than doubled in BDG.

Initially, the content of Sovetskaia Belorussiia did not significantly change in qualitative terms from when Lukashenko came to power. The general content of the periodical was still influenced by the inertia in the aftermath of the ‘democratisation’ reforms initiated in the early 1990s, when the terms ‘democracy’ and ‘civil society’ were part of the same...

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\(^{28}\) ‘Intensity’ is the total number of instances (references) of the term ‘civil society’ as opposed to ‘frequency’, total number of sources containing the term.
discourse and implied a linear transition. However, as can be seen from the following extract from the President’s speech, ‘Main directions of socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for 1996-2000’ (Lukashenko, 18.10.1996 in Sovetskaia Belorussiia), a minor discursive shift occurred impacting the term’s semantics:

The real establishment of Belarusian statehood, the building of civil society based on democratic principles, and the reformation of the economy are impossible without solving the problems of our youth, its education, professional training and upbringing according to historical, cultural, labour and patriotic traditions of the people. [These are impossible] without an increase in the youth’s role, without youth organisations, in the state-building and economic and cultural development. The State Committee on Youth Affairs was created in the republic, realising the youth policy defined by the government.

One of the early official references to the term dating from 1996 saw the President invoking the term when he talks about youth policy in the context of state-building. Whilst still using democratic formulae and attributing (‘the building of civil society based on democratic principles’), the rhetoric appears to resort to the past with the government intent on regulating relations with society on their own terms. Whilst democratic in form, the formula invokes a growing concern of the government over the events that occurred during this period, revealing tensions between discourse and meta-discursive practice. The referendum in 1996 resulted in civic unrest in sections of the population and provoked the ‘radicalisation of youth’ with growing numbers of youth NGOs and movements, such as, the Youth Democratic Initiative, Youth of the United Civic Party, and Zubr (Bison), a student movement that were linked to political parties and activities (Kuzio, 2000: 100). At this point, youth policy became of primary concern to the government. The speech published in the periodical refracted this concern as the President sent a signal to society and the administration. The dominant position of the President is broadcast by the press as direct discourse; as a directive to the public perceived collectively. Therefore, it appears that the press, having received clear instructions from the top, served a regulatory function, performing the act of transmitting the government’s message. Following the Marxist-Leninist conception of the press, mass media were approached not as the ‘fourth estate’, but as ‘an instrument of social management’ (Manaev, 2003: 83) with the official press circulating numerous addresses, programmes and directives from the government. Such a genre showed that reverse, undemocratic processes had begun in the country. In such a context, the media were used as a channel of communication for broadcasting the dominant position of the leader to the nation as perceived in collective terms (indexed in the phrase ‘patriotic traditions of the people’). Such an articulation created particular relationships with the reader based on a hierarchical, asymmetric model.
In other articles found within my database ‘civil society’ use was guided by a slightly differing logic. As an example, an article by Professor Antonovich (30.10.1996, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia) ‘Between the hammer and the anvil’, published shortly after the President’s speech, demonstrates how the term ‘civil society’ was further appropriated by official elites:

The Republic follows the common path of the post-USSR, post-Soviet evolution, from the monolith of the former uniform and mighty state toward a sovereign European middle-size state. It elaborates its own institutions of civil society and the Constitution by the uneasy way of trial and error. […] We need to solve it inside the country, without taking our disputes and insults to a European and global level, while together choosing our own allies. Simultaneously, however, we need to avoid relying on radical forces, both at the right and left of the spectrum.

Similarly to the President’s speech, by upholding liberal and democratic values in tune with the European path of development (‘toward a sovereign European middle-size state’), such rhetoric aimed to reduce the social and symbolic capital of the opposition. Notwithstanding this, is the fact that by assigning a strongly negative evaluative accent to oppositional civil society defined as ‘radical forces, both of the right and left of the spectrum’, the scholar placed alternative voices beyond the boundaries of the dialogue. By using the exclusive ‘we’ and placing an emphasis on ‘our own institutions of civil society and the Constitution’ and ‘our own allies’, the reporter provided the unifying point of view of the ruling elite whilst restricting the debate to the official argument. As the institutional crisis unfolded in 1996, the official elite appeared to place an emphasis on context-specific institutions of civil society drawing selectively on those who were included and who were excluded. The role of the message served a pragmatic function, ‘designed to contain and neutralize dissent’ through the identification and marginalisation of the ‘Other’, ‘leading to the normalization’ (Cammaerts, 2013: 122) of the idea of ‘civil society’ and ultimately reducing its ‘radicalising’ semantic. Such a strategy was employed to manipulate mass consciousness whilst gaining legitimacy from the wider population. By reproducing official messages as a direct discourse, instead of transforming them, the periodical enabled the officials to speak ‘from a position of power’ (Bennett, 2006: 468). With no apparent re-mediational act involved, the official press made a marginal contribution to the ‘civil society’ debate, serving as a subordinate to the regime and ‘indexing’ (Entman, 2004: 4) or reflecting the official debate, acting as a vehicle of passing official messages to the internal and external audiences. However, by citing official voices and silencing
alternative points of view, the periodical effected the amplification of the official understanding of ‘civil society’ and thus contributed to the official agenda-setting.

Such rhetoric was not simply constative. The rhetoric regarding the creation of ‘our own civil society’ broadcast in the official media was gradually implemented in social life. The struggle against the oppositional structures of civil society began. The regime decided to re-introduce the relationship with society witnessed before 1990s. ‘Our own traditions’ and ‘our own institutions’ of ‘civil society’ implied the idea rooted in the Communist past that that the state would grow to encompass all of society. Following this continuity, the state decided to regain control over important sections of society – youth, entrepreneurship and social care NGOs and the media were sending such signals to society. From this point the regime attempted to create its own institutions of civil society and the media, by re-establishing and promoting organisations that existed in Soviet Belorussia before the 1990s – literary and journalist unions, youth and war veteran organisations. This agenda set from above and broadcast by the official media was implemented in practice in 1997 and 1998 by establishing the Belarusian Republican Union of Youth and the Republican Pioneer Organizations as duplicates of the Soviet-era Komsomol and Pioneer youth organisations. Their establishment indicated the country’s reverse to Soviet-style practices with an attempt to integrate state and society.

2.4. Amplifying the notion of ‘human rights’

As demonstrated in the previous section, by choosing some voices and points of view whilst suppressing others, the media act to strategically amplify the official notion and diminish the alternative viewpoint. In such a role, the citing of legitimising voices, including those from international community leaders, was crucial to both the alternative and official press. The issue of human rights was a particular concern during the latter part of 1990s as political and societal freedoms were being diminished and the use of the term ‘civil society’ was closely associated with this issue, as Table 4 demonstrates. The table reveals the instances of the use of ‘human rights’ within the dataset of articles that contain references to the term ‘civil society’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding the usage</th>
<th>SB</th>
<th>BDG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (intensity)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of articles chosen for qualitative analysis</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A response followed from both local civil society and the international community to the undemocratic practices employed by the Belarusian government that proliferated following the referendum in November 1996. Belarusian political and cultural elites with the support of the international community, as well as journalists themselves, articulated an appeal for political freedoms in the universal terms of human rights, gathering support in the West. As an example, the journalist Svetlana Karpekova (21.11.1996, in BDG) reported on the round table ‘International Helsinki movement and human rights in Belarus’, arranged by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, in her article ‘The Activists of the Helsinki Movement are Dumbfounded and Indignant’:

Presenting at the meeting, the Chair of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and writer Vasil Bykov noted that there is no so called civil society in Belarus and it is not being created. Instead, an empty niche remains in the country’s life that is filled by the authority and dependent political powers, leaving no space for objectivity, neutrality and non-biased opinion. The round table participants reported on the multiple violations of human rights in various regions of Belarus, together with the persecution of dissent (inakomyslie), and the prohibition of democratic organisations and labour unions’ activity.

The journalists used an indirect quote from Vasil Bykov, one of the most prominent Belarusian novelists and thinkers. The writer provided a severe critique of the regime and was the voice of the democratic community. According to Bakhtin (1981: 293), ‘the word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life’. The word ‘dissent’ (inakomyslie) used by Vasil Bykov is indexed in Soviet dissident discourse that opposed the totalitarian system witnessed in the Soviet Union and the phrase ‘democratic organisations’ invokes the democratisation rhetoric of the early 1990s. Thus, an association was established between Lukashenko’s regime and the totalitarian past, conveying the idea that civil society cannot emerge and develop in such an environment. The writer
acknowledged the non-existence of ‘civil society’ and the lack of public space in the country in his criticism of the authoritarian practices of the regime. The journalist exacerbated this criticism by using a reporting frame that contains a strong evaluative accent in the title (‘the activists [...] are dumbfounded and indignant’), thus amplifying and simultaneously internalising the dissenting point of view through indirect quotation.

This period witnessed the rise of transnational flows of information as voices of Western institutions penetrated predominantly, but not exclusively, the content of the alternative press. The OSCE, Council of Europe, European Union and the USA government raised concerns with regards to democracy and human rights in the country and a number of reports were produced regarding the issue.29 These reports and responses were widely covered in the Belarusian press. One such report called Crushing Civil Society in Belarus was published by the International Helsinki Committee, which listed a number of concerns, including ‘the monopolising of the media and information flows’, ‘assaults on journalists’, ‘the strangling of the NGO community’, ‘police violence and arbitrary arrests at demonstrations’ and ‘the harassment of political opponents’.30 On this occasion, the Information Unit of BDG (04.08.1997) produced an article under the title ‘Helsinki Committee on crushing civil society’:

The Helsinki Committee expressed concerns that, recently, Aleksandr Lukashenko has revoked all the advances in the field of democratization that were achieved in the early 1990s. Of particular concern of this, the largest human right organisation, is the violation of the rights of the mass-media and non-governmental organisations in Belarus.

The journalist covered the report objectively and in neutral terms by citing the Helsinki Committee indirectly. He summarised its main point of view through the use of a number of phrases taken from the original31 (‘crushing civil society’; ‘revoked all the advances in the field of democratization’) and through paraphrasing (‘the violation of the rights of the mass-media and non-governmental organisations’). Whilst not assigning any commentary to the report, the reporter puts a spin on the title ‘Helsinki Committee on crushing civil society’. By failing to use quotation marks around the original phrase in the title (‘crushing civil society’), the journalist reports it as a fact rather than an opinion. The reporter also

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31 Refer to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (1997, p.4) ibid.
places emphasis on the issue of the persecution of the media and the NGO community (‘the particular concern …’). As both extracts demonstrated, the alternative media followed and amplified the international community’s definition of human rights, defined in terms of civil and political rights. It predominantly focused on issues of freedom of speech, together with restrictions on the development of civil society and political participation, with less attention given to economic, social and cultural rights. The motif of weak, destroyed or non-existent ‘civil society’ was frequently amplified in such reports. ‘Human rights’ was clearly a salient notion within the alternative dataset of articles containing the term ‘civil society’ despite the fact that only a relatively small fraction of all NGOs in Belarus at that time were dealing with political or human rights issues. At times, in such articulations, the issue of ‘human rights’ became more salient and pronounced than the term ‘civil society’ itself. Whilst freedoms were, indeed, rapidly deteriorating and being curtailed in Belarus, the media reported on these violations. This tendency can also be explained by the fact that the emphasis served as an ‘urgency-enhancing’ (Macgilchrist, 2011: 32) mechanism employed by the media and political elite to attract the attention of international community, to influence public opinion and mobilise civil society.

The criticism provoked a sharp reaction from the Belarusian regime. The official press also responded with intensity by publishing counter-frames to the human rights rhetoric. The periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia ‘magnified’ and ‘made salient’ (Entman, 2004: 31) those elements that depicted reality in accordance with the official views. The press appear to draw on those voices that represented symbolic power for each party. Thus, while reporting on the conference ‘Russia-Belarus: strategy and partnership’ that took place at the State Duma, organised jointly by the Belarusian National Centre for Strategic Research ‘East-West’ and the Moscow Institute for Humanities and Political Studies, a reporter from Sovetskaia Belorussiia, Antonovich (30.10.1996), chose to refer to the opinion of Russian experts and quoted them indirectly:

Russian experts were brave to mark the unjust nature of the political attacks on Belarus and its President. As an example, it was highlighted that the Western mass media strategically choose to talk about human rights in those CIS countries where these rights are not violated. The total silence of the Western press with regards to the violation of civic rights of Russian speaking population in the Baltic States, together with the adverse human rights situation in Transcaucasia and Transdniestria, was acknowledged with surprise.

By shifting the focus to other issues, whilst failing to address the issues of the violation of the rights of free expression and association in Belarus, the journalist indexed and extolled
an authoritative point of view implicitly accusing the Western media of holding double standards. A Cold War frame was utilised in the report, presupposing a confrontation between the two players, the East and the West. In the extract, the CIS constituted the former, whilst the Western media together with the West’s allies (the Baltic States) were assigned to the latter. The tension point is rooted in the long tradition of confrontation between the West and the USSR with regard to the notion of human rights. The early definition firstly introduced by the UN, encompassed political, civil, social, cultural and economic rights (Macgilchrist, 2011: 19-35). Whilst the West had a tendency to prioritise political and civil rights, the USSR emphasised social, cultural and economic rights, with reciprocal accusations. These frames from the past found continuity and were reproduced in the content of the periodical *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*. Quoting Russian experts indirectly, the reporter reinforced this dichotomy by using words with strong evaluative accents (‘the unjust nature of the political attacks on Belarus’) together with utilising reporting structures that conveyed critical evaluation towards the Western point of view (‘[t]he total silence of the Western media […] was acknowledged with surprise’).

Furthermore, some Western voices diverged from the normative perspective and were published in the periodical. A report ‘*Pariah or Victim? A Reappraisal of Human Rights and Democracy in Belarus*’ (1997) by Christine Stone, a researcher from The British Helsinki Human Rights Group (BHHRG) was published in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* over a number of issues (209-214, October 1997). The group based in Oxford had no association with the Helsinki Committees for Human Rights, despite the similarity in its name. The BHHRG is made distinctive through the differing views it holds on human rights and political affairs in Central and Eastern Europe, publishing reports on election monitoring and ongoing events in the region.\(^{32}\) A critical view on Western governments interfering in the internal affairs of other countries is a frequent motif; notable cases were the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Belarus. In the report, Stone, (25.10.1997, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*), accused international Western institutions, such as the Council of Europe, European Parliament and some Human Rights groups of holding a ‘policy of double standards’ towards Belarus and some other East European countries. The major point of criticism is their emphasis of political rights in the country whilst simultaneously ignoring the ‘violation of human rights in the form of torture and abuse’ in Georgia and Armenia, countries that were about to join the Council of Europe. As Stone reported (25.10.1997, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*),

\(^{32}\) Available at www.bhhrg.org (accessed 17 February 2015).
The level of civil society in Belarus may be low by comparison with some self-satisfied Western societies but is it really to be placed below so many of the former Soviet republics? In Belarus at present there are no political prisoners yet the country is singled out for particular opprobrium. How does this compare with the situation in France where six ‘rappers’ were sentenced to six months imprisonment in November 1996 for insulting the police?\(^{33}\)

The reporter recognised the existence of civil society in Belarus, manifested by both local organisations and a national-democratic movement. As Stone stated, ‘the BPF has remained in existence longer than most of the other Popular Fronts in the FSU. In inhospitable circumstances it was an effective and moderate opposition force’ (Stone, 21.10.1997, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*). However, later in her report the observer appeared to be rather sceptical towards the national-democratic movement and its leader Zianon Pazniak by stating, ‘well-meaning but badly-organized the BPF had failed during its five years in parliament to enthuse people much with its brand of nationalism’ (Stone, 21.10.1997, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*). Whilst portraying the national and democratic opposition in unfavourable terms, the reporter endorsed the president (25.10.1997, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*):

> Why, then, is the removal of Alyaksandr Lukashenka a matter of such importance to everyone from right to left and from West to East? For one thing he is not easy to manipulate. Despite all the talk about ‘Stalin’ and ‘the Soviet tyrant’ Lukashenka may, ironically, be a true Belarusian patriot. While he may not fuss with flags and symbols he believes that independence is only meaningful with strong public backing. Ordinary citizens, too, are unimpressed by nationalist paraphernalia. They feel Belarusian while absorbing what they consider to be the best from their Soviet past.

Suggesting that concerns about Belarus were motivated by geo-political factors, Stone concludes: ‘[I]legitimate concerns have become fogged in rhetoric masking possibly dubious interests’. She created a borderline between, on one side, citizens and the President, appraised positively, and on the other side, the ‘manipulating’ West and nationalists portrayed in negative terms, a strategy called the ‘ideological square’\(^{34}\) by van Dijk (1998: 33). *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* welcomed this report by allocating a number of issues across several pages. In an annotation of the report (Stone, 21.10.1997, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*):

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\(^{33}\) The quotes cited here are taken directly from the report. However, they were compared against their translation in Russian published in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*.

\(^{34}\) ‘Ideological square’ is a discursive strategy employed to emphasise positive representation of the in-group (‘Us’), while mitigating its negative qualities. Simultaneously, negative representation of the out-group (‘Them’) is amplified, while de-emphasising its positive qualities (van Dijk, 1998:33).
Belorussiia), the editorial published a short comment approving the report for its balanced and objective analysis:

The issue of human rights in Belarus is interpreted in black and white tones depending on the point of view. The truth is in the middle, of course. The closest to the truth are those who studied the issue thoughtfully, calmly and objectively.

The framing of the report in objective terms while magnifying the legitimising voices that provided counter-arguments to the opposition was part of a pragmatic strategy aimed at ‘neutralising’ dissent whilst manipulating public opinion; all this constituted a discursive battle deployed by the periodical. Yet, the extract above reveals some attempts to create consensus between the opposing points of view (‘the truth is in the middle’). Also, censorship and control did not reach its zenith during this period, with the periodical occasionally voicing alternative perspectives. Sovetskaia Belorussiia published an interview with Aaron Roudsy, a representative of the International Helsinki Committee, who came to Minsk to participate in an international conference called ‘Creating Freedom and Prosperity from the Baltic Sea to Black Sea’ dedicated to human rights in the CIS. In his interview with Andrei Evmeniov (05.11.1997, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia), the representative stated:

We expressed our position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regards to the report on current affairs in the republic by the British Helsinki Group published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia. Firstly I want to clarify that this group does not have any association with any Belarusian nongovernmental, international or human rights organisations, including our Helsinki Federation. In our opinion, the published report does not match the required quality standards and de-facto only does harm to civil society in Belarus.

The position of BHHRG appeared to be too distant from the common sense viewpoint on human rights, civil society and democracy held by the majority of Western institutions and NGOs; it was not accepted as credible by the international community and Belarusian civil society. The fact that the criticism of BHHRG’s position was published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia is indicative of the occasional heteroglossia present in the official discourse of the time. However, whilst there was some space provided for an alternative point of view, the balance between the mainstream and alternative was far from equal. As my other examples demonstrate, during this period there was a strong tendency towards manipulating public opinion and the unification of discourse, together with a growing ‘parallelism’ in reporting, where opinions and issues become counter balanced in the press, with the categories of ‘us and them’, ‘East and West’ once again having become the features of both the official and alternative press, politicising content and dividing audiences into two camps. This is demonstrated further in the next section.
2.5. Performing the ‘political community’

Civil society and the alternative media attempted to act as a watch-dog to the new political order and its growing use of police and Special Forces, censorship and the tight control of the media. This gave reason for some researchers to claim that in modern Belarus it was next to impossible to divide political society from civil society (Rouda 2007, Marples, 2004). Political society in the narrow sense is ‘the element in the model of Tocqueville which constitutes a necessary supplement to dualist models that contrast the state and its people, the private citizens’ (Hann, 1993: 22). Similarly, by ‘the political’, Mouffe (1999: 744) understood ‘the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in all human society, antagonism that can take many different forms and can emerge in diverse social relations’. In such a context, the ‘ability of movements to organize and mobilize’ as well as ‘to coordinate actions and to disseminate counter-frames independent from the mainstream media’ became strategically important (Cammaerts, 2011: 31). Accordingly, the Belarusian alternative media provided a channel of communication for alternative voices. The critical commentary towards the authorities by journalists and commentators became very common in the alternative media, as journalists felt a responsibility to society to act as a ‘watchdog’ providing checks and balances against established political power (Gross, 2002: 27). In his article, ‘Parliament as a distorted window of Belarusian democracy’ Valerii Karbalevich (18.12.1995; BDG) stated:

De-ideologisation, de-politicisation, de-structuralisation of society and the poor self-organisation of civic structures allows this regime to survive. The authorities consciously prevent the formation of civil society; seeking to artificially preserve the current state of apathy, indifference, nihilism, social amorphism. […] On the contrary, the skilful use of democratic forms, attributes and slogans only strengthens the authoritarian power.

Whilst performing an act of critical witnessing (‘[t]he authorities consciously prevent the formation of civil society’), the reporter also provided a counter-discourse in response to the official use of democratic rhetoric (‘the skilful use of democratic forms, attributes and slogans only strengthens the authoritarian power’). Together with emphasising the weakness of civil society’s structures in the country, the journalist used the term to critique government policies that led to the atomisation of society and the monopoly of the public sphere by the state. The reporter de-contextualised official ‘democratic’ rhetoric by assigning a critical evaluation and establishing boundaries between the state and civil society. Such practice, based on opinion and criticism, establishes deliberative forms of genre and contributes to the formation of a public sphere. Whilst this public space is limited and is constantly at risk of
being reduced in a non-liberal environment (sometimes referred to as ‘totalitarian public sphere’ (Killingsworth, 2012); ‘private or intimate spheres’ (Cohen and Arato, 1997)), by expressing their critical opinion, journalists have the potential to maintain and facilitate alternative spaces, informing and mobilising the general public. Macgilchrist (2011: 211) points to the potential role of a journalist in recognising and emphasising ‘the moment of the political’, i.e. ‘the journalist’s role in democratic practice is in destabilising rather than stabilising the social and political order’. By contesting and contrasting dominating points of view, the journalists have a potential to open up and expand spaces in which contemporary political and social order is subjected to scrutiny and to act as a watchdog against non-liberal regimes.

A group, comprising of critical voices from the alternative press, including those from the establishment, increased the deliberation and contestation potential of the public sphere. In the following extract from the article ‘Welcome to the Asian Country Belarus’, Leonid Zlotnikov (26.08. 1996, in BDG), the Chief Expert on Economic Policy and Reforms from the Supreme Council’s Committee, aligned himself with an alternative vision of ‘civil society’ as an independent entity, in contrast to the official point of view:

The confrontation between the President’s team and Parliament, together with political parties is indeed, the struggle for property and power. […] [A] significant part of the elite today defends a liberal variant of development within the framework of European civilisation. This means a framework of civilisation in which property is separated from power; in which civil society exists independent from the state; and people’s lives do not depend on the mercy or anger of a monarch.

The extracts cited in this section represented an alternative view point from those presented by the government. A liberal adherent, Zlotnikov’s understanding of the notion is based on a clear dichotomy between the state and civil society, between European and Asian values. He also distanced himself from the official rhetoric of Belarus as a democratic state, unmasking the contradiction embedded in official practice between declaring (discursive act) and performing (metadiscursive act), providing a counter-argument to the ‘official’ rhetoric. Siding with the voices of civil society, alternative reporters, intellectuals and adherents of liberal views among the political elite contributed to de-centralising tendencies through the act of deliberation and the expressing of an alternative opinion. However, the examples cited in this subsection demonstrate that the reporters, whilst performing the act of providing criticism of state policy and action towards civil society, employed a critique predominantly based on antagonistic relations and categories. The dichotomies ‘state’ v. ‘civil society’, ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the alternative media discourse
became salient, which is the very nature of ‘political’. Used in this reductionist way, ‘civil society’ as a unified realm in opposition to the state, served the purpose of mobilising society by the media against the increasingly centralising force of the regime. However, such politicisation of ‘civil society’ discourse restricted the debate providing the opinion of only one section of society whilst failing to meet the criteria of diversity and inclusiveness. Sometimes, becoming too radicalised ‘trying to substitute for oppositional forces’ (Lebedik, 2001: 33), the journalist becomes involved in politics. Reporting on the closure of ‘Svaboda’ (Freedom), one of the earliest and most widely distributed alternative periodicals in his article ‘With one freedom less’, Vladimir Dorokhov (27.11.1997, in BDG) wrote:

The quiet ‘purge’ of democratic ‘non-combatants’ outliving the referendum shifted to a decisive offensive against the independent press – the last structure of civil society realistically opposing the current regime.

Clearly using oppositional rhetoric exacerbated by the metaphor of ‘war’ (‘purge’, ‘non-combatants’, ‘offensive’), it was journalists themselves who constituted much of the opposition and the alternative media themselves became actors in socio-political life, promoting certain definitions and acting as a counter-force. Therefore, the media not only served society by providing comprehensive information, but the independent press became part of civil society seeing its role as a counter force to the regime. In his online lecture ‘Who is to pay for quality journalism in Belarus’ (on December 18th 2014), the Belarusian journalist Andrei Aliaksandraŭ described his vision of the role of journalism. While emphasising that he lives in the country, he states that as a citizen any journalist in such a situation is bound not only to observe and report, but also to take ‘an active position’ (dzeiasnaia pasitsyia). Whilst at times producing conflicts with the principles of objectivity and impartiality, the journalists performed a mediated action, reinforcing the new political culture arising in society. Such mediation resulted in the politicised character of the public sphere in which the dichotomy between official and alternative spheres were amplified and established with journalists representing periodicals with opposing stances, having appeared ‘on different sides of barricades’ (Zayats, 2001: 49). The increased coverage of

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‘civil society’, ‘human rights’ and ‘democracy’ were utilised by both sides, reinforcing the politicisation of media content. While not suggesting that there were no instances of ‘objective’ reporting in my database that distanced itself from ‘barricade journalism’ and that complied with the standards of unbiased journalistic reporting, it was evident that the balance between ‘news’ and ‘opinion’ aimed at informing rather than to influence was hard to achieve in both periodicals.

By reducing the notion of ‘civil society’ for the purposes of the political, the press risked representing ‘an impoverished view of social life’ (Hann, 1993: 22), undermining the development of trust and cooperation in society. This challenge was understood by some Belarusian public intellectuals, as the next extract from the article ‘This is not the entire truth yet about a human’ by Elena Daneiko (26.04.1999, in BDG) attests. The journalist reported on the event, framing it in non-direct discourse, describing her perception of the meeting with Svetlana Aleksievich, one of the most significant contemporary Belarusian writers. On the publication of her two volumes, Aleksievich met with her audience in Minsk and the reporter provided the following commentary:

She is not inclined to lecture or categorise – typically, these qualities rarely accompany intelligence and talent. She does not seek to teach and remodel the whole of humanity. She is not in a rush to judge, not to produce hatred, which is the product of the culture of struggle and the barricades, where we all appeared to be hostages. She does not like neologisms such as ‘sovok’ [...]. All that Svetlana Aleksievich says today, has been said by her in her books, and by others in other books. But if all this still remains either misunderstood or unavailable, only one thing is left to do – to repeat. That no idea is equal to human life. That our problems cannot be solved at the barricades. That without civil society it is impossible to build up the muscles needed for a new life. That you cannot live like that, looking back, when all you see in the past is only a huge mass grave and a pool of blood.

The reporter internalised the voice of Svetlana Aleksievich in close alliance through quoting her pictorially, indirectly. Whilst aligning with the writer’s position, the journalist did not impose the same point of view on the readers (‘[t]here is no mentoring-ness and categorical-ness in her; [s]he does not seek to teach) and left the reader to decide who was right or wrong? The act of deliberation performed by the journalist was based on a contrast of opinions, encouraging heteroglossia. Indirect and semi-direct quotes were employed as deliberative tools contributing to the dialogisation of discourse. Whilst acknowledging the significance of ‘civil society’ (‘without civil society, it is impossible to build up the muscles


38 In 2014, Svetlana Aleksievich was nominated for the 2014 Nobel Prize in literature.
needed for a new life’), neither the reporter nor the writer accepted the radical perspective, which creates a division in society by re-contextualising some of the terms used in oppositional discourse (She does not like neologisms such as ‘Sovok’). Terms with negative and insulting connotations ‘Sovok’ (‘Soviet man’), used to describe the collective passivity of a large section of society, the failure to organise and protest, associated with Soviet values of collectivism, indifference and apathy were strongly criticised and rejected. Instead, an inclusive, humanistic vision of the idea of ‘civil society’ aimed at reconciling society and creating solidarity and a common identity (‘we all appeared to be hostages’) was conveyed. Politics is clearly only one side of the coin. To support this point Gellner (1991: 498) claimed that civil society ‘cannot simply be identified with the existence of institutions, capable of acting as a kind of countervailing force to the state’. Whilst social institutions embedded within civil society that put pressure on the state are certainly important to act as a decentralising force in the context of authoritarianism, ‘politically oriented groups are not the only components of civil society’ (Buchowski, 1993: 82). By defining ‘civil society’ exclusively as an opposition to the state, the alternative media risked creating a division in society. It equally risked failing to represent the mass of citizens. In this respect, a more positive, inclusive, idea of ‘civil society’ proposed by intellectuals, such as Svetlana Aleksievich, was indispensable.

2.6. Mediating the ‘third sector’ as a ‘legitimate enemy’

As demonstrated in the previous sections, the politicisation of society and the media observed within this period was manifested by antagonistic relations in both the alternative and official media. According to Mouffé (1999: 744), “[p]olitics aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is always concerned with the creation of an “us” by the determination of a “them”.’ If such a division is not overcome, ‘the other’ becomes associated with suspicion and fear and is seen as an enemy to be destroyed. Whilst such a mediational logic could certainly be observed in relation to the pro-democratic and pro-nationalist civil society, who opposed the regime and demanded national revival and the respect of human rights, in the official media such antagonistic attitudes did not necessarily extend to the whole spectrum of NGOs, at least initially. The official press was found to be portraying some public organisations favourably and to be actively promoting a progressive agenda. As Table 5 attests, there were a growing number of references to differing types of public organisations that comprised what is sometimes referred to as ‘the third sector’, with 1997 witnessing a sharp increase. After initial coding of the references,
fourteen articles were selected for closer analysis; this analysis indicated that there was no univocal mediating strategy used when referring to these associations.

Table 5: References to structures of civil society in the press (1994-1999)

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Whilst my analysis is restricted to a database that contains articles with references to the term ‘civil society’, if we are to get a fuller picture of the lexical diversity and intensity of the concept, access to a more advanced corpus of data would be required. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the data presented in Table 5. In general terms, the alternative periodical demonstrates a greater diversity and higher frequency of reporting on the structures of civil society. Notably, the terms the ‘third sector’, ‘non-governmental organisations’ as well as ‘foundations’ rooted in western discourse that intrinsically

39 ‘n/a’ means data was not available or could not be processed.
encompasses the idea of autonomy from the state (‘non-governmental organisation’, NGOs), an independent structure (‘third sector’) that decentralises governmental hierarchy and delegates power from the state to citizens was predominant in BDG. Diverging from this logic, the frequent use of ‘foundation’ (fond in Russian), a term used to refer to international or western-funded pro-democracy organisations in Sovetskaia Belorussiia during 1997-1998, can be explained by the following. During this period officialdom introduced a number of restrictions on projects receiving international funding, forcing some international agencies, including the most prominent such as the Soros Foundation, to leave the country. Issues relating to the Soros Foundation together with other locally based funds were widely covered by both the official and alternative press. The periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia favoured the terms ‘public associations’ or ‘public organisations’ when referring to what Tocqueville (in Cohen and Arato, 1997) described as ‘associational life’. The terms ‘public organisations’ and ‘public associations’ (obshchestvennye organisatsii) and (obschestvennye assotsiatsii) have roots in the Soviet tradition and tend to be used to refer to institutions loyal to the regime as well as politically ‘neutral’ associations and initiatives involved in various types of societal needs. The term ‘public organisations’ also saw high intensity use in BDG. However, in contrast to Sovetskaia Belorussiia, the frequent interchangeable use of the term ‘civil society’ with other terms denoting ‘the third sector’ may be indicative of an attempt to emphasise the more political role of such organisations.

During the period under investigation the Belarusian ‘third sector’ was represented by a relatively diverse network of civic associations and organisations that sprang up during the period of perestroika and its aftermath. These included cultural, educational, religious, environmental, women’s, youth and business groups, as well as independent research centres (think-tanks) with only a small fraction of these acting in direct opposition to the government (Kuzio, 2007: 219). According to Tatsiana Protko, Chairperson of the Helsinki Human Rights Committee, until December 1998 the authorities did not have any ‘serious’ problems with public associations and the regime offered politically neutral NGOs the possibility to participate in its development agenda.40 A major concern of many of the NGOs was financial survival, with the receiving of grants from Western donors and therefore adjusting to the donors’ agenda and their understanding of the situation in Belarus. The situation changed radically only in 1999, when the largest labour unions of

the country went on strike following the consolidation of political parties and NGOs. To stop this process, the government issued Decree Number Two, ‘On some measures adjusting the activity of political parties, labour unions, and other public associations’, 26 January 1999, its aim being to increase control over civil society (Protko, 1999).

Initially, a certain level of pluralism was demonstrated in Sovetskaia Belorussiia and ‘moderately’ alternative voices were identified in the content of the periodical. One such representative was Professor Oleg Manaev, the founder of the Independent Institute of Social-Economic and Political Research (IISEPS) and a liberal thinker, gave an interview to Irina Gurinovich (06.11.1996), a reporter from Sovetskaia Belorussiia. In the interview titled ‘This “inconvenient”, yet needed sociology’, the journalist provides an overview of the institute thereby performing the act of informing the reader:

The Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Research calls itself a factory of liberal thought [think-tank] […]. The motto of the scientific institution is ‘Few can deal with politics, but everyone should participate in “civic-building”’. Informing is a speech act aimed at providing information by the news media, facilitating the formation of public opinion and helping the audiences to make informed choices (Hall, 2012: 16). Whilst the journalist appears to provide some objective information about the organisation and uses direct quotations from the Institute and thus disseminating accurate information to the reader, this act is not value-neutral. The sceptical stance weaves in the phrase ‘the Institute […] calls itself a factory of liberal thought’, in which the reporter distanced herself from the western term (‘think-tank’) through the use of the reporting frame of semi-direct quotation (‘calls itself’) and by replacing the term with a more traditional phrase, ‘the scientific institution’. As the interview proceeds, Professor Manaev describes the activity of the think-tank and provides a definition of ‘civil society’:

Holding seminars, we invited representatives of diverse structures of civil society – leaders of ten leading political parties, chairs of civic organisations and large economic structures, and representatives of state structures – Supreme Council; Cabinet of Ministers, and local authority.

Manaev’s understanding of ‘civil society’ surpassed categories of explicit confrontation, implying the use of a co-operational model to describe the relationships between the state and society. It represented a liberal point of view that included a wide spectrum of actors working together to promote the development of the market and democratic forms of governance. Such a position was not devoid of criticism aimed towards the centralising tendencies observed within the period. As Professor Manaev stated, ‘the centralisation of
power needs to be approached very carefully’, ‘it is not the people who should serve the state; but the state which should serve the people’. However, whilst including moderately critical, reformist voices in the content of the periodical while imparting news to society, the journalist performs an evaluative action that is implicit in the title of the interview (‘This “inconvenient”, yet needed sociology’), acknowledging the ambiguous attitude held by the authorities towards the think-tank (the centre was eventually closed down by the authorities in 2005 and had to move to Lithuania). Perhaps the journalist incorporates her own doubt of the official position by placing ‘inconvenient’ in quotation marks, which is juxtaposed with her own evaluative adjective ‘needed sociology’ without quotation marks, but this point is implicit and does not represent a counterpoint to the official line.

Such a liberal, reformist discourse was tolerated, providing it refrained from radical forms of opposition to official policy or views that were representative of a number of independent think-tanks, funds and women’s organisations that comprised the ‘third sector’. The official press approached them in an ambivalent way, which can be described in Mouffe’s terms. The public organisations were seen not as the ‘other’ to be destroyed, but as a ‘legitimate enemy’, ‘whose ideas we are going to challenge, but whose right to defend those ideas we will not put into question’ (Mouffe, 1999: 756). Such a mediating strategy was also employed towards what were known as Chernobyl charities and funds, the better part of which were formed during 1989 to 1990 as details of the accident became known.41 The majority of the organisations relied on links to Western charities and organisations for financial support. One of the most representative organisations was the Belarusian Charitable Fund ‘For the Children of Chernobyl’ chaired by Gennadii Grushevoi. Established in November 1989 as a nongovernment committee initiated by members of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF), its chief task was to send children for periods of recuperation abroad. Later the Fund became involved in a wide spectrum of activities concerning health and social care. It should be mentioned that the issue of humanitarian aid was always treated ambiguously even during the period of 1990-94 and in the latter part of 1990s suspicion and hostility remained, partly because it was seen as evidence of weakness and inability in the state structures to meet the demands of society and environmental damage.

41 International Humanitarian NGO ‘Independent Aid for Children’ and To Life After Chernobyl; Belarusian Charitable Fund ‘For the Children of Chernobyl’, ‘Protection from the Atom’ Benevolent Fund; The Belarusian Social-Ecological Union ‘Chernobyl’ were major charitable organizations in Belarus, 1989-1993 (Marples, 1996:72).
The ambivalent attitude towards such organisations can be traced in an interview given by the Fund’s leader, Gennadii Grushevoi, to a journalist from Sovetskaia Belorussiia Elena Shumarova (08.06.1996). In the introduction to the interview, the journalist provided a rather positive evaluation of the Fund’s activity:

The Fund ‘For the Children of Chernobyl’ does not need any special introduction. Its President, Gennadii Grushevoi, is almost the brightest figure in the international humanitarian movement which supports the victims of Chernobyl. The seven year activity of the Fund demonstrated what potential the civic initiative has in solving multiple social problems, specifically, in arranging recuperative holidays for children.

In the introduction, together with providing information about the organisation, the journalist assigns a positive evaluative accent towards the Fund, portraying it in favourable terms. However, later in the interview the journalist will invoke an implicit reference to another point of view, which conveys a more conflicting attitude towards the fund: ‘There were times when it was almost considered as a sign of a good taste to throw stones at your Fund. Have your opponents calmed down yet?’ The journalist conveys an uneasy relationship with the authorities as the Fund’s leader was found criticising both the government of Shuskevich and Kebich in their dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl incident during the earlier period (Marples, 1996) and later, Lukashenko’s administration, for obstructing the grassroot initiative to assist children and those who suffered from the disaster. This is further supported by the Chair’s vision of ‘civil society’ as expressed in the interview:

We created a model, a sample of a civic movement that is capable of implementing large-scale social programmes independently, without the organisational and financial support of the state. If more people knew about our work, it would be possible today to build in a new way the relationships between the governmental and non-governmental structures dealing with the same social problems. [At the core of the relationships are] not the dictatorship and bureaucratic control, but the redistribution of responsibilities, rights and duties between the state and civil society. Everyone would be a winner in such a situation, except the corrupt officials. […] We sought to prove that it is not only the state but also self-sufficient associations of ordinary citizens, even contrary to the former authorities, who can solve the social problems of dozens of thousands of people.

As the extract demonstrates, the Fund leader emphasised the autonomy of ‘the third sector’ from the state and the role of citizens in solving societal problems. His idea of ‘civil society’ was rooted in the initiative of the grassroots community that can only develop under certain conditions in which people are encouraged to develop their own initiatives. He criticised some aspects of governance, such as corruption, bureaucracy
and inefficiency, which prevented the emergence of a favourable environment for civic activity while refraining from direct opposition to Lukashenko. The official media appeared to, if not openly support, then at least to include reformist critical points of view in its content, serving as a channel for information and facilitating the formation of public opinion. At this point, officialdom lacked a clear and coherent policy towards non-overtly political organisations, although they were treated with suspicion and mistrust. Therefore alternative and moderately critical viewpoints were voiced in the official press. Sometimes these voices were very pronounced, reported as direct discourse and became apparent as agents of mediation. However, as the political climate changed, strategic mediating practices were utilised in the press. When some organisations attempted to participate in political decision making, a more critical stance was taken by the Sovetskaia Belorussiia journalists. In the article ‘What do Belarusian women want?’ by Galina Tropetskaia (07.10.1997) a critical and ironic attitude towards women’s NGO’s was expressed:

I will take a risk and talk about something that in essence does not exist (although, frankly speaking, it is a rather tedious task). It is about the women’s movement in Belarus […]. Strange thing, hardly ever do I mention these independent women’s organisations, my female interlocutors ask in unison: ‘Where are they? Can you name one at least?’ It is a notable fact, at least, because there are about twenty registered and active women’s organisations nowadays, including one political party. They are all together uncompromisingly intent on defending the rights and legitimate interests of Belarusian women, to promote their importance in society, facilitate their intellectual development and improve the material well-being of their female compatriots. It goes without saying, their aims are highly topical and noble. However, they have been ‘defending’ and ‘facilitating’ for at least three years. Yet, we hardly see any results. […] Instead, I hear familiar and non-binding maxims about the lack of true democracy and trust in society; the violation of human rights; the lack of real, as opposed to declarative, willingness from the state to care about women’s problems.

The article displays contradictory stylistic and structural purposes by blending the acts of informing and persuading. The opinion-based report, which incorporates the performative act of ‘witnessing’, conflicts with the principle of objectivity. Witnessing is a ‘performative act [that] affirms the reality of [an] event’ (Hall, 2012: 18) and it can be an important discursive mechanism in journalistic practice to gain authority. In the extract, the journalist employs the act of witnessing selectively to support her cause (‘my female interlocutors ask in unison: ‘Where are they? Can you name one at least?’’). This allows her to create a negative image of the women’s organisations. The reporter performs witnessing strategically, by employing direct quotes without naming concrete persons as ‘a chorus of
synchronised speakers’ (Macgilchrist, 2011: 113), which makes the actual act of quoting questionable and thereby exploiting the strategy for manipulation purposes. The women’s voices involved in NGOs are reported indirectly with an attributed negative accent (‘I hear familiar and non-binding maxims about the lack of true democracy and trust in society’). Semi-direct quotes are used (‘they have been “defending” and “facilitating” for three years at least, however, we hardly see any results’) to distance the author from their point of view and convey it in ironic terms.

A number of women’s NGOs that existed at the time were involved in democratic processes and the respect of human rights provoking the criticism witnessed in the official media. Whilst in the article the journalist acknowledged the responsibility of women in solving some societal problems, such as ‘poverty alleviation’, she denied them political rights, thus contributing to the maintenance of gender stereotypes based on patriarchal values. On the other hand, whilst expressing an ironical attitude towards women’s pro-democracy activities and ‘invoking and recreating patriarchal gender systems’ (Gapova, 2002: 655) according to which women should stay away from politics, this struggle may not be about gender per se. The denial of the right to participate in political activity was applied to the entire ‘third sector’ and the end of the decade witnessed increased control by the state, with new legislation leading to the re-structuring of the sector and the creation of loyal, pro-governmental organisations, including women’s groups (that saw their activity as being ‘in the course of protective, paternalistic ideology striving for benefits and various aid to women on the part of the State’ (Petina et al., 2010: 11). This policy also resulted in the closure of some such organisations (‘Nadzeia’ was closed down in 2007).

Therefore, as my analysis demonstrates, a number of mediation practices were employed by the press to establish a centralising unity in the context of conflict and diversity. Whilst not explicitly assigning the independent NGOs as the ‘other’, the ‘agonistic’ (Mouffe, 1999: 754-7), a stance was taken in the reports through evaluative acts performed by the journalists. Not completely devoid of antagonism, the voices of independent civic organisations were present in the content of the mainstream press during the period and were attributed the role of a ‘legitimate enemy’ (Mouffe, 1999: 755) making room for dissent and

Gender issues in Belarus deserve investigation in their own right, but to describe briefly, ‘gender equality exists in Belarus de jure’: powerful national mechanisms, such as the National Plan of Action and the National Council on Gender Policy were active during the period 1996 to 2000 with the aim of achieving gender equality (Petina L. et al., 2010: 21). In the mid-1990s, there were twenty-three women’s NGOs in Belarus that engaged with a wide range of issues: employment, violence against women, participation in political decision making and legal rights (Kuzio, 2000: 100).
a certain amount of consensus. Some journalists were able to express a critical stance (although minor) to the official position, demonstrating ambiguity towards the ‘third sector’. However, by the end of the decade centripetal forces prevailed and the pluralism in the field of mass information almost faded away, demonstrating the increasing domination of monologic forms in the public space, which differed to the situation of the early 1990s when the media demonstrated a high level of heteroglossia. The Decree 2 issued on 26 January 1999, ‘On some measures ordering the activity of political parties, labour unions, and other civic organisations’, urged all non-governmental organisations to re-register with the justice department. De-facto, this provided impetus and a legal basis for the authorities to eliminate all the organisations presenting a real or imagined threat to the regime. According to Tatsiana Protko, the chair of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the decree resulted in the suspension of the processes of civil society formation, thus reversing the country back to a situation observed in the mid-1980s, the only difference being that it was state structures instead of ideological institutions represented by the Party that took control over civil society.

A more coherent understanding of the ‘third sector’ and ‘civil society’ appeared at the end of the decade. The government now appeared to commit to constructing its own discourse defining ‘civil society’ on its own terms. The President’s addresses were extensively published as direct discourse. As an example, in ‘The President’s Address to the National Assembly’, published directly in the periodical, (Lukashenko, 08.04.1999 in Sovetskaia Belorussiia), a stratagem was provided that prescribed direct state control over civil society:

The new draft of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, adopted at the national referendum on November 24th 1996, signified a qualitative change of the legal system. It was oriented towards significantly improving the efficiency of governance in all spheres of social life, whilst developing civil society institutions. For this to happen, a wide range of direct and indirect levers of state influence are required.

The extract conveys ideas rooted in the Communist past that the state would grow to encompass all of society. In this model, as described by Buchowski (1993: 83): ‘The integration of state and society was not achieved from the bottom up by means of vigorous civil society, but from the top down by means of the heavy hand of bureaucracy’. Following this continuity, the state decided to regain control over the independent

structures of society and the official media conveyed the official message. The term was used to provide legitimacy to the new Constitution and to support the country’s chosen development course, as the next extract from the speech demonstrates:

I am convinced that Belarus has made a choice for a stable transitional movement forward, towards the concept of sustainable development. [...] However, human rights, democracy, and the market must not become yet another doctrine breaking people’s lives. [...] We can only achieve these ideals by following our own path but while we take into consideration the global experience, we must under no circumstance blindly copy other models. We will not accept a return to the practices of the historical past or the thoughtless implantation of a Western European or American path. The formation of a developed civil society that meets the needs of contemporary society in its historical context is our principle developmental objective.

The ‘authoritarian word’ of the President, discursively manifested by the subjective modality and directive illocutionary acts (‘I am convinced’; ‘must not become’; ‘we can only achieve’; ‘under no circumstances’; ‘do not accept’) is fused with authority and power of personality and demands unconditional acknowledgement by the reader. Whilst denouncing the alternative voices of the opposition (‘[o]ur current opposition represents a decadent phenomenon’) and thus restricting discursive diversity, the President invokes the legitimising notions of ‘people’ and ‘our own path’. The populist rhetoric reinforces the centralisation of discourse, as ‘populism absorbs everyday life into the tasks of the nation, […] imposing a hierarchy on the diversity of linguistic forms’ (Hirschkop, 1999: 297). And yet, this apparently unified language, a monologic discourse, did not simply discard the alternative voices. Making associations with the legitimising concepts of ‘sustainable development’, ‘human rights’, ‘democracy’ and ‘civil society’, the authoritarian discourse incorporated and monopolised the alternative point of view, making it its own ‘word’. The attempt to forge unity could not be implemented without the media serving as the source of the meaning’s unification and solidification by amplifying the official message. However, what Bakhtin vividly demonstrated is that the authoritative word is not absolute and that ‘heteroglossia’ is always juxtaposed to monologism in a perpetual struggle opening up spaces for new meanings.

2.7. Conclusion

The potential for democratisation, a diverse public sphere and civic life that arose in the early 1990s was halted by the end of the decade with increased presidential power and with diminished democratic freedoms and human rights. In such an environment, in most general terms, there was a predominant tendency of the press to shift its role from being a
catalyst of democratic change to a tool of manipulation, used by the political elite in a power struggle. However, this transformation of public life that, by the end of the decade, resulted in increasing ‘monologisation’ and ‘closure’ of discourse did not occur instantaneously, it was accompanied by a number of trends and processes as my analysis has demonstrated.

It was found that the earliest references to the term ‘civil society’ by Lukashenko’s regime were associated with an attempt to delineate the notion from the normative ideas of ‘civil society’ and recognised the need to establish a context specific model of social order and civil society. With no explicit definition provided in the official press, the initial attempts were identified in the creation of the official notion of ‘civil society’ through a mixture of ideas derived from normative democratic discourse, together with the invocation of elements of the Soviet conception of ‘civil society’, summoning populist rhetoric and the identification of the ‘other’. ‘The other’ was associated with politicised and nationalised communities, and gradually, antagonistic frontiers were established with the national and democratic opposition, western-funded NGOs and Western institutions, on one side and the government, pro-government organisations and ‘the people’ on the other. The frontier of non-political civic organisations remained fluid as they were tolerated but not trusted, and ambiguity existed towards the ‘third sector’, frequently portrayed as a ‘legitimate enemy’ (Mouffe, 1999: 756) in the official press.

Such ‘antagonistic’ and ‘agonistic’ (Mouffe, 1999: 755) media logic was driven by the political elite in power and exacerbated by the official press that reproduced official messages. In some cases considered in this chapter, the press reported official voices as direct discourse, instead of transforming them, thus contributing to the status quo. With no re-mediational act involved, the official press made a marginal contribution to the ‘civil society’ debate, by merely reflecting the official position. In other cases, however, the periodical succeeded in extolling and amplifying the official point of view by acting strategically; in such a role the strategic use of evaluative acts by journalists was found to be crucial. By utilising mediational tools, the journalists had the power not only to reflect on the official debate on ‘civil society’, supporting one side rather than the other, but also contribute to its meaning creation. Furthermore, whilst the radicalised voices of the national-democratic community were prevented from direct access, occasional heteroglossia in Sovetskaia Belorussiia was detected. The representatives of the ‘third sector’ were occasionally included in its content acting as the agents of mediation and providing an alternative point of view. However, in such cases, a reporter was frequently
found assigning an evaluative stance and therefore diminishing the potential political impact of alternative voices.

The universal discourse of human rights was amplified in the alternative periodicals and it collided with local, context specific ideas of ‘civil society’. The reporting style of journalists on many occasions was equally found to be in conflict with the principles of objectivity and impartiality. The notion of ‘the political’ was, perhaps, most instrumental in guiding mediational practices in both the alternative and official press. As my analysis has revealed, contestation and antagonism based on the polarising categories of ‘us v. them’, ‘state v. civil society’ were central to the alternative press. ‘Civil society’ was understood in terms of political community, ‘the third sector’ independent from the state, and frequently framed in human rights discourse that served as an enhancing mechanism. In such a role, the journalists and reporters constituted part of this community, voicing their own critique of the regime and drawing from sources of alternative political and cultural elites, including those of the international community. In such a context, where everything is politicised, the idea of civil society is at risk of being substituted by the idea of a political society, impoverishing the thematic content and meaning of ‘civil society’ and thereby exacerbating social conflict and dividing society. Thus, the politicisation of ‘civil society’ was indicative of change that occurred in the term’s meaning resulting from the social and political struggle. The media, both official and alternative, reinforced the political culture arising in the society, shaping the politicised character of the public sphere in which a more pronounced dichotomy between official and alternative media was established and amplified. Despite faults and shortcomings, politicised journalism, frequently affiliated with a particular point of view, helped to galvanise pressure and dissent against the increasingly centralising tendencies in the country witnessed by end of the decade. This was achieved by covering and amplifying the issues important for civil society’s development, such as human rights, political community, NGOs and voicing severe criticism to official policies. This struggle was manifested by the perpetual conflict between centripetal and centrifugal forces that became pronounced during this period and has established the leitmotif for the chapters to follow, providing the possibility of tracking evolving and shifting discursive forms and meanings of the term ‘civil society’ in the press.
3. Shaping media discourses on ‘civil society’ in the press, 2000-2004: the discursive struggle over the term

3.1. Introduction

The contemporary articulation of the idea of ‘civil society’ is predominantly associated with a liberal position on the nature of society, the individual and the state. The position emphasises ‘society as a self-regulating realm, the ultimate repository of individual rights and liberties and the body that must be protected against incursions of the State’ (Seligman, 1992: 11). ‘Civil society’ is seen as a way towards democracy, good governance and a better society (Edwards, 2009: 45-62). However, what this perspective misses is that while the use of the concept can instil ideas that facilitate the functioning of democracy, it can also serve as an ideological foundation for non-liberal regimes. Drawing on this perspective, I am going to demonstrate that ‘civil society’ can be appropriated for various purposes not only in Western-European democracies, but also in non-liberal environments, such as Belarus. I particularly emphasise the role of the media in such appropriation. The capacity of the media to influence political agendas and to support or reinforce particular points of view is specifically demonstrated in this section. Furthermore, media are understood as ‘a key site for the production of social meanings’ (Wharton, 2012: 428), resulting from the mediation between various actors by the use of different strategies (Wodak et al., 1999: 30-46), under the influence of socio-political events, within a specific public space provided by the media. This perspective is useful in demonstrating that the term ‘civil society’ is not an objective, ready-made category, but is subject to processes of interpretation and contextual use; the idea that constitutes one of the central arguments of the thesis. As Bakhtin (1981: 401) stated,

[w]hen we seek to understand a word, what matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions – this is the false front of the word; what matters is rather the actual and always self-interested use to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker, a use determined by the speaker’s position (profession, social class, etc.) and by the concrete situation. Who speaks and under what conditions he speaks: this is what determines the word’s actual meaning.

In view of this, this chapter addresses the following research questions, which are directly relevant to the aims of this thesis. What contextual factors influenced the chosen use of the term ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press between the years 2000 and 2004 and the underlying purposes behind these choices? What mediating practices were involved in this
use? What impact did these contextual factors and practices have on the meaning of the term ‘civil society’? To answer these questions, I employ a number of theoretical perspectives. I will approach media texts as, to a large extent, reported discourse (see Urbanová, 2012; Waugh, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998; Thompson, 1994). Newspaper reporters rely on the language of others - eyewitness reports, interviews, press releases and conferences, written documents and official letters, articles in foreign and domestic newspapers and many other forms of spoken and written discourse (Waugh, 1999: 133). Therefore, news production is an inherently ‘collective product’ (Koltsova, 2006: 12). When different perspectives are brought into the text, they result in a mixture of voices that frequently conflict and compete with each other, constituting a dialogic struggle. One of the aspects of the dialogic theory proposed by Bakhtin (1981) considers a language, or discourse, as a space within which meanings are fought for (Hirschkop, 1986: 110). While focusing on this perspective in my analysis, I also draw on insights from Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic and discursive capital (Bourdieu, 1991), which emphasised that the struggle between various actors and groups occurred not so much within the discourse, but over the discourse. The competition over discourse resources, or discursive capital, is ‘a mirror of the competition over social resources’ (Wharton, 2012: 441). This framework is useful for demonstrating how the terminology of ‘civil society’ became appropriated by various actors in the legitimation of political positions, practices and projects for social and political organisation in Belarus and how this appropriation was reproduced in the press.

In particular, I aim to establish a link between official policies with regard to ‘civil society’ and their impact on media debate. I attempt to trace the relationship between the points of view on ‘civil society’ formulated by political elites and how these are appropriated and reconceptualised by the media.

These theoretical considerations guide my methodological approach to data analysis. I consider the following aspects (adapted from Lemke, 1995: 39-44). Firstly, I look into the presentational (thematic) aspect focusing on what was understood by the term ‘civil society’ by various actors. Secondly, I examine the orientational aspect of an utterance. I attempt to trace how an orientational, evaluative, stance towards the presentational content was shaped. In this case, the linguistic category of ‘reported speech’ as understood by Bakhtin (1981) and Voloshinov (1973) is of particular use. The dialogic approach emphasises that ‘relations between the quotation and its context are that of dialogue and evaluation. By the mere act of quotation the author shows his or her attitude to other texts and authors and tries to evoke a similar attitude in the reader’ (Smirnova 2009: 81). The
category of ‘reported speech’ also illustrates how the struggle among socio-political points of view manifests itself, since a reporter may frequently adopt an evaluative position towards what is being reported and to coordinate his or her utterances accordingly. I also refer to typologies of reported speech derived from a number of authors (Bell, 1991; Thompson, 1994, 1996; Smirnova 2009) to guide me in my analysis. Finally, I concentrate on the *organisational* level. I attempt to evaluate the relationship between elements of the discourse itself (i.e. within the official discourse) and its relations to other discourses or texts (i.e. between official and alternative).

My archive was coded, processed and analysed with the tool NVivo10. The archive included 36 articles from *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* containing 80 references to the term ‘civil society’; 41 articles from *Belorusy i Rynok* containing 105 references to the term; 37 issues from *Nasha Niva* with 58 references to ‘civil society’ and 58 references to the term ‘independent society’. I also included 143 articles with 147 references to ‘civil society’ from *Beloruskaia Deloavaia Gazeta*, hereafter referred to as *BDG* to replace *Narodnaia Volia*, due to the former’s online access being limited to 2006-2010. Similarly to the latter, *BDG* embraced a political agenda in their content and prior to its closure in 2006 and move online, was one of the top oppositional periodicals. I compare the report on ‘civil society’ with original sources where possible, with other reports on the same issue from different sources and situate it in a broader socio-political context. The following sections demonstrate how the term ‘civil society’ was initially appropriated by officialdom and how these appropriations were re-articulated in the press.

### 3.2. The appropriation of ‘civil society’ in the official discourse: establishing ‘a practical consensus’

The document database created for my research allowed me to trace the uses of ‘civil society’ in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* from December 2000 until December 2010, in accordance with the aims and goals of this thesis. A number of searches were conducted to track the dynamics of the uses of the term ‘civil society’ and its synonyms, using search engines and Excel to process the data. As a result, a number of graphs and tables were produced. This quantitative analysis did not reveal the exact point at which the term
entered into the newspaper’s discourse due to the fact that the earliest data available was dated the year 2000 (see Graph 1).44

**Graph 1: Dynamics of ‘civil society’ use in Sovetskaia Belorussiia – Belarus’ Segodnia (2000-2011)**

Evidence from the periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia together with some secondary sources (Lepeshko, 2009: 92-3) suggest that frequent references to the term by the periodical began in the early 2000s when ‘civil society’ entered the vocabulary of the Belarusian government. Subsequently, its use saw significant increase, as the graph illustrates. In the early stage, the term was used in a context that was common with many post-Soviet regions. It presupposed the transformation of the social and political order together with intensive processes of nation-building after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Often referred to as a ‘denationalised nation’ (Marples, 1999), Belarus is a new state, or a state under reconstruction. It has seen intensive nation-building initiated by the state (Leshchenko, 2004). This objective was frequently highlighted in speeches given by officials over this period. As an example, in his address at the conference ‘On Measures for Solving Problems of Culture and Arts Development’ on 10.02.2001, President Lukashenko (Lukashenko, 10.02.2001) stated:

Belarus is joining the new century as an established sovereign European state. […] The essence of this moment is that we create our own statehood, statehood of a higher level. […] The development of democratic institutions, the creation of civic organisations and associations – all this defines the contemporary image of Belarus.

44 ‘Intensity’ is the total number of instances (references) of the term ‘civil society’ as opposed to ‘frequency’, total number of sources containing the term.
The essence of civil society is not of confrontation, but joint constructive work by public associations, movements, political parties and all branches of governance. We do not need disturbance and discord, we need order and prosperity in our country!

As the extract demonstrates, ‘civil society’ entered into official rhetoric as part of a democratic discourse and as a normative ideal. Simultaneously, whilst being declared a part of democratic discourse by the Belarusian officialdom, it diverged from the oppositional discourse by its emphasis on the non-confrontational nature of ‘civil society’, as the extract above suggests. These developments were also reflected in the document ‘National programme on human rights and civil liberty protection 2001-2005’ aimed at ‘further reinforcement and protection of the rights and the liberties of Belarus’s citizens [...] which formed the foundation of the democratic constitutional (pravovoe) social state’ [my translation from Russian] (Pashkovskii and Parechina, 2003: 177). Governmental policy and rhetoric found resonance in the media’s content. As an example, Andrei Akimov, a journalist from Sovetskaia Belorussiia (15.11.2001), reported on the press-conference given by Grigorii Vasilevich, the Chair of the Constitutional Court, in an article entitled ‘Steps towards democracy’:

As Grigorii Vasilevich, the Chair of the Constitutional Court, pointed out, the current trend is for the intensification of constitutional control. [...] This is due to the fact that civil society becomes a more active participant of democratic processes. At the same time, the government’s attention with regards to the protection of human rights and civic freedoms is increasing.

The utterance contains a direct intertextual link to official policy which approached ‘civil society’ development partly as democratisation and the reinforcement of human rights. This was broadcast in the context of a general tendency towards the curtailment of democracy and the regime’s growing control over the media, the persecution of civic activists and human rights violations. Such a discrepancy demonstrated the media’s dependence on the central political agenda. The correlation between official media discourse and the policy of the government officials showed the journalists’ adjustment to the official line. The extract represents an example of a non-direct style of reporting, when the boundaries between the reporter’s and reported voices are blurred. Whilst the utterance contains framing with a neutral verb (‘pointed out’), which aims to add objectivity to the reporting, there are no explicit markers, such as quotation marks that separate the two subjects’ positions. This pictorial (non-direct) style of reporting created a unified position highlighting the alignment between the reporter, the officials and the policy. With the
official press appearing to correlate and distribute the official point of view, it can be seen that the boundaries of ‘civil society’ debate were set by the government.

Conversely, in the alternative press the official discourse was assimilated in various ways. The government’s initiatives were frequently reported with scepticism and critical comments in the content of the alternative periodicals, as the following extract from an article by a political scientist Aleksandr Feduta (08.02.1999, in BDG) on the policy at its initial stage of design demonstrates:

The appearance of such a decree alone can plunge any sensible person into shock. First, the authorities officially acknowledged that civil society does not exist in Belarus. That is citizens are not self-organised and are not capable of protecting their rights and freedoms. Whom from? Across the world structures of civil society exist to protect citizens’ rights and freedoms … from the state! It is the level of development of civil society’s institutions and their efficiency of activity that defines the level of the state’s democratisation.

The extract polemicises against official policy and the potential expansion of state power over civil society resulting a reduced space for civic initiative. The utterance provides an intertextual link to the policy and also refers to the different positions being taken in the public debate. The reporter assigned his own comment on the official view by paraphrasing official voices (‘[t]hat is citizens are not self-organised …’) and the assumption that citizens cannot initiate independent initiatives without direction from above is contested using a phrase with negative evaluative accent (‘such a decree alone can plunge any sensible person into shock’). These positions are juxtaposed against each other, forming a dialogic battle not only within the discourse, but also over the discourse. The tension between officialdom and civil society grew during this period. Polemic practices were common in the commentary and analysis of the press, where the reporter acted as a publicist influencing public opinion (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 33-41), as the extract demonstrated.

During this period a more neutral style of reporting, which included voices representing different political positions, was seen in the database of the alternative press. As an example, Belorusy i Rynok published an interview with the Deputy of Justice Minister V. Golovanov taken by the journalist Antonina Malivuk (04.10.1999). In reply to her question ‘Do you consider Belarus a democratic state?’ the Deputy gave the following answer:
Belarus is ‘a unitary democratic social law-governed state’. This position is stated in our country’s Constitution. […] As far as I know, none of Belarus’s top leaders ever claimed that the state governance of the republic is ideal. On the contrary, it has been repeatedly underlined that, in our development we are moving constantly towards a model experienced by other European countries, which is not always ideal as witnessed there. The fact that our statehood and our civil society are developing, regardless of all the difficulties seen during the time of transition, is obvious to any unbiased person. The evaluation of the current situation with regards to human rights by the opposition is to a large extent farfetched and politicised. […] Yes, I agree with those who talk about a partially developed Belarusian democracy. But our current system is much more advanced than it was a few years ago and, importantly, it is constantly improving.

As the extract demonstrates, the voice of the official is reported as direct speech. This style of reporting leaves it to the reader to decide whether to agree or disagree with his opinion. In his answer the speaker recreates a dialogue by invoking official and alternative viewpoints regarding the issue. The speaker expresses his partial consensus regarding civil society development and democratisation, with what may appear as alternative voices (‘Yes, I agree with those who talk about not fully developed Belarusian democracy’). However, on closer inspection the speaker distances himself from ‘the opposition’, placing it beyond the boundary of societal consensus. The reporting verb ‘demands’ and the negative evaluation of the alternative view (‘the evaluation […] is farfetched and politicised’) indicates authorial disagreement with the voices of the opposition. The third party voice of an ‘unbiased person’ confirming ‘the fact that […] our civil society [is] developing’ permits the speaker to establish common ground with the reader in an attempt to bring the reader on side with the author. Furthermore, in his answer to the question, the speaker invokes an intertextual reference to the Constitution, which is quoted directly in the passage (Belarus is ‘a unitary democratic social law-governed state’), which provides ground for re-establishing consensus between the conflicting points of view. Such a consensual discourse model, based on the rhetoric of civic and legal rights with intertextual links to the Constitution, frequently invoked by official voices in the press, is difficult to challenge and it makes it hard to reframe the terms of the debate. As Murphy (1990: 26) pointed out, consensus means agreement with other voices; however, it can also mean unity, ‘one voice’. Accordingly, consensual discourse serves as an important tool for manipulation and dominance.45

45 ‘The dominant often find it necessary to invoke a public language of moral consensus in order to justify their legitimacy as well as cloak their pragmatic, non-consensual interests’ (Murphy, 1990: 26).
At this stage, the regime was not fully authoritarian and being referred to as a populist style of politics (Goujon, 1999; Dryzek and Holmes, 2002), ‘demagogical democracy’ (Korosteleva, 2003), ‘defective democracy’ (Beichelt, 2004) – terms from political science and philosophy that emphasise the ‘selective use of liberalism’ (Richter and Hatch, 2013: 325) by non-liberal regimes and contribute to the literature on hybrid regimes (e.g. Levitsky and Way, 2002). From the perspective of discourse analysis, I may add that by explicitly and implicitly invoking other discourse formations that originate in democratic and also legal discourses, officialdom used ‘the system of intertextuality’ (Fairclough, 1992: 101-36), which embodied universal beliefs and evaluative attitudes to create consensus, or ‘one voice’ (Murphy, 1990). As Bourdieu (1991: 40) stated,

\[r\]ecourse to a neutralised language is obligatory whenever it is a matter of establishing a practical consensus between agents or groups of agents having particularly or totally different interests. This is the case, of course, first and foremost in the field of legitimate political struggle, but also in the transactions and interactions of everyday life.

If establishing ‘a practical consensus’ proves ineffective, then covert coercion may be used to maintain the balance of power, as my next sections demonstrate.

3.3. Electoral politics: the battle over discursive capital

3.3.1. Appropriation of ‘civil society’ by officialdom

2001 saw the increasing use of the term, as Graph 1 (p.102) attests and association can be drawn with the presidential election campaign culminating in Aleksandr Lukashenko’s re-election to a second term on 9th September 2001. The Belarusian officialdom claimed ‘a decisive victory with 78 percent of the vote’. The official message was appropriated and circulated in the official press. In his article ‘Candid opinion’ a journalist, Maksimov (13.09.2001), from Sovetskaiia Belorussiia reported the following:

The past elections, which ended in the triumphal victory of the current President Aleksandr Lukashenko, marked a new stage in the development of our country’s civil society. The Presidential elections of 2001 entered the history of not only domestic democracy but also global democracy due to the fact that it was witnessed by an unprecedentedly large amount of observers monitoring the transparency and fairness of the electoral process. […] [One of the observers,] Professor Zakhariev, the chair of the fund ‘Slavs’, commented in the following way: ‘I was happy to see people taking

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the elections to heart. They clearly demonstrated their understanding that they are the real factor driving future political processes in the country'.

The journalist conveyed a peculiar vision of civil society, in the sense of an electorate choosing and voting for the government. The reporter internalised the official point of view that approached ‘civil society’ in terms of active voters and supporters of the regime. The participation of people in elections and referendums was seen by officialdom as part of the processes contributing to the formation of civil society (see Pashkovskii and Parechina, 2003: 177-8). The extract shows again the correlation between media discourse and the official point of view. The indexical point ‘new stage of civil society development’ indicates a divergence from other models of civil society. Similar to the notion of ‘democracy’, ‘civil society’ was attributed a particular meaning and function. The functional aspect of the use of the term was particularly salient in the context of electoral politics – it was a new civil society where the regime sought to gain legitimacy. Not only was the content (themes and sources) from the government’s agenda reproduced by journalists, it was enhanced and reinforced by them. Evaluative accents such as ‘triumphal victory’ were used to express the reporter’s positive stance towards the event. This demonstrated a lack of independence in the official press as the journalists promoted official views, speaking with one voice with officialdom and showing the story from one viewpoint. Furthermore, the position was further extolled by a third party – the journalist quotes directly one of the international observers, Professor Zakhariev, to add authority and trustworthiness to the report as well as to create a counterbalance to the Western observers’ reports of the falsification of the elections. According to the OSCE, the elections failed to meet democratic standards with falsification of voting results, repression of political opponents, and the restriction of access to most media for opposition candidates.47

As a number of extracts from Sovetskaia Belorussiia (Lukashenko, 10.02.2001; Akimov, 15.11.2001; Maksimov, 13.09.2001) have demonstrated, the notion of ‘civil society’ was appropriated by officialdom as part of a democratic discourse. Without providing any rigid definition and demonstrating an uncertainty towards the meaning of ‘civil society’, officialdom clearly came to recognise the notion’s pragmatic value; it became a source of legitimacy for the government both in the eyes of the Belarusian voters and the international community. Having adopted the practice of certain democratic liberties - on a discursive level this was manifest by the appropriation of the term ‘civil society’ and

47 www.rferl.org/content/article/1066125.html (accessed 5 May 2014).
democratic rhetoric in general – the essence of such ‘democracy’ was manipulation. As Wilson (2011: 194-196) observed, Lukashenko’s support from the general populace was essential in his second term. He still faced a credible opposition with dissent present even at higher levels of authority. The opinion of the international community also appeared to be significant for the regime. Therefore, officialdom employed the strategy best described as the appropriation of discursive capital to gain legitimacy, derived from Bourdieu’s (1991) framework, or the struggle over the appropriation of a discursive, social and symbolic capital. Accordingly, the officials supported by the press made use of a discourse that emphasised democratic governance, human rights and emerging civil society; a language previously associated more with the pro-democratic opposition and civil society. In Wilson’s terms, the regime used political technology aimed at ‘faking democracy’ (Wilson, 2005) to win re-election. The periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia circulated and extolled the official point of view demonstrating a close correlation between official policy and media coverage. It appeared to be a political instrument of the state reproducing political messages during electoral campaigns, whilst suppressing, marginalising, and deconstructing⁴⁸ alternative voices.

In response, the official voices were challenged with counter-balancing discursive practices. This is demonstrated in an article by Olga Tomashevskaia (21.11.2001, in BDG) ‘Lukashenko lamented about PACE’. The journalist reported on President Lukashenko’s response to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe’s (PACE) critique of the presidential elections of 2001 and the political climate in the country:

The Belarusian president thinks that ‘[i]t is unfair to close ones eyes to those steps which have been made by the Belarusian authorities towards the country’s democratisation, especially during the last few years. The statement of fact by the international observers of the presidential elections of 2001 that civil society exists in Belarus serves as an important confirmation of this’.

The author re-accentuates the original report by the president by taking an ironical stance. The irony is based on the removal of the direct quote from its original context and by its subsequent framing in the context of the title of the article, such that it constitutes a quotation clause that contains elements of a language game. The title in Russian (‘Лукашенко “ПАСЕтовал”’) can be read as ‘Lukashenko lamented’ or ‘Lukashenko lamented about PACE’, based on a phonologic similarity between the name of

⁴⁸ De-construction is understood in my research as a macro-level discursive strategy aimed at dismantling and marginalisation of alternative voices, viewpoints and discourses (adapted from Wodak et al., 1999).
international organisation (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the verb lament/complain (посетовать in Russian). In his report quoted directly, the president invokes the rhetoric of civil society and democracy to prove the legitimacy of the elections. The verb to ‘lament for’ contains a negative evaluative connotation with respect to the report, which together with the ironical stance achieved through the use of the pun, permitted the reporter to express critical assessment of the speech and to re-articulate the official voice. Such a reporting strategy based on irony and aimed at deconstructing the official discourse is a constituent of the battle for the appropriation of discursive capital. Furthermore, the use of ‘civil society’ was prominent in the alternative press during the electoral campaign, as the next subsection demonstrates.

3.3.2. Alternative uses of ‘civil society’: politicisation of the discourse

References to the term ‘civil society’ were equally prevalent in the content of alternative press during this period. ‘The opposition relied heavily on the civic sector during its 2001 presidential campaign whilst at the same time the campaign gave an impetus to the development of civil society’ (Čavusaũ, 2007: 7). During the presidential elections of 2001, the emerging pro-democracy civil society supported Siamion Domash, an active promoter of democratisation as well as the Belarusian language and culture, as the extract from the article by Tumar (18.12.2000, in Nasha Niva) illustrates:

Domash is in sympathy with those who we are familiar in calling ‘independent Belarusian society’, the network of associations, party groups, clubs, together with educational, human rights, religious and sporting organisations across the country. The potential of independent Belarusian society is limited, yet proven. It has withstood the burden of six years of resistance to Lukashenka.

The extract identifies ‘independent society’ as a synonym for ‘civil society’, a term employed by the opposition for the purposes of legitimisation and mobilisation. As Muller (2006: 318) stated, ‘the legitimising function of ‘civil society’ is based on the fact that it is civil society, which through its independence and autonomy, creates the social resources of political power and gives the candidate its legitimacy’. Whereas the mobilisation function of ‘civil society’ is achieved through its symbolic power to appeal to a community’s solidarity and thus counterbalances strong tendencies towards centralisation and authoritarianism. The journalist’s definition of the term contains a political component, (‘six years of resistance’), highlighting the politicised nature of Belarusian civil society.
Civil society provides a platform for contestation against the misuse of state power and a non-liberal regime, as the next extract from the article by Bulhakaŭ (10.09.2001, in Nasha Niva) illustrates:

A serious reserve for the opposition, and this distinguishes it within the CIS area, is a wide spreading network of non-governmental organisations, in which many oppositional politicians find refuge. The consequences of the Belarusian authorities‘ policies, concerned with ensuring their monopolising status in all spheres of social life, became the oppositional nature of the Belarusian ‘third sector’.

It has been acknowledged that the politicisation of the Belarusian civic sector began in the second part of 1990s as the government, headed by Aleksandr Lukashenko, re-introduced authoritarian order. This phase marked the beginning of political confrontation between civil society and the state and it saw numerous NGOs siding with the political opposition. The rise of civic resistance and politicisation of civil society was further observed at the turn of the century with active involvement of NGOs in the 2001 presidential election. As Čavusaŭ (2007: 7) pointed out, ‘there was not any fundamental difference between pro-democracy NGOs and political parties as some NGOs and civic initiatives, such as the Assembly of Pro-Democracy NGOs in the Coordinating Council of Pro-Democracy Forces or the Khartyia-97 human rights group, functioned as part of political opposition and became an equal partner to political parties’. As Table 6 shows, the umbrella term ‘civil society’ is frequently used alongside the term ‘opposition’ (in Belorusy i Rynok (BR); BDG and Sovetskaia Belorussiia (SB)) and ‘independent society’ (in Nasha Niva (NN)). The more ‘neutral’ term ‘third sector’, in political sense, was also used, although less frequently.49

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49 The data in columns BR, BDG and SB presents the concurrent use of the term ‘civil society’ with other terms. Conversely, the NN archive is comprised of volumes, therefore it is not viable to do similar search. Instead, the use of the terms from the same semantic group is presented separately. Notably, the term ‘independent society’ (‘nezalezhne hramadzta’) associated with protest politics and nationalist discourse has a similar number of references to the term ‘civil society’.
Table 6: Dynamics of the terms’ use in the Belarusian press (2000-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BR</th>
<th>BDG</th>
<th>SB</th>
<th>NN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 articles</td>
<td>143 articles</td>
<td>36 articles</td>
<td>37(160) issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_sources</td>
<td>_instances</td>
<td>_sources</td>
<td>_instances</td>
<td>_sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third sector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such ‘politicisation’ of ‘civil society’ discourse in the alternative media occurred under the influence of local actors and journalists. It also occurred under external influence, as the next sub-section will demonstrate.

3.3.3. International flow of voices

The use of the term ‘civil society’, as a counterbalance to excessive state power, was subject to a flow of international voices. The periodicals quoted intensively the voices of representatives from such international organisations as the UN, PACE, and OSCE, as Table 7 shows. The voice of the former Chair of the OSCE Advisory-Monitoring Group in Belarus, Ambassador Hans-Georg Wieck was particularly salient in shaping the discourse of ‘civil society’.

Table 7: Dynamics of the flow of international voices in the press (2000-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BR</th>
<th>BDG</th>
<th>SB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>_sources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans-Georg Wieck</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki Committee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the large volume of data (160 issues), it was not possible to perform an ‘overlapping search’, e.g. frequency of ‘opposition’ in articles containing references to ‘civil society’. As an example, within 30 issues from 2000 the search revealed a total of 321 instances of ‘opposition’.

50 Due to the large volume of data (160 issues), it was not possible to perform an ‘overlapping search’, e.g. frequency of ‘opposition’ in articles containing references to ‘civil society’. As an example, within 30 issues from 2000 the search revealed a total of 321 instances of ‘opposition’.
As the table attests, the former Chair of the OSCE Hans-Georg Wieck, who appeared frequently in my search, especially in BDG, made a significant contribution to the alternative discourse of ‘civil society’. His vision that sought the mobilisation of pro-democratic political forces was sometimes referred to as ‘Wieck’s Doctrine’ (see the extract by Abramova (05.03.2004, in BDG)). On the brink of the 2001 elections, Wieck attempted to consolidate the opposition, which was divided on numerous issues regarding the country’s future course, or as it was put in the report by the OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission (2001: 3), ‘to develop a political culture of cooperation and a capacity to compromise’. As a result of this initiative, a coordination council of the opposition was formed in 1999 to unite political parties (including the Belarusian Popular Front, the United Civil Party, the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party, and Hope) with support from Charter-97, a democratic movement and the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (Korosteleva, 2005: 49-51). The parties became known as the political opposition or ‘civil society’, ‘merging their differences to form a single political force in their struggle for a democratic future’ (Korosteleva, 2005: 49). These developments found wide resonance in the press, as the extract from the article by Dziadok (04.10.2002, in Nasha Niva) attests:

As H. G. Wieck outlined in one of his interviews with Nasha Niva, ‘a great achievement of the OSCE Observation-Advisory Council is the development of viable political structures and coalitions within civil society which are able to win elections and form a stable government. […] The coalition of national and democratic forces that act in opposition to the president is a new phenomenon for Belarusian political culture. The idea of the creation of such a coalition became a powerful idea that aggregated the citizens of the country in contrast to the idea which is not new – the giving of the power to a “strong person”, a dictator’. […] Political parties, independent from Lukashenko, non-governmental organisations and independent media play a great role in fighting for democracy in Belarus.

As the extract demonstrates, the framework approached politicised civil society as an essential part of democratic development. Great effort was placed on galvanising political forces during the parliamentary and presidential elections through a rhetoric of the mobilisation of active citizenship. Sometimes, such mobilisation invoked a ‘war’ metaphor (‘fighting for democracy’; ‘democratic forces’), which is at the very nature of political struggle. In his reports, H. G. Wieck welcomed and acknowledged the emergence of a coalition within civil society and saw it as ‘the foundation for the development of
democratic political structures’. H. G. Wieck’s reports were frequently cited directly in
the periodicals to emphasise the political content and the authoritativeness of the source.
Other examples, in which a pictorial (non-direct) style of reporting was employed, revealed
some tensions with the OSCE Chair’s position. As an example, in her article Olga
Abramova (05.03.2004, in BDG), a political scientist and member of the Belarusian House
of Representatives, stated:

The processes of the country’s political forces consolidation I call for myself as part of
‘Dr Wieck’s doctrine’. Today, […] Hans Georg Wieck maintains that he is the only
person who knows what must be done with Belarus. By the words ‘must be done’ he,
obviously, implies a change of regime. The processes of consolidation of the
oppositional forces are promoted by Mr. Wieck with some conditions. Notably, he
suggests withholding financial assistance to those structures of civil society that are
unwilling to become a part of a united coalition. The culmination of this project,
apparently, must be presidential elections in Belarus, with a single candidate
representing the oppositional coalition. […] This construct appears to be logical enough,
but only from ‘the far and beautiful West’.

The author expressed a critical stance towards Wieck’s position, referring to it as ‘Dr
Wieck’s Doctrine’. The phrase, embraced in quotation marks, ceases to be a semantically
neutral phrase and it acquires a critical connotation that distances the author from the initial
point of view. The author expresses direct criticism of the ‘top down’ approach and
conditionality attached to the policy of civil society’s development proposed by the
international community. Reflecting on Belarusian democracy-building policies adopted
by the international community, Korosteleva (2005: 54) observed that initially the EU and
the US chose to ignore the problem, adopting a strategy of exclusion. Later the
international community adopted a clientelist policy whereby oppositional and
nongovernmental organisations were supported with the aim of rekindling democracy. This
approach failed to create both an effective opposition and a dialogue between civil society
and the government. ‘The EU appears to be convinced that the development of parties and
of nongovernmental organisations is the only sensible way to prevent undemocratic
practices – the realm that has no say in decision-making in Belarus’ (Korosteleva, 2005:
55).

The response by officialdom to this politicised rhetoric was rather predictable, becoming a
pivotal point in the confrontation between officialdom on one side and the OSCE and the

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51 OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission (2001: 3) Republic of Belarus. Presidential Election,
Belarusian opposition on the other. Styled in the traditions of Cold War propaganda, the article ‘Operation “White Stork”: Foreign Intelligence Forces against Belarus’ was published in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* (05.09.2001) on the brink of the Presidential elections.

In the best tradition of the spy genre, the periodical provided a report by an influential centre in Moscow ‘Independent Political Expertise’, which had been passed to the KGB in Belarus. The ‘analytical note’ was ‘published with some abridgements’ anonymously with the purpose of informing and warning their readers of a conspiratorial plot designed by Western powers and their local ‘agents’ represented by the Belarusian opposition. The extract provided below represents the voice of H. G. Wieck reporting on the state of affairs in Belarus framed as a report by the security service and published in the periodical:

A source reports: [...] [t]he authoritarian character of the rule established by Lukashenko prevents the strengthening of ‘liberal values’, ‘civil society’ development and the introduction of political, economic and cultural liberties. [...] The explicit anti-Western orientation of Aleksandr Lukashenko [underpins] his aim to recreate the union of Russia and Belarus followed by the re-joining of other former USSR republics. [This objective] contradicts the interests of the West associated with the vast spaces of post-Soviet Eurasia and serves as a detonator to USSR re-unification. [...] All this encourages the West to eliminate Lukashenko as the main obstacle in the way to establishing the geopolitical models of a ‘new world order’.

The speech attributed to Hans Georg Wieck is presented through an authoritative report of the security service. According to the ‘Source’, Hans Georg Wieck, ‘the professional German intelligence agent’, coordinated the “White Stork” operation’. His position is represented in the extract through a mixture of non-direct reported utterances and segmented quotations, which mark the site of the battle (‘Lukashenko prevents the strengthening of “liberal values”, “civil society” development’, ‘contradicts the interests of the West’ and therefore the West needs ‘to eliminate Lukashenko’). Such a reporting style is used to portray H. G. Wieck as a conspiring enemy. According to the source, the Belarusian opposition supported this conspiracy:

Politically and socially, the project “White Stork” is based on the Belarusian opposition, Belarusian Popular Front, oppositional organisations and groups, independent media [...].

The logic behind such coverage is that the Belarusian opposition and pro-democratic civil society, who are influenced and supported by ‘the enemy’, are therefore alien to the Belarusian people. Such a framing strategy also permitted the positive portrayal of the
President as a defender of post-Soviet Eurasia’s unity and as a counter-balancing force to Western domination and ‘the new world order’. Importantly, the 2001 elections took place in the shadow of the ‘Serbian scenario’; Slobodan Milošević was ousted from power earlier in the year as a result of armed NATO intervention. The Belarusian regime attempted to prevent this scenario and to win legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Apparently, such discursive practice was found to be commonplace during the period. Vital Silitski (2006: 80-1) provided another similar example, where the arrest of activists who had observed the elections, was accompanied by ‘revelations’ by the KGB in the press. One such published report claimed that ‘the KGB unmasked a plot by the activists to overthrow the government through organizing explosions in the centre of Minsk on Election Day’ (Silitski, 2006: 81). Such ‘pre-emptive dramaturgy’ was aimed at the marginalisation of the opposition. The way such texts are perceived and interpreted depends crucially upon where the reader situates himself among the viewpoints existent in society. Therefore, the message conveyed by this report is clearly addressed at a readership that shares particular values and points of view – a nostalgia for the USSR, an anti-Western stance and support for integration policies with Russia, all of which were on the official agenda during this period. Notably, the ‘evidence’ came from Moscow. The use of references from Russian sources, a frequent practice observed in the content of the periodical during this period, aimed at deconstructing pro-democratic civil society and the opposition. It served as an external legitimising force that contributed to centralising tendencies.

In summary, this subsection has demonstrated the transnational influences mediating the concept of ‘civil society’. The construction of ‘civil society’ was shown to be not necessarily a traditional phenomenon, nor was it fully shaped by Western influences, as some may suggest. It was a process involving a complex set of discursive practices in which meaning was constantly negotiated and constructed by various actors within the space provided by the media. These re-articulations were often shaped to form counter-strategies in an attempt to shape discourses and discursively struggle over the term ‘civil society’ - a ‘struggle among social-linguistic points of view’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 273). Such a struggle can be further understood as the battle for social and discursive capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Despite the efforts to mobilise civic society, the pro-democracy NGOs and opposition groups failed to achieve the goal of delivering democratic change (Čavusağ, 2007: 7). Three thousand people gathered in October Square to protest against the allegedly unfair elections, but this had little impact. The government announced its
intention to close the Minsk mission of the OSCE unless it showed it more respect. 52 Mission Chair Hans Georg Wieck left the country in December 2001 and the OSCE’s rhetoric appeared to become less confrontational thereafter. 53 After the elections, the government changed its discursive strategy ensuring that the ‘democratic façade’ would not endanger the stability of the regime, as the next section will demonstrate.

3.3.4. The (re-)construction of official ‘civil society’: ‘pillars of the state’

After the elections, the government adopted a series of strategies aimed at consolidating presidential power. Lukashenko began paying greater attention to strengthening his own local power base. Following a period of ambiguity in the use of ‘civil society’, the regime was becoming more assertive in its own vision of ‘civil society’ and the official media were providing a clear-cut line between real ‘civil society’ and ‘uncivil’ society. The ‘oppositional’ ‘civil society’, supported by ‘foreign intelligence’ and thus representing a threat to Lukashenko’s government and the ‘stability’ of the country, was portrayed as ‘not trusted by the people’ and ‘the public’ (Masliukova, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 06.09.2001). Simultaneously, the government started elaborating their own vision of ‘civil society’, a practice that I refer to as the re-construction of ‘civil society’, which aimed at establishing a status quo on both discursive and societal levels, following the description provided by Wodak et al. (1999: 8). Accordingly, this (re)-constructive strategy allowed the establishment of certain meanings and it is associated with ‘the genesis, production and construction of particular social conditions’.

The initial construction of the idea is associated with a number of reports and speeches given by the president between 2002 and 2003. The period saw the emergence of the so-called ‘Belarusian model’ of development and the state’s ideology, which were reflected in these reports. One such report, titled ‘Speech by the President of the Republic of Belarus A. G. Lukashenko at the Final Plenary Session of the Permanent Seminar of Executives of National and Local Government Agencies’, given on 22nd March 2002, emphasised a powerful state, closer integration with Russia and other post-Soviet states, social and economic policies based on socialist-type welfare and resource distribution as well as appeals to the ‘traditions and mentality’ of Belarusian citizens. Having defeated the

nationalism of the Belarusian Popular Front, which was a driving force for independence in the late 1980s-early1990s, officialdom established its own criteria in the understanding of the national idea. Instead of ‘national revival’, a transition to democracy and a market economy proposed by the opposition, Lukashenko’s government offered a sovietised version of state-formation that gave grounds for a number of social and political scientists to call the official rhetoric a different type of nationalism – ‘state nationalism’ (Kuzio, 2010) or ‘Soviet nationalism’ (Leshchenko, 2004). This Belarusian model of development steered ‘the idea of the national exclusiveness of Belarus as a model of a state-society, its unique character which is devoid of any outside influence’ (Bekus, 2010: 272). The report also contained references to the idea of civil society. Referring to the presidential speech on the Belarusian model of development in 2002, the ‘official’ political scientist B. M. Lepeshko (2009) defined this period as the second stage of the formation of official civil society. The speech ‘made a great impact on the institutional development of civil society in the country’ (Lepeshko, 2009: 94). In this report, however, the president provided a narrow definition of civil society, i.e. public associations playing a greater role in state governance, as the following extract shows (Lukashenko, 22.03.2002):

We need to gradually increase the role of public association in the system of state governance. […] They must become de facto the representatives for the interests of society, not for the individual militant politicians and politicos. Only in this case, their activity will intensify the fight against red tape, bureaucracy and corruption and will contribute to the effective work of the administrative mechanism.

The extract represents an example of how previous discursive practices are re-evaluated and transformed producing new meanings. The speaker attempts to re-define the role of public organisations in Marxist-Leninist terms, understood as organisations serving the corporate needs of the state (‘they must become de facto …’). In such an articulation, a negative evaluative accent is assigned to independent civil society organisations affiliated with the opposition, described as ‘militant politicians and politicos’. The strategy is aimed at marginalising the pro-democratic forces and constitutes a discursive battle over the idea.

The second speech, entitled ‘On the status of ideological work and measures for its improvement. Report of the President of the Republic of Belarus A. G. Lukashenko on the Permanent Seminar of Executives of National and Local Government Agencies’, given on 27th March 2003, provides a more coherent formula of ‘civil society’ in agreement with the ‘ideology’ of the state. ‘Civil society’ in such a context was intended to support this ‘Belarusian way’ of development ensuring stability, sovereignty and prosperity of the state.
During this period, the regime insistently saw civil society as a partner in a state-building project, metaphorically referring to pro-government civic organisations as ‘pillars of the state’ or the ‘foundation of the state’, as the following extract suggests (Lukashenko, 27.03.2003):

Our civil society is based on newly elected councils of deputies, labour unions, and the mighty youth organisation and its allies. These are the three main pillars of our society, which are designed to ensure the connection of people with the authorities, actively involving citizens in state-building, together with other participants of the political process. They are also designed to control the structures of government that have a lot of power and are in charge of material resources.

In the extract, the logic of difference exacerbated by the use of the pronoun ‘our’ in an exclusive sense (‘our civil society’; ‘our society’) became a determinant of the discursive construction. The new civil society clearly had to be ‘designed’ and constructed with the aim of supporting the ‘Belarusian way’ of development. The official media began reinforcing the message. A frequency search of the collected data from Sovetskaia Belorussiia over the period 2000-2004 (36 articles in total containing 80 references to ‘civil society’) revealed the ‘key words’ used in the construction of the official discourse of ‘civil society’:

**Table 8: The dynamics of key words in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (2000-2004)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notion</th>
<th># Sources</th>
<th># Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sovereignty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results show that ‘civil society’ was used in the context of state-building and was intended to support this ‘Belarusian way’ of development ensuring the ‘stability’ and ‘independence’ of the state. Soviet nostalgia and pan-Slavism were still important as they had been at the beginning of Lukashenko’s presidency, although the regime started to distance itself from fully-fledged integration with Russia, which would potentially reduce the power of the Belarusian political elite including that of the President (Wilson, 2011: 203-6). Therefore the message circulated in the press maintained an emphasis on ‘independence’ and ‘patriotism’, merging discourses of Soviet identity and Belarusian statehood and amplifying state-centric and context-specific ‘civil society’. Clearly, the formulae came from the above and the press began reproducing the official discourse on ‘civil society’ by quoting the president, official speeches and documents. On multiple occasions the President was quoted directly, as the following extract from the report by Press office of President demonstrates (Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 04.03.2003):

The President praised the elections of the local councils and stressed that 73 percent of voter turnout demonstrated the high level of responsibility taken by the Belarusian people in the development of their own country, as well as the strong civic position taken by the people in Belarus. ‘At this stage, I see my future goal in the systemic organization of the councils at all levels and the formation of civil society on this basis,’ announced Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The reporting of the president’s speech linearly (direct style) in the periodical indicates the authoritativeness of the source, which whilst informing broader audiences, also sets instructions to the establishment manifest by directive speech acts (‘I see my future goal …’). On another occasion the entire Manifesto of BRSM (03.09.2002, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia) was published directly, which saw its primary aim as ‘fostering the development of civil society, based on patriotic, spiritual and moral values’. Similarly to the Soviet period, the periodical appeared to be the voice of the political elite allowing them to facilitate the flow of information between various structures of the establishment. With the press serving as a channel for the official message and influence, it is the government itself that appeared to be the recipient of official messages and directives. This statement can be further supported by the large number of subscription to Sovetskaia Belorussiia (500, 000 copies) of which 70, 000 copies are bureaucratic subscriptions. This level of support ensured to a great extent by administrative measures, together with it occupying the position as the official paper of the presidential administration, guarantees its success and influence (see Klaskoŭski, 2007). All these references suggest the
dependency of the official press on the political agenda of the government, which, as in Soviet times, served as a channel for the delivery of official messages to its audiences.

These messages were further reinforced by broader representatives of the establishment, in accord with the ‘cascading activation model’ described by Bennett and Entman (2001), ‘indexing’ and promoting the official idea, as in the example taken from the article by Professor Lepeshko (in Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 22.09.2004):

The definition of civil society in many ways is based on mentality (mentalitet). Tell me, is it possible to form civil society in a country without such characteristics as tolerance, patriotism, respect for the older generation, and some other features? Obviously, these are basic notions, without which it is impossible to talk about civil society.

The rhetorical question (‘Tell me…’) is used in the utterance whereby the reporter attempts to convince the reader and establish an alignment between the addressee and addressee. The question is formulated in such a way that it leads to only one possible answer, anticipated by the reporter, an ‘unavoidable’ answer (Martin and White, 2005: 124). In fact, the answer is implicitly provided by the author (‘Obviously, …’). This formula works to convince a reader who is presumed to be potentially resistant to the author’s point of view. Whilst in form, such an utterance represents orientation towards the reader, entering into a dialogical relationship between an author and an audience, in essence it leads to a unification of points of view on values constituent of ‘civil society’. ‘Civil society’ in this context is attributed particular values and ideals, representing a point of tension between universalising (Western) and particular (Belarusian) models. It demonstrates explicit divergence from the earlier democratic discourse and western models of ‘civil society’. It ‘echoes’ the official understanding of ‘civil society’, whilst not explicitly citing the definition, as in other examples. The derivative of the idea of ‘civil society’ resonates with the official view. Rather than embracing the values of ‘personal freedom and individual emancipation’ (Seligman, 1992: 159), as well as democratic structures and institutions and participation in decision making, it is linked to the idea of national identity (‘mentality’) and ‘patriotism’ as understood in official terms. Being reconstructed, the idea is used to strengthen the power of the state. It is exacerbated by the mediational style, characterised in this work as monologic, as it tends to unify with the official point of view.

In another extract from his article (Lepeshko, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 22.09.2004) the scholar re-defines the notion, contributing to the official battle over the term:
Civil society is where personal responsibility is; where discipline and order are; where structures are formed within the constitutional field that support the state’s policy, including the anti-terrorist policy. [...] Sometimes they say, the wider the range of civic organisations is, the more effective civil society is. It appears that what is at issue is different. Civil society cannot be built on the basis of social unrest.

The discourse of civil society is constructed through the frame of ‘law and order’ and security through the emphasis on ‘personal responsibility’, ‘discipline and order’, and ‘constitutional field that support the state’s policy’. It also battles any alternative points of view on ‘civil society’ (‘what is at issue is different’; ‘civil society cannot be built on the basis of social unrest’). Whilst entering into a dialogue with the alternative point of view, the scholar denounced the normative idea of diversity and plurality of civil society’s organisations (‘sometimes they say, the wider the range of civic organisations is, the more effective civil society is’) and chose to prioritise the idea of ‘order’ over ‘freedom’. The reporting style is clearly intended to persuade the reader that the reporter’s perspective is the correct one and that the oppositional perspective is faulty and dangerous. It also aimed at justifying official policy towards suppressing independent civil society organisations witnessed within the period.

This period saw governmental attempts to impose stricter controls over civil society and to restructure the Belarusian ‘third sector’ by launching a further round of the re-registration campaign with the aim of transforming the nature of the Belarusian civic sector. The overall goal was to create a new form of civil society that legitimated Aleksandr Lukashenko’s political regime. Wilson (2011: 216-217) provided a comprehensive summary of this campaign. The crucial points are as follows: following Lukashenko’s rise to power in 1994-95, the authorities made their first attempt at reducing the influence of the third sector; however, even after this first wave of reforms the sector still numbered 2,191 NGOs in April 1998. A second and third campaign against civil society began in 1999 and in 2001 when the sector saw its greatest reduction. Many of the NGOs had openly sided with the opposition and in the eyes of the authorities there had been excessive electoral monitoring. A fourth wave of reforms forced the re-registration of the NGO sector in 2003-2005 and with it the closure of 347 organizations. These policies transformed the nature of the Belarusian ‘civil society’ resulting in tamer ‘state civic organisations’ established by the government itself to meet its objectives, sometimes referred to as ‘GONGOs’ (Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisations) and

54 This classification of civic organisations is not exhaustive. For more information of ‘third sector’ in Belarus see, for example, Chernov, V. (2008) The Third Sector in Belarus. Available at www.nmnby.org/pub/0801/31m.html (accessed 23 November 2012).
secured the domination of the state in most spheres of social life. The campaign received broad coverage by the media, both official and alternative. The remaining part of this chapter will provide an outline and analysis of this mediation. The next sub-section provides an account of how the policy of restructuring the ‘third sector’ was reflected in the press and how this contributed to the transformation of ‘civil society’ discourse.

3.3.5. Transformation of ‘civil society’ discourse

The shift in the definition of ‘civil society’ from political structures towards a de-politicised definition – ‘the third sector’ – was observed in the official discourse. Transformation, understood as a discursive practice, or macro-strategy, aimed at transforming the meaning of a relatively well-established content into another, involves a number of discursive tools and practices (Wodak et al., 1999: 30-46). One such practice, or micro-strategy identified, was named ‘re-accentuation’ by Bakhtin (1981: 419). Specifically, this strategy aims to demonstrate how a reporter supporting a certain political agenda may exploit reported speech as a discursive mechanism to construct utterances, which through their evaluation and interpretative force have the potential to impact on meaning and interpretation by the reader. The article ‘It is where there is no loneliness, there it is nice’ by a journalist Evgeniia Selezneva (01.11.2002, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia), appeared to be particularly representative of the transformation of ‘civil society’ with regard to who is included in its structures. The article provides a report on an annual Assembly of democratic non-governmental organisations that took place in Minsk. It offers an outline of what is understood by the terms ‘third sector’ and ‘civil society’ by various representatives selected by the journalist. It culminates in an overall summary of the issue by the author. I have selected the three most representative extracts from the article in their sequential order for a detailed analysis:

Use of Complex Structures 1: non-direct, segmented-direct and free-direct speech

(a) These organisations call themselves non-governmental, public and voluntary. (b) They are also named ‘the third sector’ – in contrast to the structures of authority and political parties. (c) They often talk about themselves: we are, allegedly, the representatives of civil society and our interests are social, cultural and other socially significant issues.

In the introduction, the reporter Selezneva provides an overall definition of one of the structural elements of civil society – ‘the third sector’ – as understood by NGOs themselves. The extract is composed of a complex structure with a variety of mixed reported speech
types: (a) non-direct, (b) segmented direct and (c) free-direct respectively\(^5\). Noun and pronoun groups in type (a) and (c) function as subjects - the report is attributed to representatives of the ‘third sector’ (‘eti organisatsii nazyvaiut sebia...’; ‘o sebe oni chastno govoriat: my, deskat, …’). Passive voice construction is used in type (b) attributing the report to a third party (‘escho ih imenuiut …’) and therefore, as in cases (a) and (c), the author appears not to be in control of the report. The use of neutral verbs of reporting in the quotation framing clause (‘call themselves’; ‘are also named’; ‘talk about themselves’) emphasises the reporter’s neutrality and creates the effect of objectivity. The use of ‘free structures’ and neutral verbs of reporting also enables the reporter to highlight more vividly what the journalist considers important in the reported utterance (Smirnova, 2009: 86). Contrast is highlighted between the ‘third sector’ and both political parties and the state; the voice attributed to the civic sector describes its activity as within the domain of the social and cultural and excludes politics. Such a complex structure containing the ‘intensive’ use of reported speech creates an effect of ‘maximum accuracy of rendering information’ (Smirnova, 2009: 86). The extract does not quote the voices directly, however, by arranging the voices of the civic sector to speak for themselves pictorially, the journalist attempts to add validity to the claim.

Use of Complex Structures 2: indirect (‘topical’) and indirect quotations with shifted deixis

(a) [At the Assembly’s round tables], they were debating on a long standing dispute: who we are and why, what is our mission, what are our aims and what do we want to achieve.
(b) Svetlana Koroliova, a representative of the public association “Women’s Response”, for example, thinks that ‘the administration of the Assembly politicises her activity at the cost of social work and acts in the interest and under the impact of political parties from the nationalist and democratic spectrum. It is time to decide what type of union public organisations need – professional or political’.

The extract begins with ‘topical reported speech’, which ‘renders only the general content or macrostructure of the quoted utterance’ (Smirnova, 2009: 84). The utterance (a) encompasses structural features of both indirect quotation, marked by the absence of inverted commas and direct quotation, marked by the use of first person nouns (‘tam diskutirovali, [...] kto my [...] i kuda idiom’). Next, the reporter introduces a quote (b) from a representative of the civic sector, which also constitutes a mixed structure. The utterance (b) follows the pattern of indirect speech marked by the use of the indirect reporting clause ‘thinks that’ and third person pronoun ‘her’ instead of the first person (‘Svetlana Koroliova

\(^5\) Free direct speech is ‘shaped according to the pattern of direct speech, but differs from the latter formally by the absence of quotation marks’ (Smirnova, 2009:85).
schitaet, 'chto rukovodstvo Assamblei politiziruet eio deiatelnost'…'). However, the reported speech (b) is placed in quotation marks, as if it was a direct quote. It serves to indicate that the evaluative statement appears to be that of the representative of the civic sector, not of the journalist herself. The reader’s assumption would be that the source actually spoke the quoted words. The quoted source expresses direct criticism towards pro-democracy civil society and creates a clear division between the political and more socially-oriented civic sector. Such shifts in deictic order (as demonstrated in quotes (a) and (b)) are purported to add evidence of authenticity and validity to the quoted utterance. In the following extract, however, the journalist explicitly assigns her own evaluation:

Use of Complex Structures 3: segmented quotation and direct quotation without attribution

(a) A contradiction clearly takes place. (b) Having looked through the printed materials distributed at the congress, I kept stumbling upon themes, slogans and arguments ‘from another opera’ [from quite another story], like ‘the state wages an attack on the freedom of speech’. It is customary and common place in the vocabulary of, let’s say, the United Civic Party. (c) But these organisations deal with politics in another dimension; youth, social, legal and educational policy. (d) The participation in different political campaigns does not lead to anything good, as the practice has shown. It appears that civic initiatives have been convinced of this.

In this extract, the reporter explicitly aligns with the source’s point of view in utterance (a) (‘Protivorechie iavno imeet mesto’). She also distances herself from the alternative voices in utterance (b) through the use of quotation marks and the assignment of negative evaluation both implicitly (‘ia natykalas’ na temy […] iz drugoi opery’) and explicitly (‘uchastie v razlichnykh politkampaniiakh ni k chemu khoroshemu ne privodit’). The alienation is further emphasised by the de-personification of the alternative voices. The report (b) ‘gosudarstvo vediot reshitel’noe nastuplenie na svobodu slova’ is not attributed to any particular speaker initially. In fact, these may not be real words spoken at a particular time by a particular person; rather they constitute a generalised statement (marked by reporting frames ‘tipa’ and ‘eto bolee chem privychnyi [rechevoi] oborot’) of the opposition, projected as real speech. The effect of using such a structure is to denounce or label in advance any alternative point of view as ‘a clichéd phrase’ – a phrase that has no real meaning and originality (Thompson, 1996: 510). Thus, the journalist assigns her negative evaluation to the voices of others. Finally, the reporter invoked the voices of civic sector indirectly, through the use of performatives that express approval (as with the utterance (d) ‘v etom […] ubedilis’ grazhdanske iniciativy’). This strategy legitimises the journalist’s normative stance in her critique towards the politicisation of civil society.
The reporter employed a number of complex structures combining elements from direct, semi-direct and non-direct quotations. The way the journalist used quotes in the preceding extracts is clearly manipulative and she deliberately exploited reported speech for pragmatic purposes, ‘adapting it to [her] own semantic and expressive intention’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 319). By both attributing ownership of evaluations to members of the civic sector (as in Extracts 1 and 2) and also by projecting her own voice into the reported speech (as in Extract 3), the reporter was able to produce and naturalise transformational structures and modes of knowledge (Fairclough, 1992: 185-199). As a result, a clear division was constructed between civil society structures involved in social welfare and those organisations that aligned with oppositional parties and embraced a political agenda. To assess such an interpretation within the ‘normative’ framework of civil society theory, in most general terms, one would encounter divergence. Within this perspective, in Western democracies, diverse civil organisations (‘associational life’)\(^{56}\) or ‘the third sector’ are seen as partners of the state, solving social and economic problems and participating in political decision-making and the implementation processes. The key liberal concern in such partnerships is the limitation, legitimation and control of political power by free and autonomous associations and organisations within society (Wood, 1990: 64). In the Belarusian official media discourse, such a definition was transformed and re-articulated, such that the civic sector was deprived of its political function. Instead, it was understood as NGOs cooperating with the government in solving multiple social issues and the regime saw them as a partner in the state-building project whilst denying them autonomy and political agency. Such a ‘transformation’ of ‘civil society’ aimed at contributing to the strengthening of the regime’s power and the establishment of an authoritarian state.

3.3.6. Some aspects of ‘centrifugal’ tendencies in the press: irony, metaphor and ‘implicit consensus’

In response to the centripetal tendencies aimed at the re-creation and transformation of the term ‘civil society’ described above, a number of de-constructing, ‘centrifugal’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 294) discursive practices were identified in my dataset; irony, metaphor and ‘implicit consensus’ (meaning ‘agreement’ (Murphy, 1990: 24-7)). These practices were used to confront the semantic unity imposed by officialdom, in which alternative voices were muted and confronted ‘in an attempt to open up discursive space for new meanings to emerge dialogically’ (Baxter, 2007: 119). In its critique of the authoritative discourse, the

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\(^{56}\) Toqueville, for further reference see Cohen and Arato (1997).
centripetal tendencies sought to ‘rob [the official language] of its power to harm, distance it from the mouth’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 402). What follows is an analysis of these mediating strategies.

3.3.6.1. Irony

In the ‘radical scepticism’ of monologue (Bakhtin, 1981: 401), laughter becomes an important means of de-centralisation. Whilst traditional accounts of irony can be described as ‘saying one thing and meaning another’ (Fairclough, 1992: 123), within the dialogic framework it acquires a slightly different interpretation. Underlying the intertextual nature of irony, Fairclough (1992:123) pointed out that ‘an ironic utterance “echoes” someone else’s utterance’. In the utterance taken from the article ‘The Fourth Rome’ by Sergei Nikoliuk (2003, in Belorusy i Rynok), the reporter quotes from the official definition of ‘civil society’ adding slight variations to it. By ‘echoing’ official voices, the reporter expresses an ironic attitude towards the definition. This creates a disparity between the meaning, for example, attributed to the term in extracts by Lukashenko (27.03.2003) and Press office of President (Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 04.03.2003) and the following passage:

The authorities do not always rely on coercion. It is much easier to deal with the substitution of terms. As a result, elements of civil society become the part of the state’s ‘vertical’. Not everyone will notice the substitution. […] It is the XXI century outside, but without any obvious reasons and direct orders civil society forms. Yes, yes, the civil society that ‘relies on the recently elected Council of Deputies, labour unions and the mighty youth organisation’.

Irony in this extract is based on repetition (re-quoting) with slight variation, or ‘re-accentuation’ in Bakhtin’s terms (Bakhtin, 1981: 419). The reporter ‘re-accentuates’ the official voice by assigning an ironical stance to it. The use of quotation marks signals that the reporter distances himself from the official definition of ‘civil society’ (the civil society that ‘relies on the recently elected Council of Deputies, labour unions and the mighty youth organisation’), only using the report ironically. The hyperbole ‘mighty youth organisation’ and the repetition of the particle ‘Yes, yes’ function as discursive markers allowing the reader to recognise that the meaning in the reproduced utterance is not the meaning implied in the original utterance. Irony here strongly depends on the reader being able to recognise the mismatch between the original and reproduced meaning. The repetition of the particle ‘Yes, yes’ constitutes a dialogue with the reader, as if the reader had asked a question in disbelief, whilst the journalist had anticipated the question on behalf of a reader. The underlying proposition here is ‘civil society as defined by officialdom cannot be valid and
true’. In another example, criticism towards the official vision of ‘civil society’ was conveyed via what is known as ‘scare quote’ single words or short expressions placed in quotation marks (Bell, 1991: 208). In their article ‘From Sheep to Monkey’, the reporters Dmitrii Drigailo and Valerii Levkov (30.12.2003, in BDG) provide an account of the year 2003 and its impact on civil society development in the country:

The year 2003 [...] was declared as the year of a harmless Sheep. Through joint effort this year has brought us the liquidation of more than a dozen newspapers and civic organisations, total control of FM broadcasting, [...] and nearly complete enrolment of people aged between 15 and 30 to the ‘new-Komsomol’.

The use of inverted commas in the segmented quote (the ‘new-Komsomol’) signals an ironic attitude towards the official youth organisations. The reporters ‘re-accentuate’ the official understanding of ‘civil society’ by referring to it as the ‘new-Komsomol’ – a youth organisation with roots dating back to the Soviet era, a term containing a negative connotation. The ironic effect is further based on the mismatch between the apparent context (‘2003 byl ob”iavlen [godom] bezobidnoi ovtsy’ and ‘likvidatsiia [...] obshchestvennykh organizacii’). The choice of the verb (‘was declared’), invokes an official point of view. The reporter re-accentuates the official voice in an ironic manner by introducing a ‘popular’ element into the speech – ‘the year of harmless Sheep’ (a reference to the Chinese calendar), as well as anglicised ‘new-Komsomol’ (‘ɲyœ-ɠɒmsomʊl’), thus converting official language into colloquial discourse. The reporters align with the alternative viewpoint by using ‘liquidation’, a word charged with an evaluative accent representing an alternative point of view and their critique towards the official policy of re-registration. In the latter case a negative evaluation is assigned to the official policy of re-registration through the invoking of militaristic discourse. The policy of re-registration found particular criticism in the alternative content as the next sub-section will attest.

3.3.6.2. Metaphor as the manifestation of discursive struggle

As explained earlier, during the period of investigation officialdom ‘established a legal framework for so-called “state civic organizations” and launched a campaign to “nationalise” civic society’ (Čavusaü, 2007: 7). The metaphorical reference to the restructuring campaign as a ‘war’ against civil society was frequently employed in the alternative discourse. An example, in the article, by Sergei Ivanov (15.09.2003, in BDG) demonstrates this well:
The liquidation of [some] major public organisations […] gave reason for the international community and Belarusian human right advocates to maintain that the authorities wanted to eliminate the influential and uncontrollable elements of civil society. Meanwhile, by the end of the summer, to use the terminology of war, the strikes upon civic organisations were delivered not surgically as before, but in a manner resembling carpet bombing.

The ‘metaphorical’ application (see Fairclough, 1995: 94-102) of militarised discourse is represented by such formulations as ‘likvidirovat’; ‘unichtozhit’ nepodkontrol’nye elementy grazhdanskogo obshchestva; ‘udary po obshchestvennyym organizatsiiam’; ‘kovrovykh bombardirovok’. Such formulations, initially attributed to the voices of the ‘international community’ and ‘Belarusian human right advocates’ through a pictorial style of quotation (b) are further internalised by the reporter in his comment (b). Such an application of a ‘war’ metaphor by the reporter clearly correlates with the oppositional point of view. The examples are numerous in my database. Another case demonstrates the report of local voices through the segmented quote in Levkov (17.12.2004, in BDG): ‘After the search by KGB of one of the IISEPS offices, the IISEPS staff […] begun to speak of “war against civil society”.’ Such selection of a quoted fragment of the other person’s speech, the type of quotation known as ‘scare quotes’ (Bell, 1991: 207-9), constitutes a powerful tool for influencing the reader because a selected semantic element from a different content is highlighted by the reporter.

Whilst metaphors are frequently approached as figures of speech that serve for stylistic decoration in literary discourse, Fairclough (1992: 194) points to their constructive role: ‘[m]etaphors structure the way we think and the way we act, and our systems of knowledge and belief, in a pervasive and fundamental way. How a particular domain of experience is metaphorised is one of the stakes in the struggle within and over discourse practices’. The fact that the ‘militarisation’ of ‘civil society’ discourse took place signified the politicisation of thought and social practice lead to a division in society. Whilst the critique embedded in such discourse has a potential ‘to foster reflexivity’ as well as ‘to deflate and combat the power’ (Jacobs and Smith, 1997: 71) together with working towards the transformation of discourse and social practice, such a crude, confrontational method reduced the space for open dialogue in the public arena regarding ‘civic sector’ policy. Together with such confrontational means, more discreet decentralising practices were identified within my dataset, as the next sub-section attests.

57 IISEPS (Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies) is an independent Belarusian think-tank.
3.3.6.3. Discreet forms of criticism: ‘implicit consensus’

The examples of centrifugal tendencies found within my database show that ‘[r]esistance always remains a possibility’ (Carpentier, 2011: 147), as differing voices can be heard through the channels of alternative media. However, even within the mainstream media, de-centralising opinions manage to find a way through, creating divergence in public debate. This period’s dataset revealed some deviations from the contesting discursive practices described above, where criticism was expressed in more discreet forms. There were a number of propositions found within the data that demonstrated agreement between official and alternative points. However, this agreement was frequently expressed non-overtly, in discreet forms. Therefore, I refer to such forms of communication as ‘implicit consensus’, following Murphy (1990) and Wharton (2012). As Murphy (1990: 26) stated, ‘those subordinate in social relations are often compelled for self-protection and survival to [feign] agreement and loyalty with the dominant and to conceal resentment and disagreement’. However, in some cases, such disagreement reveals itself. As an example, Gennadii Dylevskii, the Deputy of House of Representatives of the Belarusian National Assembly, stated in his article ‘Unrequired intellect’ (Dylevskii, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia, 16.04.2003):

Consensus 1: ‘the need to establish pluralistic public sphere’

We need to establish a monthly journal ‘Open Tribune’ […], in which political and cultural scientists as well as economists can publish without any censorship. [We need to] launch a discussion programme on the First National TV channel on Saturdays, where all significant public figures will be invited. In both cases, there should not be any personal or ideological limits: the wider the range of opinions, the better it is for our common good. […] This will enhance the international image of the state and, most importantly, will improve the political and moral climate in the country. It will give a powerful impulse to law-making and will help to demolish bureaucratic obstacles restraining entrepreneurial initiative and the development of civil society, characterised by a multi-party system, parliamentarianism, and local governance.

The ‘implicit consensus’ with alternative points of view expressed by the official in this utterance concerns a number of issues. Firstly, the lack of space for debate in society and the unfavourable political environment restricts the development of civil society. Secondly, ‘civil society’ is understood in terms of ‘good governance’ and pluralism (‘civil society, characterised by a multi-party system, parliamentarianism, and local governance’) and the need for democratisation. However, the measures proposed to solve the first problem – ‘to launch a discussion programme on the First National TV channel’ – seems far-fetched and
unrealistic. The channel is known as a mouthpiece for official propaganda. It is possible that the reference to the channel signifies that the proposition made by the author can potentially be shared among all social actors (officialdom, civil society and the media) and thus appears as relatively uncontroversial. However, such a statement casts a shadow of scepticism over the validity of the claim. It makes it unclear whether it is genuine or whether it is used for pragmatic purposes – to implement a rhetorical ‘democratic’ façade described earlier. Another extract found in my database provides a further example of consensual dialogue between official and alternative voices. Sergei Posokhov, the former presidential aide (1996-2001) and Chair of Political Science and Geopolitics Association of the Belarusian public Association ‘Rus’ in his article (Posokhov, 2004 in Belorusy i Rynok) stated the following:

Consensus 2: ‘the lack of connection between the state and civil society’

The problem for the authorities is the fact that they do not interact with civil society. […] The authorities cannot take a measure of ‘social temperature’. There is no feedback. […] Recently, the president himself has been making attempts to establish this feedback. He calls for labour unions and youth organisations to work more actively. But they fail to succeed because civil society is underdeveloped. It requires a few conditions: self-organising citizens, a free press and a market economy. And most importantly, political process. It implies public discussion, vital for addressing society’s problems – the reform of communal services, healthcare, pensions etc. This does not exist and all the bulk of the state’s hierarchy remains stuck in the air. If city executives ever consult, it will be the managerial corpus or ‘tamed’ public associations.

The former presidential aide Sergei Posokhov internalises a critical position towards the state of affairs and agrees with the alternative position on the following points. Firstly, there is no interaction between state and civil society, which is evaluated in negative terms by the author (‘The authorities cannot take a measure of ‘social temperature’, there is no feedback’). Secondly, civil society is not developed. Here, the author quotes the president indirectly presenting the latter in positive terms (‘He calls for labour unions and youth organisations to work more actively’). The author goes on to shift the responsibility for the failure to develop civil society from the president to structural factors and also lower-rank authorities (‘they do not interact with civil society’). The grammar and lexical choice is made very carefully here to conflate the proposition made. The president is expressed as an agent and portrayed in positive terms. The rest of the administrative hierarchy and together with society are presented as objects. Thirdly, the author expresses a critical stance towards the civic organisations established by the government by referring to them as ‘tamed’
public associations. The adjective containing a negative connotation is placed in quotation marks; this is indicative of a distant authorial position towards the issue.

In summary, it has been demonstrated that writers or reporters associated with the establishment may diverge from the official point of view. This subsection attempted to analyse some areas of latent consensus found in my database during this period. However, such occurrences of consensus are exceptional and therefore largely irrelevant. Therefore, I conclude that this period saw an increasing attempt to re-define the idea and establish a monopoly over ‘civil society’ discourse, further depriving nationalist and democratic civil society of its discursive and symbolic capital.

3.4. Conclusion

In summary, during this period, political elites launched an inherently controversial strategy of constructing ‘civil society’ from above. The officialdom persistently saw civil society as a partner in a state-building project, metaphorically referring to pro-government civic organisations as ‘pillars of the state’ or the ‘foundation of the state’ with the aim of replacing the ‘politicised’ structures of civil society. From this point of view, ‘civil society’ was increasingly understood as a network of state-centric and pro-governmental civic organisations that are more reminiscent of the Soviet era mass organisations than of NGOs in the Western sense, the former enjoying state patronage and being dependent on the state both in resources and decision-making. In this way, ‘civil society’ was perceived as a constituent part of the regime, rather than a realm separate from the state. The official media circulated the official message, quoting high ranked officials, policy-makers and scientists linearly (directly) or pictorially (non-directly and quasi-directly) while ‘echoing’ official voices with a high degree of consensus, ensuring the centralisation and unification of the societal point of view. Alternative voices were counteracted and marginalised, and thus disenfranchised from the production of ‘civil society’ discourse in the official press. Marginalisation was achieved through the use of legal restrictions and coercive power, but also through the imposition of ‘consensus’, meaning ‘unity’ (Murphy, 1990: 32).

The way the term ‘civil society’ was mediated in the official press during the period 2001-2004 showed a high correlation between official policy and media coverage, highlighting the official press’s strong dependency on the government’s political agenda. The familiar Soviet approach of using the media as an instrument of ideological manipulation was reinforced, particularly during electoral campaigns, with journalists adjusting to the agenda
and policy of government officials. The official newsmakers employed a variety of
discursive practices aimed at extolling, amplifying and justifying the official point of view
and policy towards ‘civil society’. Such a close correlation between official policy and the
discursive practice of the press contributed to the legitimation of Lukashenko’s rule and
the justification for the strengthening of the state as well as the restrictive policy of
restructuring the third sector, which became an official policy goal in the early 2000s. Such
a discursive transformation of ‘civil society’ aimed to contribute to the strengthening of
sovereignty and establish an authoritarian state.

These official practices further provoked radicalisation in the non-governmental civic
sector, which aligned with political parties in their struggle against the regime. In this
context the concept was understood as a platform for the contestation against the expansion
and misuse of state power. Such ‘ politicisation’ of the term ‘civil society’ occurred as a
result of transnational influences in the mediation of the alternative press, which showed a
strong tendency towards the inclusion of Western voices with a liberal-democratic political
agenda in their content. Retaining an impartial attitude and balanced coverage towards the
issue often appeared equally challenging. In the media space, the multiplicity of voices
involved in shaping the debate on ‘civil society’, were assimilated in various ways. Some
of these mediated statements became recognised and accepted, while other statements were
confronted and placed at a distance. Therefore, it is possible to characterise the mediation
of the term ‘civil society’ as an on-going, contextual and transnational negotiation and re-
articulation between multiple voices, the theme that is central to the entire thesis.

There were a great variety of intertextual, stylistic and rhetorical strategies identified
within my database, which were used by reporters in mediating the term ‘civil society.
Some of these strategies ensured a tendency towards a unification of ‘civil society’
discourse enabling officialdom to speak with one voice. Others provided a means for
confronting the unification tendencies, constituting a battle within and over the discourse.
Reported speech was found to be a particularly important tool for determining an authorial
position towards an issue and for potentially persuading the reader. Importantly, analysis of
reported utterances showed that by placing the term ‘civil society’ in a new context and by
infiltrating it with his or her own comments and interpretations (the ‘re-accentuation’ of a
word (Bakhtin, 1981: 419)), the reporter had the potential to release the term’s polysemy.
As Bourdieu (1991: 40) stated,
Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us that, in revolutionary situations, common words take on opposite meanings. In fact, there are no neutral words. [...] At the cost of the re-interpretation implied in the production and reception of the common language by speakers occupying different positions in the social space, and therefore endowed with different intentions and interests, it manages to speak to all groups and all groups speak it.

As a result, ‘civil society’ became a term used by different actors for different purposes.
4. ‘Public Square’ 2006: between ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘monologism’

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, while simultaneously re-evaluating both the conceptual nature of the term ‘civil society’ (RQ1) and its function (uses) (RQ3) in the alternative media during the period from 2005 to 2007, I attempt to provide an explanation of the complex interaction between various actors (journalists, politicians, academics and public figures), socio-political events and discursive formations within the context of media influence (RQ2).

The year 2006 was an important milestone in social and political life in Belarus associated with the presidential elections and social activism that took place during the political events. These developments are frequently analysed within the framework of the ‘colour revolutions’ (Korosteleva, 2012; Silitski, 2007) that were spurred by the allegedly controversial presidential elections in a number of post-Soviet states. In some states, such as Ukraine and Georgia, the revolutions resulted in the establishment of pro-Western governments and in general westernisation. In a number of other states of the former Soviet Union, such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Belarus, the revolutionary attempts made by the pro-democratic opposition and civil society ended in failure. Whilst the ‘colour revolutions’ are a phenomenon worthy of research in their own right and will not be explored in this chapter, they establish the background for my research. The success of the colour revolutions witnessed in Georgia (2003) and particularly in neighbouring Ukraine (2004) alarmed the Belarusian authorities leading them to take a number of precautionary measures to prevent the development of similar events. These processes and actions were sometimes described as ‘pre-emptive authoritarianism’, ‘a strategy of combating the democratic contagion by anticipating political challenge’ (Silitski, 2006: 61). The preventative mechanisms employed by the non-liberal regimes were varied and included tactical, institutional and cultural components and were aimed at preventing the rise of internal opposition and the destruction of dissent. In Belarus, the changes resulting from the ‘revolutions’ witnessed in the neighbouring countries led to further centralisation of the state. Within this period, in Lukashenko’s second term, the Belarusian regime was becoming more straightforwardly authoritarian. A referendum in October 2004 removed the two term presidential limit thereby allowing Lukashenko to run for an unlimited number of times with his third term commencing in 2006. In addition, the referendum extended the control the president could exercise with respect to the Belarusian Central Election Commission, the KGB, the
judiciary, the media and other institutions. In the three years following 2001, the president’s second electoral term, the democratic opposition and civil society was effectively emasculated (Burger and Minchuk, 2006: 29-30). With the regime becoming overtly coercive, the authorities began their fourth campaign against independent NGOs. A huge segment of civic society was forced underground. As Čavusă (2007: 7) described, [a]fter the crackdown on civic society in 2003 through 2005, it was clear that the third sector would never be able to function as freely as during the 2001 presidential election. Then, Belarusian civic society was a well-structured network involving dozens of legal organizations capable of conducting nationwide campaigns. In the run-up to the 2006 presidential election, civic society represented a weak network of organizations and initiatives divided by political interests, partly depoliticized under threat of persecution or subordinate to other political forces.

Also, further restrictions were applied to the independent media. In November 2005 the state postal service refused to deliver three leading oppositional periodicals, demonstrating an effort to restrict information and consolidate the regime’s power in the run-up to the elections. In this context, the conflict between state and civil society gained a level of pertinence while at the same time such an environment greatly hindered civil society in achieving its goals. The 19th of March witnessed the re-election of the President, an event that triggered the breakout of mass protests in Minsk and other Belarusian cities and towns. On March 21st youth activists set up a small tent city in October Square in Minsk. The protest was not initially forcefully removed, but allowed to continue with the state TV portraying the protesters as drunken and violent provocateurs, demonstrating anti-social behaviour. On March 24th the police broke up the demonstration and hundreds of people were jailed. Despite the riot police’s actions, the following day tens of thousands of protestors took to the streets of the capital with the protests continuing for another week until they were broken up by riot police. The campaign failed to achieve its goals and Lukashenko was sworn in as president on 8 April 2006. This environment fostered the contextual conditions that saw a general increase in the use of the term of ‘civil society’ in the press, as Graph 2 attests:

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58 See www.rferl.org/content/article/1062858.html (accessed 8 May 2013).
Graph 2: Intensity of ‘civil society’ use in the press (2000-2010)

Graph 60 reveals a proportional dependency in the use of the term ‘civil society’ with periods that witnessed significant socio-political developments. The years 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2010 were important ‘milestones’ in social and political life in Belarus, being associated with the presidential and parliamentary elections and the social activism linked to these political events. Therefore, in this chapter I build my empirical evidence using data selectively from the period associated with the vibrant political events known as ‘colour revolutions’. With this in mind, this chapter addresses specific questions, which are directly relevant to my research questions. How was the use of the term ‘civil society’ in the press informed by the unfolding political events of 2006? How were the ‘pre-emptive’ actions as well as the civic resistance witnessed during the period manifested in media discourse? What do these discursive practices with regards to the articulation of the term ‘civil society’ tell us about the nature of the Belarusian public sphere? To address these questions I engage with a number of concepts and ideas derived from dialogic theory, as outlined in the following section.

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60 Only three periodicals are represented in this graph, they were chosen because they allowed access to contiguous data over the period. The Sovetskaia Belorussiia dataset encompasses only those articles containing the term ‘civil society’ with more than 50 % relevance, as categorised by the periodical’s website. Data for Nasha Niva was generated from the Belarusian online library Kamunikat (http://kamunikat.org/). Belorusy i Rynok provided an in-depth electronic archive allowing me to create the dataset from 2002 to 2010.
4.2. A description of the specific methodological tools used in this chapter

The ‘colour revolutions’ can be understood not only in socio-political terms, such as public protests against authoritarian regimes, but also from a cultural perspective as ‘a battle of ideas’ (Ambrosio, 2010: 141) that take place within a public space. To analyse how such a battle unfolds, I engage with a number of concepts and ideas from dialogic theory. In Bakhtin’s (1981) and Voloshinov’s (1973) writings, dialogue is conceptualised as emerging from social tensions and struggle. This inherent power struggle in dialogue does not necessarily seek common ground, or public consensus, as in a rational model of communication proposed by Jürgen Habermas. Instead, Bakhtin’s dialogue constitutes ‘an immense novel, multi-styled, mercilessly critical, soberly mocking, reflecting in all its fullness the heteroglossia and multiple voices of a given culture, people and epoch’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 60). Such a culturally and socially diversified discourse provides a space for confronting and clarifying societal issues and conflicts and these are always evident in language use and particular meanings (Hirschkop, 1999: 78-9).

Whilst this approach to dialogue is central to the entire thesis, in this chapter I offer the framework for the analysis of the Belarusian public sphere. The Belarusian public space is frequently described through the binary categories of ‘official’ and ‘alternative’ public spheres, thus emphasising the polarised environment in which the media operate. It is crucial to acknowledge the conflicting and polarised nature of the Belarusian public sphere, where at times the public is presented with two different and opposing realities. Indeed, this trend is frequently acknowledged by Belarusian media researchers. ‘Rather than encouraging a constructive public dialogue on the country's economic and political development, the media are simply another front in the political battle between the government of President Lukashenko and the opposition’ (Manaev, 2003: 30). In the context of these polarised discourse communities, each of the sides’ attempts to create its own defined ‘ideological’ world, even an apparent neutral position may represent the views of a special interest group. In such a conflicting environment, there is a limited number of relationships between ideologically diverse discourses. One obvious relationship is that of opposition. As Fairclough (1989: 91) stated, ‘anti-languages are set up and used as conscious alternatives to the dominant or established discourse types’. However, it would be an oversimplification to use such a perspective in my analysis. It is important to consider the complex diversity of voices and relations present within the discourse. It is also important to emphasise that the two realities do interact. Therefore, I
assume that media text is a complex mixture of voices, languages and relations present within the media space. These voices engage and often struggle with each other dialogically and this impacts on the term’s meaning.

Furthermore, in light of the events that took place in the October Square in Minsk, I will thematise discursive practices and communications witnessed during the period through the notion of ‘public square’ following Hirschkop (1989). ‘Public square’ is a notion derived from Bakhtin’s writings (‘Rabelais and His World’; ‘The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism’) to refer to a modern discursive space described as ‘a differentiated arena of conflicting values’ (Hirschkop, 1989: 72). It is a space where various publics and their interests are represented through differing ‘points of view’ made through a passionate argument. Bakhtin did not use the term ‘public square’ in a sociological sense to investigate public institutions as such. The subject of his concern was forms of discourse, ‘ploshchadnoe slovo’ (square discourse)61 that came to mean the multiplicity of points of view embodied in language. It came to signify a site where these views can meet and can be formed. In a way, Bakhtin’s conception of ‘public square’ may create direct associations with the notion of ‘public sphere’ developed by Jürgen Habermas, whereby concerned citizens’ debate over matters of public interest should be resolved through the public use of reason. Contrary to the Habermasian model of communication, the citizenry debate over social order is verified by the battle of interests and opinions articulated by means of distinct ideologically charged syntactic, grammatical and lexical forms (Hirschkop 1989: 69), described by Bakhtin as ‘heteroglossia’. In other words, the ‘public square’ is the institutional name for ‘heteroglossia’ (Hirschkop, 1989: 69).

‘Heteroglossia’ (raznorechie) is a product of struggle between different voices. Generally, it is seen as a domain of an alternative sphere that enjoys plurality and diversity of the social world, or as originally defined, ‘social diversity of speech types [...], a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships always more or less dialogised’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 263). It is typically not applicable to the official sphere, since centralising forces tend to suppress and silence alternative voices, a discursive practice that can be described through the notions of ‘monologism’ or ‘monologic style’. In most general terms, monologic style is associated with authority and political power. It is a

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hierarchical, unitary discourse that enacts centralising tendencies and domination. It seeks to promote one voice, or authorial point of view. Contrary to this, is a dialogic style of communication that is juxtaposed to the ruling ‘monologism’ of the official sphere. It is a pluralistic, heteroglossic style of communication that engages with a range of voices, social identities and represents the domain of citizens.

Drawing on these theoretical considerations as well as critically engaging with the debates surrounding the term ‘civil society’ in the press in the context of the political events of 2006, I am going to argue that the mediation of the term ‘civil society’ occurred in a manner that can be described through the Bakhtinian notions of ‘monologism’, ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘public square’. The notions describe purely discursive means by which meanings and points of view are shaped and articulated; yet, they also provide a ground for sociological and political observations. Thereby, the discursive practices manifested in ‘style’ witnessed over the period will be compared to the sociological processes of firstly, the centralisation of social and political life in the light of the ‘colour revolutions’ and secondly, the formation of a new type of civil society.

Four periodicals were chosen for my investigation; these are *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*-Belarus’ Segodnia, *Narodnaia Volia*, *Nasha Niva* and *Belorusy i Rynok*. BDG data was no longer available for this period. Initially, nineteen articles from *Narodnaia Volia* and *Belorusy i Rynok* and twenty three issues from *Nasha Niva* (sometimes containing a number of articles per issue) published between 2005 and 2007 and containing references to the term ‘civil society’ were analysed. 134 utterances were coded thematically providing a crucial initial point for the structure and content of my analysis. The analysis begins with the examination of discursive practices and trends with regard to the use of ‘civil society’ in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia-Belarus’ Segodnia*, followed by the investigation of those in other periodicals.

4.3. ‘Monologisation’ of ‘civil society’ discourse in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*

The monologic tendency, which became already visible during the president’s second term, became particularly pronounced in the third pre-election period, exacerbated by the ‘colour revolutions’. The monologism in the official discourse was constituted by the amplification of ‘the new model’ of ‘civil society’ and the replacement of the normative idea with a hybridised version, consisting of Soviet, populist and statist discourses. The
idea highlighted the context-specific nature of ‘civil society’; it was presupposed to be ‘based on our traditions’ and it was defined as ‘Councils of Deputies, mass youth organisations, labour unions, war veterans and women’s organisations’ (Lukashenko, 19.04.2005 in Sovetskaia Belorussiia). It was also proclaimed to be ‘the pillars of the state’ by president Lukashenko and was seen as a constituent part of the state’s ideology (Lukashenko, 19.04.2005 and 23.05.2006 in Sovetskaia Belorussiia). Officialdom persistently saw ‘civil society’ as a partner in a state-building project, emphasising the continuity with the Soviet past, as the following extract demonstrates (Lukashenko, 25.05.2006, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia):

It has been determined historically that at the base of our society are the four pillars, they do exist and we need to develop them. They are labour unions, Councils of Deputies, youth and war veterans’ organisations. […] We have secured continuity. Not only are they the largest mass organisations. They are the most formed, mature, and time-tested instruments, which proved their efficiency in self-organisation and self-government of the people.

The Soviet discourse (‘determined historically’; ‘mass organisations’; ‘most formed, mature, time-tested instruments’; ‘self-government of the people’) has been re-contextualised and re-ordered in historical and social terms, successfully incorporating the Soviet legacy into the modern conception of the state’s development. In this way, ‘civil society’ was perceived as a constituent part of the regime, rather than a realm separate from the state. The definition became a repetitive formulae circulated in the content of Sovetskaia Belorussiia during this period. It appeared six times in my search within five sources as a direct quote (variants were excluded from the count). Such a direct, monotonous use of authoritative speech was aimed at insuring ‘a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 272), a practice that I refer to as ‘monologisation’ of discourse, which is indivisible from the wider processes of socio-political and cultural centralisation. The formulae came from above and the press reproduced the official discourse on ‘civil society’ by quoting the president, official policymakers and scientists. The monologism was exacerbated by a specific genre frequently found within the periodical; addresses by the president (as an example, see Address by the President to the People and National Assembly (Lukashenko, 19.04.2005; 23.05.2006, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia). In such addresses the authoritative word of the president is reported in a linear, direct style with no commentary attached, which in form, constitutes a monologue. Such a style ‘demands our unconditional allegiance’, ‘one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it’ (Bakhtin 1981: 272). It is a discourse in which
the voices of others are not recognised and where the author presents a proposition that has no dialogic alternatives.

Furthermore, to ensure the unity of such ideological communication, there are some discursive practices that a reporter can deploy. As an example, the article ‘Together, not apart. In search of civil society’ by Lepeshko (29.09.2005, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia) represents a case of a reporter’s assigned ‘active orientation’ (Vološinov, 1973) towards the ‘other person’s speech’:

The idea announced by A. Lukashenko of the ‘pillars of the state’, represented by the strong labour union and youth movements (plus, of course, war veterans and women’s organisations) is very attractive and is likely to find wide support within society. The challenges of the XXI century are too serious to deny help to those who try resolving nation-wide issues.

The utterance internalised the quote by President Lukashenko, which is partly demarcated by quotation marks (the ‘pillars of the state’). Such an appeal to authority is an effective persuading strategy. The reported speech (the definition of ‘civil society’) is assimilated by the reporter into a new conceptual system that determines the speech and establishes ‘consonance’ (Vološinov, 1973: 119) with it. Such a pictorial style of reporting allows the reporter to assign an evaluative accent to the reported speech (‘the idea […] is very attractive’). The reporter also aligns the official point of view with wider society’s position. A non-direct frame of reporting is used for this purpose (‘the idea […] is likely to find wide support within society’) contributing to the establishment of a centralised language. Together with the endorsement of the official point of view on ‘civil society’, the journalist framed the message in ‘security’ terms (‘[t]he challenges of the XXI century are too serious’). As indicated, the challenges seen by the government within this period were associated with ‘colour’ revolutions. In such context, officialdom recognised the ‘pre-emptive’ and homogenising property of the context-specific term ‘civil society’ in uniting the nation in the context of the threat of revolution. The use of the term became irrevocably associated with the idea of ‘unity’ of the nation. Some references found within the official content established a link between the development of civil society and the necessity to consolidate the Belarusian society in general, as the title from the previous article suggested: ‘Together, not apart. In search of civil society’ (Lepeshko, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia 29.09.2005). In another article by Kryat (in Sovetskaia Belorussiia

21.09.2005), the consolidation of the state and society as central to the idea of civil society was emphasised:

It is the close cooperation between the state and the public (obshchestvennost) that is considered as the key feature of civil society globally. ‘Some foreign politicians think that a confrontational model of civil society, opposing the state, is needed in Belarus. We cannot agree with this’ – Lukashenko announced unequivocally. – ‘Belarus needs the unity of the people and authority, including constructively-oriented organisations working towards the welfare of people and the state. This is our vision of the essence of democracy and the structure of civil society.’

Accordingly, the government and official media could be seen explicitly confronting the oppositional idea of civil society (‘[w]e cannot agree with […] the confrontational model of civil society, opposing the state’). Instead, the statist model of the pro-government third sector as declared by the president (‘constructively-oriented organisations working towards the welfare of people and the state’) was amplified through the use of a direct quote. When quoting the authoritative voice of the president, the reporter positioned himself as an ‘authorial’ voice. The ‘authorial voice’ extolled the dominant official discourse through the use of a comment expressing a similar opinion regarding the issue. Furthermore, the reporter used a reporting frame that excluded alternative opinion (‘Lukashenko announced unequivocally’). The ‘other’ in the extract was associated with the West (‘[s]ome foreign politicians think …’), whose voices were confronted and negated. Opposing alternative voices was a common practice in the official media. Other sources from my database demonstrated that some Western politicians and members of international community were portrayed as external enemies accused of undermining the peace and stability of the regime. Among those were international NGOs involved in supporting democratisation or electoral monitoring, such as the OSCE, as the following extract demonstrates (Rubinov, 2006 a, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia):

H. G. Wieck, the former chairperson of the OSCE mission in Belarus, expressed himself something like this to Deutsche Welle: if Belarusian democratic forces are not sponsored from overseas, they will become marginal and eventually disappear. This is a very frank and true statement. […] In other words, if Belarus is left in peace, if no one interferes in its affairs or pays to recruited revolutionaries, then it will develop peacefully, constantly increasing its citizens’ welfare and gradually taking a decent world position.

By re-quotimg H. G. Wieck pictorially and locating the original utterance in a new context, Anatolii Rubinov, the chief ideologist of the President’s Administration, radically changed its meaning. By further paraphrasing the former OSCE representative (‘[i]n other words’) the reporter re-accentuated the statements, which resulted in a negative portrayal of the
democratic forces as internal enemies (‘recruited revolutionaries’) representing a threat to the country’s security, stability and peace, as implied in the extract. Such an explicitly manipulative, propagandist method aimed to marginalise the opposition and the West.

The discourse of law and order, exacerbated by the use of the notions of security, stability, statehood and authority was prominent in the content of the periodical, while the ‘colour revolutions’ were associated with ‘the danger’, ‘catastrophe’, ‘threat’ and ‘challenge’ to national and international security. In his interview with the chief editor of Rossiiskaia Gazeta, Vladislav Fronin, which was also reproduced in Sovetskaia Belorussiia (29.12.2005), Aleksandr Lukashenko stated:

As for ‘revolutions’, they are not a revolution. They are banal banditism, craftily implemented using Western money. […] I reply to my opponents: ‘we see civil society differently’. We create it based on the main civic institutions. These are the largest youth organisations, labour unions, war veteran organisations and women’s organisations. I underline the largest and therefore mass organisations.

In his message addressed firstly, to Russian audiences both politicians and citizens and secondly, to [his] opponents’, be it the Belarusian opposition or the Western community, the president provided a clear-cut line between real ‘civil society’ and ‘uncivil’ society. He re-accentuated the notion of “revolutions”, as understood by the ‘opponents’ in negative terms by negating it (‘they are not revolution’), proving the contesting nature of the dialogue with civil society. He further transformed it through a law and order frame criminalising the opposition (‘[t]hey are banal banditism’), portraying the latter as illegitimate. Such a rhetoric clearly endeavoured to preempt and later destroy the civic protests and activism associated with the ‘colour revolutions’, to secure support from the wider population and also from the Russian government. Both governments shared common concerns with regards to the ‘colour revolutions’ and appeared to join efforts ‘to combat democratic contagion’ (Silitski, 2006: 61). There are examples where the Russian government could be seen manipulating and redefining some crucial terms associated with democratic change. Thus, the notion of ‘democracy’ was re-articulated through the concept of ‘sovereign democracy’ to mask and legitimise the dominance of the Russian government over the political system (see Ambrosio, 2010: 141-143). Furthermore, in Russia, the aftermath of the tragic events at Beslan in 2004 saw the role of civil society

63 The ‘key word’ searches during this period revealed 310 references to the notion ‘security’ within 42 sources containing the term ‘civil society’.
64 Refer to Lukashenko (25.05.2006) in Sovetskaia Belorussiia.
emphasised as an element in the anti-terrorist struggle. This was reflected in President Putin’s address to the nation in 2005 (Belokurova, 2010: 463). This idea of the mobilisation of civil society against ‘the danger’, ‘threat’ and ‘challenge’ to national security, be it terrorism or colour revolutions (sometimes understood synonymously), was commonly shared by the establishments in both countries. The Russian government was committed to preventing such a scenario both at home and in the CIS countries by providing financial and strategic support (see Ambrosio, 2010: 144-145). In such a context, as Wilson (2011: 210) explained, ‘Lukashenka sold himself to the Kremlin as a bulwark against the fear the Kremlin had sold itself of US-inspired colour revolution and as a testing ground for “counter-revolutionary technology”. Russia was happy to loan money, media support and the services of its “political technologists” to stop the virus spreading’.

Interestingly, this period saw a rapid increase in the inclusion of Russian ‘official’ sources reflecting on the idea of ‘civil society’ in the periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia. The reporters from Sovetskaia Belorussiia referred to Russian politicians, scientists and journalists choosing selectively those voices and opinions that would perpetuate their arguments and extol the official point of view. The extract from the article ‘On the crossroads of democracy’ (13.10.2004) further demonstrates this:

An interesting opinion was expressed in the interview by the renowned Russian political scientist Sergei Kara-Murza given to the correspondent from Sovetskaia Belorussiia. […] ‘I cannot consider the Belarusian opposition, which demonstrates the non-rational approach, as democratic. I think that your opposition is the part of intelligentsia that at some point fell into the state of ‘manilovshchina’, of the utopic consciousness; they picture to themselves a somewhat simplistic notion of Western welfare, without twists and whirls. It seems like realistic thinking has been ousted by them to the periphery of their mind’.

Professor Kara-Murza’s point of view is influenced by nostalgia for the Soviet past and he has been known for his critical position towards liberal values. The scholar’s speech was reported directly. This very vividly and poetically provided a critical view of the Belarusian opposition. The utterance contains an intertextual link to Nikolai Gogol’s famous novel ‘Dead Souls’. The scholar created the allegory between the opposition and a character from the novel, the landowner Manilov, who represented an irrational, utopic, sentimentalist attitude to life, thus conveying a satirical stance towards the Belarusian opposition. The direct mode of reporting added weight and credibility to the official point of view towards

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65 See ‘Soviet Civilisation’ (2001) and ‘Mind Manipulations’ (2000) by Sergei Kara-Murza, as an example.
the opposition and created ‘the objectivity’ effect. Simultaneously, the editorial board of the periodical (the author was not mentioned) foregrounded the interview with a positive evaluative statement (‘interesting opinion was expressed …) that indicated the alignment of the editorial staff with the critical stance of Professor Kara-Murza.

The official periodical welcomed publications with critical readings of liberal civil society, ‘colour revolutions’ and the West’s involvement in domestic politics. Notoriously, a number of articles by Aleksandr Dugin, a Russian political scientist and advocate of extreme anti-Western views, contributed to this conspiratorial discourse portraying pro-democracy NGOs as a conspiring ‘other’. To quote one such reference (Dugin, 27.01.2006, in *Sovetskaia Belorusssia*):

> [i]n the contemporary context, it is NGOs, public associations and funds that become the main conductors of globalisation and Americanisation. [… ] In reality, we deal here with the intelligence activity in the era of the information society. Contrary to the traditional forms of espionage, their activity is carried out almost openly. We have seen the role non-governmental organisations played in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine.

By making these allegiances with the Russian media and reporting official voices directly, the periodical aimed to increase its potential for influence. Russian media enjoy high popularity and trust in Belarus and Russian politicians and experts are known to the public.66 Choosing selectively their sources to act as referees in the dialogic battle with the alternative media and the democratic opposition, officialdom aimed to add credibility to the national propaganda by quoting Russian political scholars and commentators. Restrictions were introduced with regards to pro-liberal Russian sources, which in contrast to *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, were circulated in the alternative press.67 The state media circulated the official message, quoting the president, high ranking officials, policy-makers and scientists linearly (directly) and thus amplified the message. In such cases, a specific genre (such as an ‘address’) also was found to reinforce official monologism. When citing official voices

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66 Russian media, print, broadcast and online enjoy popularity in Belarus and also a high level of trust with the population, as it demonstrates a higher level of professionalism and diversity of opinion (Astapenia, 2014). Available at http://belarusdigest.com/story/how-russian-culture-and-media-shape-belarusian-politics-16833 (accessed 12 March 2015).

67 An example being the article published in *Nasha Niva*, authored by Fiodr Luk’ianov (Luk’ianov, 28.07.2006 in *Nasha Niva*), the chief editor of the Russian Journal *Russia in Global Affairs*, who reflected on Putnam’s concept of ‘social capital’ and its applicability to Ukraine. Reports on Ukrainian ‘civil society’ and the events associated with the Orange revolution, aired by the Russian Service of *Voice of America* (*Golos Ameriki*), were printed in *Narodnaia Volia* (2006). The experience of civil society from other countries was assessed – from Ukraine, Romania and Russia. These publications generally welcomed change and saw a vibrant civil society as a crucial factor in the demise of the authoritarian government and democratic development of the country.
pictorially (non-directly and quasi-directly), reporters commented on these voices with a high degree of consensus, ensuring the centralisation and unification of the discourse. In such a centralised and monologic context, there was no place for the alternative point of view; the alternative position was negated, silenced or marginalised through criminalised or conspiratorial discourses, which portrayed pro-democratic civil society as enemies supported by the West. Such mediation practices ensured a crucial role of the media in the electoral politics of 2006. In contrast, in the alternative press the idea of ‘civil society’ was seen and articulated according to different media logic, as the next sections demonstrate.

4.4. ‘Public Square’ and the ideas of ‘civil society’

4.4.1. ‘Self-organising society’

Coincidently, with the third electoral campaign of the spring of 2006, a new idea of ‘civil society’ became evident in the alternative press, emphasising the importance of self-organising citizens and their ability to direct the country’s future development. The Presidential campaign resulted in Lukashenko’s re-election for a third term. As a result, mass social protests took place in Minsk’s October Square expressing discontent and demanding change. As a result of the protests and increasing public activism, a number of journalists and intellectuals reported the emergence of a ‘new society’. There was a feeling that ‘something had changed in Belarusian society or in some part of it’, ‘something had moved from the dead end’ (Dyn’ko, 2006, in Nasha Niva). Framed within a narrative of ‘revolution’, the new idea of ‘civil society’ appeared to presuppose a rapid societal mobilisation through social network activity and the overthrow of the illiberal regime, as expressed in the article by Chief Editor of Nasha Niva Andrei Dyn’ko (2006, in Nasha Niva):

The Springs 1996 and 2006 are the interrelated milestones in society’s efforts to win back the areas of freedom. The next step could be a new civil society, which through the virtualisation switches to the partisan activity, or through solidarity – to the revolution.

Whilst finding its continuity in earlier discourses on civic protests, the current events were reported from a different angle, with the notion of ‘self-organisation’ at the core of the new discourse. As Dyn’ko (2006, in Nasha Niva) further stated, whilst reflecting on the events of 2006:
Spring 2006 impressed us with the high level of self-organisation seen in independent society (*nezaležnaе hramadźva*) in the capital. This was manifested by the establishment of the camp site, the organisation of flash mobs, the spreading of information via the Internet and the organised mass support of political prisoners. Not only was this self-organisation the best ever […], it also took some processes totally away from the control of the authorities.

Through social networks, independent media, pro-democracy NGOs and youth movements, the public at large were able to assemble and demonstrate new ways of civic resistance. In particular, the voices of a younger generation who embraced European values and supported democratisation led to new ‘civil society’ rhetoric, emphasising the idea of a self-organised society. The voices of young protesters and camp dwellers at the Square were quoted in the press, as the following example by Klaskoŭski (24.03.2006, in *Nasha Niva*) illustrates:

> The bi-polar scheme – political opposition against the regime – is too simplistic. October Square showed that civil society is emerging. As Stas Pachobut, pointed out, ‘it is not the parties’ representatives or activists who are gathered here, but real European people’.

‘Civil society’ as a term in this utterance focuses on the themes of the wider community in contrast to a rather ‘closed’, over politicised and at times monologic discourse of the political opposition. The slightly colloquial phrase ‘real European people’ invokes the voice of a young person, representative of a new generation that enjoy European values. Such a polyphonic style of reporting contributed to the ‘dialogisation’ and diversification of ‘civil society’ discourse, implying the emergence of a communitarian, ‘bottom up’ model of ‘civil society’ during the protests in the Square.

Multiple voices of students, activists and citizens could be found in the alternative press with an array of concerns not typically raised in the official media. Among the concerns was the failure of the current regime to recognise the autonomy of civil society and to be accountable before society - the legacy of the Soviet state. These concerns were represented by the alternative social and political manifestations and narratives, often framed in anti-regime and anti-Soviet terms. An example was the issue of Chernobyl and the consequences of the disaster, still silenced by the current pro-nuclear regime as it was by the Soviet government. Consequently, it is perceived as an oppositional issue used as an argument to undermine the regime.\(^{68}\) The case is best exemplified by the extract from

\[^{68}\text{For further reference on this issue see Marples (2006:355).}\]
Belorusy i Rynok containing a quote by a civic activist V. Ivashkevich (Barbarich, 17.04.2006 in Belorusy i Rynok):

According to V. Ivashkevich, for twenty years after the [Chernobyl] catastrophe, the attitude of authorities towards the people practically has not changed. If before they used to set radioactive clouds on the heads of Belarusian farmworkers, forced pioneers to participate in May 1st demonstrations, now ‘the authorities hush up the objective data on the condition of the contaminated areas, do not let civil society control their actions, use propaganda’. ‘That is why now, as twenty years ago, we, the Belarusian society, face one key task – to make the authorities accountable before society’, the politician pointed out.

The extract represents a case where the use of the personal pronoun ‘we’ is employed to construct a unified social identity and solidarity. A wide spectrum of society is associated with the ‘we-group’ in an attempt to mobilise wider public support; the use of ‘society’ and ‘civil society’ as synonyms in the utterance is an important component of the constructive strategy. The articulation of ‘civil society’ as a unified force simultaneously implies a distancing from the authoritative Other. At the start of the utterance the author, the journalist Barbarich, uses a ‘pictorial’ style of speech reporting (speech without quotation marks). This enables the author to internalise the expressed point of view and saturate the passage with his own voice, configuring the intonation of the extract - sarcasm, disbelief and anger; parallelisms and hyperbole are used to create this tone. Simultaneously, the voice of the quoted activist is clearly highlighted in the extract by placing his words in quotation marks and by the use of neutral reporting frames (‘[a]ccording to V. Ivashkevich’; ‘the politician pointed out’). Such a reporting style, where the reported voice is found to be embedded in a polyphonic way, whereby the voice of the activist is one among many, whilst not suppressed or modified by the ‘authorial voice’, contributes to the diversity of the public space. It is a space ‘concerned with a range of social identities’ and a multiplicity of voices, which represents an ‘intermediate realm of public interests and activities’ or ‘public square’ in Hirschkop’s terms (1989: 72-73). It is also an essentially contested space, in which meaning is emerging through social struggle. In the above extract the struggle is manifested by the ironic intonation towards official policies. As a further example from one of the previous extracts by Klaskoŭski (2006b, in Nasha Niva) demonstrates, the voice of the young protester opposes the idea of a public protest managed by the structural opposition. It can be argued therefore that these discursive processes found its sociological parallel in the formations of civil society, since as Edwards (2009: x) states, ‘the essence of civil society is collective action, negotiation and struggle’.

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4.4.2. Use of the idea of ‘civil society’ by the democratic opposition

The idea of a self-organising ‘civil society’ was used by Aleksandr Milinkevich, a Presidential candidate and the Leader of the United Democratic Coalition, who was widely cited in the alternative periodicals. It was used to mobilise civil society or as Milinkevich stated, the ‘most active part of society’ (Sadovskaia, 06.02.2006, in Belorusy i Rynok) and to galvanise civic resistance. Aleksandr Milinkevich in his interview given to Frumkin (30.05.2006, in Nasha Niva), talked about a new perspective on ‘civil society’ specific to this period that was civic organisations and initiatives participating in electoral politics. Through social networks and independent media these pro-democracy initiatives managed to mobilise a wider public, especially younger, urban and educated people. This new form of social activism was further acknowledged by the leader of the democratic coalition Aleksandr Milinkevich (Khodosovskii, 03.05.2006, in Belorusy i Rynok):

The best form of peoples’ cooperation is self-organisation. Independent self-organised structures take responsibilities for certain functions. It is from them, and not from headquarters, where initiatives come. Taking Internet-communities, as an example, they can do a lot.

A self-organising community - citizens and social activists who act without coordination or direction from above and who do not necessarily identify themselves with any particular political party or organisation – was a rather new phenomenon for Belarusian society. As the above extracts suggested, the new society emerging was characterised in the alternative press by the principles of social solidarity and initiative as well as the autonomy of society from the state. Furthermore, with the increased focus on Belarus by the international community and the media, the events provided the opportunity to reach wider audiences both locally and internationally. ‘Civil society’ was framed in normative terms, connected to the ideas of freedom, democratisation and European values. The activism witnessed during the electoral campaign of 2006 in October Square in Minsk provided grounds for the claims of the emergence of civil society and a precondition for the creation of a united democratic nation, as expressed by Milinkevich in his interview to Barbarich (30.10.2006, in Belorusy i Rynok):

Without the events of spring 2006 they would have doubts in Europe whether there is civil society in Belarus; whether there is a need for freedom of speech in Belarus; whether there is a nation in Belarus. […] The spring of 2006 showed that there is. Today no one doubts that Belarus is a European country that deserves democracy and freedom’, Milinkevich thinks.
The journalist reported the message of the opposition leader neutrally, as a fact, with minimal comments attached allowing the message to stand out. The message was addressed to Europe (‘they would have doubts in Europe’) as well as Belarusian pro-democratic audiences. As the extract demonstrates, the ideas of the Belarusian nation and ‘civil society’ were re-articulated within a normative framework with the emphasis on the notions of ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and European values. The concept of ‘Europe’ played an important role in such articulation, reminiscent of the discourses of Eastern and Central European dissidents, for whom ‘Europe’ was seen as a symbol of their ‘return to Europe’ following the period of Soviet domination. Whilst this anti-Soviet stance appeared to be less pronounced in Milinkevich’s speeches, in both cases, such an articulation was used as a counter-frame to the non-democratic political system of power, demonstrating commitment to European values. It also served as an appeal for the support from the international community. In such an articulation the juxtaposition between the democratic nation represented by civil society and the authoritarian regime were prominent, as Aleksandr Milinkevich (Sadovskaia, 06.02.2006, in Belorusy i Rynok) commented in his interview:

I always say that there are two Belarus(es). The first Belarus is the authority […] that chose the way to back away from reform, the way towards regression. […] However, there is the second Belarus – it is society that practically became the hostage of the Belarusian authority. And the most active part of this society is civil society. It is this Belarus that Europe should most actively communicate with, supporting NGOs, parties, independent media and labour unions.

Framed in normative terms, the juxtaposition of the non-liberal regime and civil society became an underlying principle in such an articulation. Such rhetoric used by the alternative political elite to catalyse change in society during the electoral periods turned out rather successful in sustaining civic protests in the Square as well as in attracting attention from the international community. However, it provided few answers in terms of how to use the spontaneous citizen activism in order to deliver democratic change in the face of the overt coercion and ‘pre-emptive’ measures employed by the regime (Korosteleva, 2012: 43-4). Furthermore, the normative framework appealing to European values was appealing to only a segment of the population. As Marples (2006: 358) explained, in the run up to the election Milinkevich visited a number of European capitals meeting EU political elites. While this may have increased his standing on the international stage it did little to increase his domestic profile and he failed to familiarise himself with
the Belarusian electorate. This resulted in Lukashenko receiving the majority support of the country with 83 percent of the vote.

In contrast, officialdom promoted the idea of unity of the nation by deploying a homogenising discourse of citizenship and emphasising the lack of social and political contradictions. Such articulations also contained an anti-Western stance, as in the following extract by Anatolii Rubinov (2006, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia):

> Today, in our country there are no serious confessional, national or class contradictions or antagonisms. All citizens and dwellers of Belarus feel absolutely equal in their rights, no one is branded as a second class citizen unlike in some other countries.

The authoritative voice of the chief ideologist Rubinov dominates the extract in an attempt to produce a homogeneous discourse with the emphasis on the notion of unity and stability implied in the text. Alternative voices are confronted and silenced (the negation ‘no serious antagonisms’ gives away the presence of the alternative position). The universalising language of citizenship seeks to create unity of the nation and diminish and obscure any potential conflicts. A further implication is that the country is equal and a ‘class-less’ society invoking a tradition of Soviet rhetoric. The reference ‘other countries’ implies a critical position towards the West, supposedly accusing the former of failing to sustain the civic and cultural rights of minorities as well as opposing Western values of unchecked capitalism. Such rhetoric can be frequently found in the official discourse, in which Belarus is presented as an example of social and economic stability, equality and justice.

4.4.3. ‘Independent Society’: shifting the borders between the civic and the national in Nasha Niva

Simultaneously, there was another pronounced idea of ‘civil society’, demonstrated by the term nezaleznae hramadztva (independent society). The term was used to refer to the public protests, overlapping with the idea of a self-organising community, as the extract in Section 4.4.1 by Andrei Dyn’ko (2006, in Nasha Niva) illustrated. Predominantly used within the national periodical Nasha Niva, the term was introduced by Andrei Dyn’ko, who became Nasha Niva’s Editor in Chief from 2000. In my online interview (04.10.2014), Dyn’ko explained that he sought a clear term, understandable by the readership, because the term hramadzianskaia supol’nasts’ (civil society) was ‘too scientific’ for the average reader. The original meaning of the term ‘independent society’ implied a part of society independent from the regime. Often used alongside ‘civil society’ (hramadzianskaia
supohnastr’ in Belarusian), the term *nezalezhnaye hramadztyva* was well-received and therefore became established and developed within the content of the periodical. Used by journalists, political experts and readers, it acquired new connotations and overtones.

Intertextual parallels can be found with the language of freedom used by Eastern and Central European intellectuals. The term ‘independent society’ was originally used in the works of leading intellectual activists in the Polish opposition, such as Adam Michnik. He used the idea to describe the nature of totalitarianism and to juxtapose the imagery of society to the state. The idea of ‘acting freely in a repressive environment’ of acting ‘as if one lived in a free society’, ‘creating zones of increasing freedom’ was presented in his work ‘The New Evolutionism’ (in Goldfarb, 1998: 90). This idea found continuity in the article by Iankevich (2006, in *Nasha Niva*), whereby ‘free society’ (*vol’nae hramadztyva*) or ‘independent society’ (*nezalezhnaye hramadztyva*) implied the idea of free society in an un-free country, an ‘alternative society’ that aimed at:

non-political democratic struggle, the search for ways to freedom and the enlargement of space for free society in an un-free country. This is the only way for Belarusian *civil society* to survive.

This intertextual reference to the ideas of ECE dissidents two decades on, became a source of certain values and beliefs, used to generate social, political and cultural capital, which under some favourable circumstances, would catalyse changes in the society. Focusing on the dissidents’ language of freedom, this perspective also internalised nationalist rhetoric. Anchored in the ideas of the National Revival Movement (*Adradzhenne*) of the early 1990s, the discourse emphasised the struggle for democracy and national self-determination, or *nezalezhnasts’* (independence in Belarusian). Use of the term ‘independent society’ (*nezalezhnaye hramadztyva*) articulated a desire to have one’s own traditions and language within an independent democratic nation. Within this discourse, the Belarusian language and culture faced discrimination by the state and as a consequence the survival and development of the Belarusian language and culture became of concern to ‘independent society’ (*nezalezhnaye hramadztyva*).69 Thus, whilst emphasising the national issue, this nationalising approach had a common vector with liberal discourse, whereby both appeared to represent a counterweight against the abuse of state power and a non-liberal and state-centred regime.

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However, the notion ‘independent society’ only appeared to remain within the boundaries of the national periodical’s content. The periodical continued to be elitist and oriented towards national and democratic intellectual elites. This was partly acknowledged in my interview (13.08.2014) with a journalist from Belorusy i Rynok and a media expert, Pawliuk Bykowski, who pointed out this tends to be the feature of the ‘niche’, ‘elitists’ periodicals, whilst the broadsheets tend to internalise the vocabulary known to and used by the readers. The use of the term ‘independent society’ (nezalezhne hramadztva) also represents a case when the personality of the Editor affected the content of the periodical. Andrei Dyn’ko, speaking a number of European languages and commenting on a broad spectrum of socio-political and cultural issues represents a public intellectual and opinion-maker; therefore the term established itself within the periodical. However, it failed to reach broader audiences. Yet, the discourse was not limited exclusively by the idea of ‘independent society’, as the term ‘civil society’ was widely used in the national periodical (including by the editor himself), contributing to the diversity of ‘civil society’ discourse, as in the article ‘Our uniqueness’ by a historian Siarhei Khareuški (10.11.2006, in Nasha Niva):

Carrying the fight for the preservation of our culture, even if we do not win today, we win historically. Those who today are fighting desperately for the old Hrodna and Mensk create the future model of civil society of responsible and caring people. This is ‘the salt of the earth’, which will be necessary for a free Belarus; a country characterised not by its unique vandalism but as a normal, European country.

This extract exemplifies social conflict manifested by the struggle over national culture and identity exacerbated through the metaphor of a battle (‘the fight for the preservation of our culture’; ‘we win historically’). The reference to ‘vandalism’ implied an ambivalent stance in the official policy towards national culture, including negligence and destruction of historical buildings and cites. This stance was juxtaposed with the idea of a democratic nation and civil society, which takes care of cultural heritage, national symbols and the historical memory that determine Belarusian identity. This perspective approaches ‘civil society’ as a facilitator and catalyst of nation-building and Belarusisation, whereby the survival and ‘revival’ of the nation became the primary task of civil society. In the extract, positive qualities were attributed to the latter (‘civil society of responsible and caring people’). An intertextual biblical reference ‘the salt of the earth’ further reinforced such a positive portrayal. The extract represents the broader response of a national-democratic elite and the section of society that prioritises the alternative perspective of history, culture and identity that considers the history of Belarusian society as part of the history of European states; this is
seen as an essential pre-condition in the building of a democratic nation and civil society.\footnote{‘Alternative’ historians describe the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the ‘Golden Age’ of Belarusian statehood (Gapova, 2002: 641). They view the Soviet period of Belarusian history as a period of colonial submission and contemporary Belarus as a post-colonial formation (Bekus, 2010:4). Conversely, the official ideology regards the Soviet period as a period of intensive nation-building carried out by the Soviet state and as a model of contemporary nation-formation.}

It contrasts with the official nation-building project that is based on state-national identity, Soviet values, the Russophile conception of Belarusian culture and State patriotism, where the state’s interests and power are dominant. The tension between the two approaches can be demonstrated in the following extract by Anatolii Rubinov (28.07.2006, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia), in which the national discourse was confronted and re-framed in strong statehood terms:

What is to ‘revive’ here? Poverty, backwardness and illiteracy, so vividly described by Ianka Kupala in his classical works? Or, even earlier, serfdom? […] It is not the ‘revival’ that we need. It is the creation of a new, progressive, well-organised, wealthy, strong and prosperous state that is needed. ‘For strong and prosperous Belarus!’ – is a good and self-explanatory motto.

The antagonistic response to nation-building is based around the notion of ‘revival’. Deploying a series of polarised terms to distinguish between the two periods of nation formation, the reporter (the academic Rubinov) assigns a negative evaluative accent to the alternative perspective, portraying the pre-Soviet period that witnessed the development of rising yet rather moderate nationalist sentiments as backward and regressive.\footnote{On the issue of the revival movement (Adradženne) of the early twentieth century refer to Zaprudnik (1998:181), Snyder (2003: 53–4). Also see a definition of ‘Belarusian nationalism’ (Zaprudnik, 1998:56-7) and the section ‘The Beginnings of Organised Belarusian Nationalism’ by Rudling (2014:52-6).} He invokes the alternative voices in a mocking manner by repeating and paraphrasing them - ‘revive’; ‘revival’ (words placed in quotation marks). The voice of Ianka Kupala\footnote{Ianka Kupala (1882-1942) was a prominent Belarusian poet and playwright. He was one of the key figures of the national revival movement of the early century and the editor of Nasha Niva from 1914 to 1915 (Zaprudnik, 1998:138).} is quoted indirectly, ‘pictorially’ and is actually misquoted and misinterpreted, thereby allowing the authorial voice to inflct and distort the meaning of the writer’s works. Furthermore, the authorial voice appears to exalt the dominant official position by quoting the motto of the presidential campaign of 2006 directly, in a linear style and by assigning positive evaluations (for example, a ‘good motto’). This example demonstrates how officialdom attempted to battle the alternative Belarusian national idea and create a unified, fixed discourse of nation-formation.
These two antagonistic responses to nation-building in Belarus embedded in the discourse of ‘civil society’ may lead some to the conclusion that ‘national consolidation remains a crucial unaccomplished task facing Belarusians’ (Ioffe, 2012: 25). The argument may also serve as one of the explanatory variables on the weakness of civil society. This dualism provides grounds for criticism that both sides, the regime and opposition, use nationalist imagery and myths as political capital while failing to create trust in wider society vital for generating social capital and developing civil society (Rudling, 2012: 26). It creates division in society and generates ‘split identity disorder’ (Ioffe, 2004: 112). It produces alienation between a small group of intellectuals who render an alternative version of Belarusian identity rooted in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the majority of ‘passport Belarusians’, whose vision of history is associated with Russo-centric approaches; this results in creating an ‘elite without a constituency’ (Ioffe, 2004: 112). Furthermore, the oppositional rhetoric is not without bias, sometimes being based on exclusionary and divisive categories, which contradict the very idea of ‘civil society’, as the next subsection demonstrates.

4.4.4. Challenges to ‘dialogisation’ in the alternative discourse

The contradictory articulation of the idea of ‘civil society’, as mediated in the alternative press, can be exemplified by the analysis of the use of the word ‘sviadomyia’ (translated as civic-minded, conscious, cultured, well-educated from Belarusian), which may also be representative of the divide in society. It demonstrates who is included and also excluded from the national-democratic definition of ‘civil society’. In the alternative discourse, ‘civil society’ is frequently referred to as ‘civic-minded citizens’ (sviadomyia hramadziane) - ‘[o]bserving how dynamically the stratum of civic-minded citizens is being formed, Milinkevich announced the creation of a wide movement for change’ (Klaskoŭski, 30.03.2006, in Nasha Niva. Other examples found include ‘civic-minded community’ (sviadomaja hramada) (Klaskoŭski, 24.03.2006, in Nasha Niva); ‘all free and civic-minded people of the country’ (svabodnyia i sviadomyia); ‘civic-minded and educated Belarusians’ (sviadomyia i adukavanyia) (Professor Sakavik, 05.02.2009, in Narodnaia Volia), ‘intelligent people – civic-minded Belarusians’ (reader Kazlova, 30.07.2010, in Narodnaia Volia). In this context, the term ‘sviadomyia’ described responsible and active citizens, sometimes carrying the connotation of a privileged, ‘educated’, stratum of society, revealing

73 This section includes references to a later period to provide a fuller analysis of the term ‘sviadomyia’, thus demonstrating a continuous discursive trend, rather than something specific to the period.
a rather elitist nature of ‘civil society’. In other contexts, the term acquired the connotation of ‘nationally-minded’ or ‘national-patriotic’ people stratum of Belarusian society, as the extract demonstrates (Iakavenka, 30.06.2009, in Narodnaia Volia):

Best, civic-minded (‘sviadomyia’) forces in society stand for the revival (adradzhenne), for the normal use and the life of the Belarusian language. […] Language is we who call ourselves Belarusians. If there is no language, there will be not we.

Similarly to the official media, the juxtaposition ‘Us’ (intelligent, politically and nationally ‘civic-minded’ Belarusian speakers) and ‘Them’ (apolitical, nationally-indifferent and non-critical thinkers) is employed, as in the following extract (reader Zhukau, 25.09. 2008, in Narodnaia Volia):

Those who believe in the contemporary official propaganda, […] in the theatrical shows at ‘Stalin’s Line’74 representing what could have been rather than what happened are not civic-minded (nesviadomyia). It bears analogy with the comparison between the pre-war Soviet propaganda film, ‘If war happens tomorrow…’ (‘Esli zavtra voina…’) and the real war.

The construction of the notion is based around the opposition of the categories ‘liberal’ v. ‘Soviet’; ‘national’ v. ‘Soviet’ and also ‘intelligent’ v. ‘common’, a category containing a social stratum element. As this extract and also extracts in Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 demonstrated, journalists, scholars and public intellectuals glorified the young protesters as a post-Communist generation, smart, computer-savvy and well-educated, who have internalised national and democratic values and portrayed them in heroic terms. Those who were not able to embrace liberal or national values were attributed negative qualities. Claiming this identity and constructing this social hierarchy creates a risk of alienation of some Belarusian intellectual groups from ‘the people’ portrayed as ‘Russified’, Sovietised, denationalised and lacking strong political and cultural aspirations. Such discursive division may partly explain why Belarusian intellectuals failed to mobilise wider public support during the protests of 2006 and also afterwards.

Officialdom did not miss the opportunity to exacerbate this alienation. In the official media discourse, the Belarusian word ‘sviadomyia’ can be found frequently applied to refer to the nationalist and democratic opposition in an ironic manner. The ironic effect is achieved

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74 Founded on the brink of the sixty years anniversary of the Second World War, the historical and cultural complex ‘Stalin’s line’ was opened on the 30th of June 2005. Situated in the Minsk region, where no ‘lines of defence’ existed in real terms, the complex serves as the memorial of the year 1941 and the museum of the first days of the war (see www.stalin-line.by/english.shtml (accessed 20 January 2014)).
through using a Belarusian word in a Russian text constituting a mocking repetition of someone’s speech. Quotation marks are always applied in such uses: ‘our very “intelligent” and “civic-minded” (nashih ochen’ “gramotnykh” i “sviadomykh”) (Lukashenko 2008, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia). It is a strategy that Talbot (2007: 65) called ‘ironic double-voicing’ drawing on Bakhtin’s dialogic principle. ‘The other person’s word is being used to communicate aspirations that are hostile to it’ (Bakhtin, 1981, cited in Talbot, 2007: 65). In such cases the external voice (real or imagined) is ‘passive’. It is being used against its will. In this case, it is the use of the Belarusian language by Russian-speaking officials, quoted by the media, which becomes a means to express the hostility of the Belarusian-minded ‘minority’ to the rest of society. Irony is used to detach the reader from the Belarusian national identity and helps to sustain this status quo of ‘otherness’ of the identity. It is not necessarily the language or culture per se that is ridiculed; rather the rhetoric is reminiscent of a ‘class struggle’ between the groups possessing different cultural and social capital.75 The alienation of the alternative ‘civil society’ from ‘the people’ (narod) is highlighted in Sovetskaia Belorussiia: ‘[t]heir real problem is that they are too distant from the people (narod) and from real people’s problems!’ (Lukashenko, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia 24.04.2009), whereas the activities of the official ‘civil society’, according to the President, ‘must be ‘grounded’ in the interests of the common man’ (Lukashenko, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia 25.05. 2006).

The question one may pose here is to what extent is nationalism compatible with civic order and ‘civil society’ discourse? National-democratic intellectuals argue that symbols and values of the ‘national revival project’ in the Belarusian context became the most effective means of mobilising the socially and politically active ‘minority’. In theory, it is supported by some scholars. According to Shils (1995: 221), ‘[n]ationality is a necessary ingredient, perhaps even precondition, for civil society. It is the collective self-consciousness that sustains civil society’. The author’s claim that civil society is ‘guided and oriented by nationhood’ can be supported by the fact that a number of the former USSR states have seen the emergence and development of civil society grown out of nationalist sentiments. On the other hand, the homogenising nature of nationalism represents a challenge to the development of pluralistic civil society. It holds the risk of becoming an exclusionary tool that leads to an authoritative closure, ‘monologisation’ of discourse, in Bakhtin’s terms. The well integrated minority may risk creating an alienation from the majority of Belarusians, whose views may differ.

75 On the issues of class, identity and gender in Belarus, refer to Gapova (2002).
Therefore, the ‘cultural’ and ‘political’ model, aimed at national mobilisation against the authoritarian government, may represent an intermediate position; the model that incorporates some elements typical for nationalism while being in accord with democratic values. The ‘cultural’ concept of civic nation and ‘civil society’ emphasises that the importance of a common culture, national symbols and historical memory is not necessarily in conflict with democracy on the assumption that it commits to values of plurality, cultural difference together with human and civil rights. In this sense the following definition of a nation as ‘a responsible community of citizens’ represents a model that may be compatible within a democratic system:

The uprising of the nation as a community of citizens, who share personal responsibility for preserving collective good is an important condition to make Lukashenka’s regime sway. […] It is the nation, not the regime, which will become the factor in saving sovereignty (Blogger Volkswagen, 30.06.2006, in Nasha Niva).

This perspective reflects Shils’ (1995) understanding of ‘civil society’ that encompasses the liberal tradition with its focus on societal freedoms, autonomy and responsibility, and the national tradition with its emphasis on ‘nation’ and solidarity. It embraces the assumption that the building of a democratic nation and civil society would guarantee individual rights as well as the possibility for the ethno-cultural community to develop their own cultures, identities and languages. National consciousness would transform subjects of political power into responsible citizens – a process that would undermine both consolidated authoritarianism and exclusive nationalism.

4.5. Conclusion

My analysis of the period associated with ‘colour revolutions’, witnessed across a number of FSU states, revealed that in Belarus the notion of ‘civil society’ became a signifier of conflicting points of view and contesting interpretations. The official media amplified the notion that emphasised the link with pro-governmental organisations, the Soviet legacy and an anti-Western stance. The articulation of the notion was further framed by official journalists, experts and ideologies, which was used in the context irrevocably associated with the notions of ‘unity’, ‘security’ and a strong centralised state. Ironically, ‘civil society’ was seen as a pillar of authoritarian state-building rather than an autonomous

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76 The idea of the ‘cultural model’ of nation formation as intermediary between the ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ nationalism was adopted from Lucka (2004).
societal realm. It can be argued therefore that the centralising tendency conceptualised through the notion of ‘monologism’ became one of the preventative strategies utilised by officialdom to resist and counteract the ‘colour revolutions’. These discursive processes towards a unification in the periodical *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* were manifest by a ‘linear’ style of reporting speech, reinforced by specific genres (such as addresses to the nation) and by ‘pictorial’ style’, whereby an authorial voice would intentionally change the original meaning for manipulative purposes. The centralisation was further ensured by references to a particular voice or definition (in particular, Lukashenko and the concept of the ‘pillars of the state’); the prevalence of a number of similar points of view in an utterance; by the absence, negation or silencing of alternative voices and by selective and limited choice of reported voices. Importantly, the selectively chosen Russian sources were a common practice observed within the content of the periodical during the period, which served as the external legitimising force contributing to the centralising tendencies. These discursive tendencies were directly associated with centralisation and unification of the public sphere and social and political life, attempting to restrict and replace dialogism in society.

In contrast, in the alternative media, ‘civil society’ was seen as a catalyst of democratisation and national consciousness. The first perspective highlighted the principles of autonomous self-organising civil society and democratic community and the second perspective considered history, culture and identity as an essential part of building a democratic nation. However, all these discussions found in the alternative press have a common vector – they were focused overwhelmingly on the change of the regime and democratic development of the country. These discourses sometimes were in conflict with each other, but most commonly they merged and overlapped, discovering new ways of framing civil resistance and democratic activism of 2006 with the notion of ‘civil society’ playing a key part. Importantly, the protests taking place at the Square gave pertinence to a new idea of civil society associated with citizens playing their role in social and political life. The debates surrounding the term occurred (and the logic of meaning creation followed the pattern) in a manner that can be partly described through the Bakhtinian notion of ‘public square’. The alternative press’ reports containing references to the term, on the whole, possessed a higher degree of vocal, ideational and generic variation. Commentary was frequently used among authors reinforcing ‘heteroglossia’. There was no uniform agreement upon the concept of ‘civil society’ and a certain level of polemics could be observed between the sources and even within a single source. It represented a range of
social identities and points of view, whereby the voices of activist and protesters from the Square could be heard. Therefore, this ‘novelisation’ and diversification of discourse could be indicative of emergent civil society in Belarus. This multiplicity of voices constituted a new form of emergent civil society represented by societal self-organisation at October Square in Minsk and in other Belarusian towns during the electoral events. The heteroglossia of ‘civil society’ was contrasted with the monologic power of the statist discourse. However, as the analysis of the use of the term ‘sviadomyia’ demonstrated, the construction of the alternative ideas of civil society were sometimes based on exclusionary practices that hindered the dialogic quality of the discourse and contradicted the normative principles of plurality and diversity, which in the end may have had detrimental effects on civic activity and political culture.

This renegotiation of the ideas of ‘civil society’ draws attention to the straightforward confrontation and an explicit power struggle over the production and reproduction of forms and meanings. Such an understanding provided the foundation for an understanding of the Belarusian public sphere as being essentially contested, in which the meanings of ‘civil society’ were seen as emergent through struggle. In such a struggle, the forms of a nascent civil society represented by societal self-organisation and heteroglossic tendencies in the ‘public square’ turned out to be ineffective in the battle against the official ‘monologism’ and ‘pre-emptive’ measures employed by the regime. In this battle the use of the media together with restrictive policies became crucial in the creation of a social and cultural environment that did not favour democratic change. After the quelling of the protests in March 2006, the rhetoric of freedom and social protests were replaced by the language of disillusionment and disappointment. The weakness of ‘civil society’ was frequently highlighted in the content of the press. As for the official media, after the threat of ‘colour revolution’ appeared to bypass Belarus, the rhetoric concerning the protests and civil society appeared to become more subtle, producing new power relations and mediation practices, as the next chapter demonstrates.

5.1. Introduction

According to Bakhtin (1981) and Voloshinov (1973), normative definitions of words are only an initial point in understanding how meaning is created:

Every sign, as we know, is a construct between socially organised persons in the process of their interaction. Therefore, the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organisation of the participants involved and also by the immediate condition of their interaction. When these forms change, so does the sign (Voloshinov, 1973: 21).

Emphasising the dialogic nature of understanding, their ideas suggested that meaning production is closely connected with the conditions and forms of social communication. Following this tradition, I approach ‘civil society’ as a sign that is subject to constant social interaction. Not only does this sign ‘exists as a part of reality, but it also reflects and refracts it’ - ‘the word is the most sensitive index of social change’ (Voloshinov, 1973: 19).

In view of the above, in this chapter I am interested in the extent to which both the official and alternative periodicals changed (if at all) their discursive practices of mediating the term ‘civil society’ in the new, more ‘liberalised’ context associated with a shift in domestic and foreign policy that was observed in the period between 2008-2010 (a more detailed outline of the context is provided in section 5.3.). I analyse whether in the changing social and political conditions, there were changes in the forms of the mediation of ‘civil society’, how this was reflected in the structure and style of the discourse, and how this affected the term’s meaning. Anticipating changes in the official media discourse that earlier were found to be monological in form, I attempt to examine whether the periodical presents any evidence pointing towards a more dialogic style. With regards to the mediation of ‘civil society’ in the alternative press and together with shifting discursive practices, I examine how divergent societal interests and points of view, discursively manifested by ‘heteroglossia’, impact on the term’s meaning and whether there are consequences of this discursive diversification with regards to contributing to the creation of civic agency and social solidarity. Finally, I explore the relationship and interactions between official and alternative discourses on ‘civil society’ in the changed contextual environment and the potential impact such relationships have on the term.
Prior to proceeding to the analysis, it is important to clarify what is understood by the notion ‘dialogism’ and what forms of dialogic communication are considered in this chapter. Bakhtin and Voloshinov approached dialogue in a broad sense. Following their ideas, I consider several aspects of dialogue. Firstly, I approach dialogue in a ‘triadic’ sense - ‘composed of an utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two. It is the relation that is most important of the three, for without it the other two would have no meaning’ (Holquist, 1990: 38). I present an analysis of a round table discussion between representatives of official and alternative spheres published in the periodical *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*. The case study is included in my chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, the inclusion of the direct alternative discourse and alternative agenda in the content of the official periodical to some extent represents a shift in its discursive practices and reflects larger changes in the social, political and cultural context. Secondly, the case study is useful in analysing the relationships and the nature of the interactions between the mainstream and alternative discourses on ‘civil society’ within the evolving context provided by the periodical. In such interactions, the role of a reporter in mediating the discussion appears to be crucial. The fact that reporters and journalists have a particular mediating role in broadcast discussions is widely acknowledged in media studies (Talbot, 2007; Richardson, 2007). In this role, a reporter may be just ‘another subjective voice’ (Graham, 2000: 23), or alternatively, a reporter may guide a reader authoritatively through the text. In the latter case, for example, he or she may work at maintaining distance from or closeness with the views expressed or at promoting or subjugating a message. It will be useful to assess the relationships between the reporter and other voices participating in the debate and how this style of communication affects the meaning of the term ‘civil society’.

Furthermore, in my dataset I investigate ‘internal’ dialogism, when the argument in utterances occurs on an ideational and discursive level rather than between persons. Bakhtin defined the ability within a discourse to contain many voices, one’s own and voices of others, as ‘double-voiced’ discourse. It is a ‘potential dialogue’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 325) within a single utterance in which speakers may reproduce the voices of others, or view-points through an act of appropriation. This means that the word is never wholly

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77 As Voloshinov (1973:113) stated, ‘[d]ialogue, in the narrow sense of the term, is but one form, albeit the most important to be sure, of verbal interaction. But dialogue can be understood in a broader sense, meaning by it not only direct and viva voce verbal communication between two persons, but also all verbal communication, whatever its form’.
one’s own, it ‘is always already permeated with traces of other words, other uses’ (Graham, 2000: 29) - the property of language that Julia Kristeva described by the term ‘intertextuality’. Merging with the appropriated points of view, or expressing various degrees of distancing, represents a kind of inner dialogue (Maybin, 2013: 384). With this in mind, I attempt to provide an evaluation of the identification and the disposition of voices in the periodicals, both official and alternative, over the period of 2008-2010 referring to the term ‘civil society’, together with the mode of re-accentuation and appropriation of national (official and alternative) and transnational (EU) points of view, attributable to ‘civil society’. Identifying voices, relations and structures and the way they change under contextual factors is essential, as such analysis may shed light on the social, political and cultural processes embedded in the style itself that forms and informs ‘civil society’ discourse.

These aspects are applied to the analysis of my data in an ad hoc manner, depending on the form and content of the discourse, rather than being the determinant of the overall structure of the chapter. These aspects are complementary to one other within one common dialogic framework and each has the potential to add depth and complexity to my analysis. My dataset over the period 2008-2010 is comprised of 26 articles (with 71 references to the term ‘civil society’ in Russian) by Sovetskaia Belorussiia; 18 articles (54 references in Russian) by Belorusy i Rynok; 28 issues (41 references in Belarusian) by Nasha Niva; 39 issues (55 references in Russian) and 33 issues (47 references in Belarusian) by Narodnaia Volia. To begin my analysis, I will detail the social and political context in which the mediation of ‘civil society’ took place.

5.3. Context 2008-2010: the multi-vectored approach and the Eastern Partnership programme

In the aftermath of the 2006 elections Lukashenko’s regime seemed to be highly insured against domestic challenges. After the 2006 elections, political opponents were imprisoned, independent media silenced and civil society organisations restructured. However, international pressure soon built and the West introduced the policies of isolation in its relations with the regime. In addition, Russia moved to raise gas prices in an attempt to force Minsk to surrender fifty percent of Beltransgaz (Wilson, 2011: 222-223). The growing economic and political dependence on Russia and the gas and oil dispute encouraged the regime to seek new approaches in foreign policy, the strategy now becoming multi-vectored. It was manifested by two essential dimensions (Korosteleva,
First, it was aimed at diversifying foreign energy supplies by developing tighter relations with energy-rich countries in the CIS and abroad; China, Iran and Venezuela were among the countries courted. Secondly, the Belarusian government adopted ‘a clear pro-EU discourse asking for more cooperation in several areas of mutual interest, including transport, borders and energy’ (Dura 2008, as cited in Korosteleva, 2009: 239). Meanwhile, the West was simultaneously deciding that the policies of isolation they deployed towards the country were not having the desired effect and Belarus was becoming more isolated and dependent on Russia. Therefore, Belarus was included in the EU’s Eastern Partnership programme (EaP), alongside Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The EU produced a new platform for dialogue with some conditions on democracy and human rights attached.

The EaP framework was based on a more pragmatic and apolitical approach in comparison to previous EU initiatives, which had been underpinned by a principle of ‘strict conditionality’ (Korosteleva, 2009: 234). The new initiative was aimed at modernisation, encompassing the following thematic directions: 1) ‘Democracy, good governance and stability’; 2) ‘Economic integration and convergence with EU policies’; 3) ‘Environment, climate change and energy security’; 4) ‘Contacts between people’ (European Commission, Concept paper, 2009: 4).

Seeking to foster cooperation with the Belarusian government, the EU launched ‘an intensified dialogue with Belarus on energy, environment, customs, transport and food safety’, as Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy stated (European Commission, 26.01.2009: para. 3).

At the same time, support for civil society, democracy and human rights remained strong on the EaP agenda. The EaP Civil Society Forum was set up as one of the key elements of the framework with the aim of providing a platform ‘to meet together and build a strong network of civil society organisations’ facilitating closer contacts between the EU and partner countries’ civil societies, according to European Commissioner Stefan Fule (2010: para. 9).

Members of national civil society platforms were expected to meet annually at the EaP Civil Society Forum (in Brussels in 2009, in Berlin in 2010 and in Poland in 2011). Eligibility for participation in the Forum

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was defined by the following standard, which also defined the EU understanding of ‘civil society’:

Membership in the EaP Civil Society Forum should be open to civil society organisations i.e. grass roots organisations, trade unions, employers’ organisations, professional associations, NGOs, think tanks, non-profit foundations, national and international CSOs/networks and other relevant Civil Society actors from EaP countries, but also EU Member States and international organisations/networks (European Commission, Concept paper, 2009: 4).

The establishment of the Civil Society Forum under the EaP initiative allowed the institutionalisation of the voice of civil society within the framework of the dialogue between Belarus and EU. To some extent, representatives of Belarusian civil society received an opportunity to become new actors in EU relations. At the same time civil society was attributed an active role in domestic affairs. As Benita Ferrero-Waldner stated in a speech (European Commission, 16.11.2009: para. 2), ‘[c]ivil society has a crucial role to play in holding governments to their reform programmes’. Thus, viewing both the Belarusian government and civil society as key actors in development, the EaP framework encouraged them to cooperate. In response, the Belarusian government released political prisoners, opening the door slightly to the West (Wilson, 2011: 227-9). The change was also observable on a discursive level. The following section further explores the content of the periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia identifying the main discursive trends and strategies in mediating ‘civil society’ within this socio-political context.

5.4. Content analysis of Sovetskaia Belorussiia: discursive trends

The developments outlined above were reflected in Belarusian politicians’ rhetoric and consequently in the periodical’s content. ‘Civil society’ (grazhdanskoe obshchestvo) was found to be regularly mentioned in Sovetskaia Belorussiia with gradually increasing frequency (number of sources) and intensity (number of instances) reaching its highest point in a decade in 2010 (see Graph 3).

81 Institutionally, two leading structures were granted the right to represent civil society at the Forum – Consortium EuroBelarus and the Assembly of NGOs. Finally, July 2010 saw the creation of the National Civil Society Platform. For further reference see http://eurobelarus.info/images/stories/Eastern_partnership/National_Forum2010/Resolution_rus_final.pdf (accessed 19 March 2014).
Graph 3: Dynamics of ‘civil society’ use in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* (2008-2010)

Analysing the content of the periodical through thematic coding the instances of ‘civil society’ use in this period (71 instances within 26 sources in total) allows me to identify a number of trends.

Firstly, the use of the term ‘civil society’ in this context resulted in a proliferation of debate regarding the relationship between the state and civil society, with new emphasis placed on this relationship. The notions of ‘dialogue’ (23 instances of the stem dialog* within 7 sources) and ‘partnership’ (58 instances of the stem partner* within 14 sources) were frequently deployed within the content of the periodical of this period. Dialogue in social problem solving was particularly emphasised when the global financial crisis hit Belarus. Within this context the agenda of dialogue was reinforced by the notion of ‘social partnership’. ‘Social partnership’ was proclaimed by the president in his Address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly as ‘the real way out of the [financial] crisis, the way to become stronger, more united and ready for new challenges’ (Lukashenko, 24.04.2009, in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*). The discourse embraces the ideas of social interaction within the arena provided by the government, with regards to civic associations, governmental institutions and the ‘people’ (*narod*), which is frequently posited as a key addressee within the president’s speeches published in the periodical. Similar to earlier rhetoric, the concept of ‘social partnership’ appears to serve as a tool of consolidation across the nation’s cultural, political and social divide, against real or imagined threats,
rather than promoting ‘a corporatist sharing of power’ (Kay, 2006: 122), as defined within a normative framework. Therefore, continuity was observed in officialdom portraying the cooperation between civil society and the state as the constituent part of a single governing regime rather than an entity separate from the state. Yet within the same address published in the periodical, President Lukashenko (Lukashenko, 24.04.2009, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia) proclaimed:

We need to encourage the partnership between the state and public institutions. The more diverse the spectrum of these institutions, the more opportunities there are for the manifestation of social activity of citizens.

The extract constitutes a shift towards a more ‘normative’ understanding of ‘civil society’, which recognised the diversity of civic institutions and the need for citizens’ participation. The use of a more empowering reference, ‘citizens’ as opposed to ‘people’ (narod), frequently appropriated before, articulated new forms of relations between the state and civil society. The clearly confrontational manner observed in the earlier speeches of the president, now appear to have been replaced by a more dialogic style. The use of ‘we’ and ‘between’ make claim of common interests between the state and civil society. The use of ‘more’ presupposes two referential positions – the official and alternative. The act of appropriation of alternative viewpoints (‘the spectrum is not diverse enough’ and ‘the diversity is important for promoting civic activity’) indicates that the speaker recognises and accepts them.

Secondly, the use of ‘civil society’ was observed in reports that internalised the ideas of democracy, human rights and civic participation. As the Minister of International Affairs, Sergei Martynov, announced (31.07.2009, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia):

Belarus will be working on reforms towards democracy, the development of civil society, freedoms for NGOs, supremacy of law and compliance of human rights, but according to those aspects that we consider important for ourselves.

The message is clearly addressed firstly, to international actors and secondly, to domestic audiences. The demonstration of the willingness of the state to adopt some changes towards democratisation can be interpreted as an attempt to appear more legitimate both in the eyes of the EU policymakers and Belarusian citizens. The appropriation and circulation of forms and meanings originated from liberal democracies in the West, with the focus on the notion of ‘civil society’, serves as a signal for partnership with the international
community. The use of ‘civil society’ in universal terms of democracy and human rights, however, appear to be contested by the national framework revealing tensions between normative and local (‘empirical’) perspectives. The former defines ‘civil society’ as a constituent part of a democratic society and the latter describes the constitution in ‘actually existing societies’ (Lane, 2006: 8). The utterance, directly quoted in the periodical, implicitly expresses only partial agreement with what may be called a mainstream European voice on democratisation and civil society that approaches civil society as a constituent of an autonomous sphere, ‘in which institutions interact with, but are independent from, the state’ (Lane, 2006: 8). The use of the pronoun ‘we’ in an ‘exclusive’ sense, exacerbated by ‘ourselves’, clearly indicates the intention of the Belarusian authorities to define ‘civil society’ and its role in the country’s development in their own terms and maintain the unification of the public space. By producing a ‘hybridised’ version of the term and therefore, reducing the room for the normative point of view, the authorities attempted to resist the decentralising centrifugal forces associated with the EaP voices.

Thirdly, certain relaxations of the restrictions on NGO activities and the necessity to change policy and legislation were announced, appropriating the EU rhetoric of ‘good governance’. In his Pre-electoral Programme to the Presidency of Belarus, published in Sovetskaia Belorussiia on 27 November 2010, Aleksandr Lukashenko stated under the title ‘our main objectives’:

TO IMPROVE GOVERNANCE: Transparency of the state authorities to the people and civic initiatives will be guaranteed. There will be an increase in the role of public associations and local self-governance in the functioning and governance of the state.

This official initiative was further circulated and modified in the content of the periodical. In her interview given to Sovetskaia Belorussiia (Rud, 16.12.2010), Elena Kirichenko, the head of the NGO department at the Ministry of Justice, said that ‘from January 2009 the Ministry of Justice has been working towards significant improvements in the registration of public associations’. As Elena Kirichenko (Rud, 16.12.2010, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia) said in her interview, ‘citizens can voluntarily form public associations, […] independent of the state’s authority’. At the same time, she pointed out that the main role of these civic initiatives is seen as:
cooperation with the state to take care of war veterans, the youth, the solving of ecological problems, the preservation of culture and historical monuments, child and family support. To summarise, they [should] provide support to the state in the implementation of social, economic and legislative reforms.

On the one hand, a shift in the definition of ‘civil society’ occurred, internalising the European normative framework of participatory democracy and ‘good governance’. ‘Civil society’ was understood as a ‘community of free citizens’, ‘a self-governing sphere of free citizens’, ‘a network of associations of free citizens’ functioning independently of the state (Rud, 16.12.2010, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia). Clearly, at least on the rhetorical level, ‘civil society’ was perceived as a means, if not of minimising the dominance of the state in the public sphere, then of increasing the space for civic activity in solving societal needs by the substitution of some of the state’s functions by civil society. On the other hand, Kirichenko’s utterance cited above embodies earlier official definitions of ‘civil society’ as ‘pillars of the state’ (‘veterans, youth organisations…’) that were observed in the context of extensive state-building processes present during the third term of the presidency (2001-2006). Such discursive ‘hybridisation’ (or ‘double-voiced’ discourse) deployed by the officials, signalled once again a tension between the ‘empirical’ and ‘universal’ models of ‘civil society’.

Fourthly, a shift in the representation of oppositional civil society was also noticeable. A partial recognition of alternative civil society could be observed in the periodical as opposed to its former exclusion or direct marginalisation. They appeared no longer to be crudely represented as ‘enemies’, but conversely this attempt at dialogue and inclusion was still sporadic and one-dimensional. The oppositional ‘civil society’ was mentioned and addressed by the President (Lukashenko, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia 24.04.2009) in a critical tone in the context of the proclaimed improvement in NGOs registration:

The matter is not that they are ‘suppressed’ or deprived of registration. These are just their excuses with which they blame the state for their own misfortunes. Comply with the law, as everyone else does, and no one will be able to refuse you registration or to interfere with your work. Their real problem is that they are too distant from the people (narod) and from real people’s problems!

The heteroglossic nature of the utterance is manifested by negation, indicating that two points of view are opposed. The voice of the oppositional civil society implies that their rights are violated by the state, signified by the word ‘suppressed’ enclosed in quotation marks. The particularisation of the ‘alien’ point of view highlights the coloration of the
word and creates a mocking effect that, together with its negation, permits the
delegitimisation of the alternative point of view and the perpetuation of the official
perspective. Simultaneously, the objectification of the oppositional voices, which can be
further observed by the direct address of the opponent through the pronouns ‘you’ and
‘your’, indicates the more overt recognition of alternative voices and positions in
comparison to earlier periods. However, a great sense of distance towards alternative views
still prevailed. This distance is conveyed through the use of the proposition ‘they’ as
juxtaposed to ‘people’. It is further exacerbated by deploying the discourse of law and
order that implicitly attributes the qualities of ‘non-civil society’ to the opposition. Thus,
the boundaries of who is included in and excluded from the definition of ‘civil society’ are
still discursively contested, constituting a dialogic struggle.

In summary, the periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia demonstrated a dual logic (‘double-
voiced’ discourse in Bakhtin’s terms) in mediating ‘civil society’. By embracing liberal-
democratic voices rooted in the ideas of active citizenship and good governance, it
constituted change. The change was represented by a more dialogic style of
communication and by the inclusion of a larger diversity of voices, although implicitly.
However, this tendency was found to be frequently confronted by centripetal forces of
authoritative discourse representing the continuity of ‘monologic’ communication
practices. The continuity was manifested by the invoking of the Sovietised rhetoric of
‘civil society’, the presence of antagonistic intonations and accents and by attempts to
subordinate and subjugate ‘democratic’ voices. The one-directional, ‘monologic’ style of
communication can be further exemplified by the use of the verbs expressing commands
and obligations that ‘stand for the enactment of institutional power’ (see Von Seth, 2011:
59). The use of such verbs found in the previous extracts (‘we need …’, ‘they should …’
and ‘comply…!’) implied an unequal power relationship between speaker and addressee
and attributed a passive role to the reader. Furthermore, the circulation of ‘civil society’
discourse occurred ‘hierarchically’, from high ranked official policy makers through
executive officials to journalists. The periodical appeared to continue promoting official
points of view by publishing official texts as either a direct discourse or by reporting them
quasi-directly without any criticism attached and indicating consensus with official policy
makers. The journalists appeared to exercise little freedom in expressing their points of
view, ‘giving us meanings without voices’ (Hirschkop, 1999: 87) and imposing ‘objective
truths’ upon the reader. The role of the reporter in the official press is considered in detail
in the next section. To conclude, such a duality of style resulted in a rather ‘hybridised’ or ‘double-voiced’ meaning of the term ‘civil society’.

5.4.1. The Kuropaty Case: staging a dialogue in Sovetskaia Belorussiia

As emphasised above, a partial shift in mediating the term ‘civil society’ was observed in the periodical Sovetskaia Belorussiia, which can be further demonstrated by the case presented in this section. A round table discussion was launched by Sovetskaia Belorussiia, documented in the article by Kirilenko (29.10.2009, in Sovetskaia Belorussiia). It aimed to initiate dialogue - in a sense of exchange of utterances between two or more speakers - between the representatives of ethno-nationalist and democratic civil society and officials with the intention of discussing the issue of Kuropaty.83 I chose this case study because it is representative of a larger trend in socio-political and cultural development observed within the period under investigation. Whilst previously officialdom rejected the ethno-nationalist model of state with the Belarusian language, culture and nationalist historical narrative proposed by the president’s predecessors in the early 1990s, in the context of ‘liberalisation’, some mild moves towards alternative ‘Belarusianisation’ processes were observed. Wilson (2011: 226) provides an example, when the culture minister, Paval Latushka, changed the broadcasting of some news programmes into the Belarusian language and proposed that one of the state TV channels used Belarusian only. Also, a propaganda campaign titled ‘Belarus is We’ emphasised selective points of ancient history like the Battle of Grunwald.84 Therefore, the Kuropaty case illustrates firstly, a shift in the national policy with the intention of the regime, to include some part of the alternative perspective on history, culture and civil society into its agenda. Secondly, the case represents a part of one process that signified the opening of the public space for mutual dialogue in a politically and culturally divided society. Representatives from a range of sectors in society, both official and alternative, were present at the meeting, discussing the role of the site in national memory together with the role of civil society and the state in preserving the site. The discussion was conducted and published in both the Russian and

83 Kuropaty is a forest site near Minsk (Belarus) that was turned into an execution ground between 1937 and 1941 where more than 100,000 (possibly up to 250,000) civilians were executed by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police (Zaprudnik, 1998: 139). It was discovered by a team of archaeologists headed by the leader of the Belarusian National Front, Zianon Pazniak, in 1988. It became a symbol of the Stalinist repression in Belarus against the Belarusian intelligentsia and has been a point of conflict between opposing forces within the country.

84 The Battle occurred on 15 July 1410, when the alliance of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the multi-ethnic East European state that included the territories of contemporary Belarus from the early 13th to the end of 18th century) defeated the Teutonic knights.
Belarusian languages, a practice referred to as ‘polyglossia’ (*mnogoiazychie*) by Bakhtin. This, together with the fact that *Kuropaty* entered the official discourse and that multiple points of view were presented appeared to be indicative of certain changes in the official policy towards the ‘dialogisation’ of public space. Below, I provide an analysis of the dialogue and look closer at how the communication occurred and how the term ‘civil society’ was articulated by the participants of the round table. In particular, I look into the mediating role of the reporter in the discussion.

One approach to analysing this issue is to look at how speech is reported. John Lucy’s approach (Lucy, 1993) focuses on the reference-and-predicational (or propositional) aspect of an utterance. According to the author, there are two common, ‘prototypical’ formal approaches to the reporting of speech, which may be deployed by a reporter in achieving certain communication goals. First, ‘the reporter can characterize (predicate about) the pragmatic presuppositions and entailments of the reported utterance in referential terms – essentially acceding to the dominant functional mode of the metalanguage and treating both referential and nonreferential material in referential terms’ (Lucy, 1993: 94). Second, ‘the reporter can minimise such predication by attempting to re-present or replicate the reported utterance in close to its “original” form with minimal predication so that it can directly signal its own pragmatic significance’ (Lucy, 1993: 94). Lucy’s classification derives from Bakhtin’s study of reported speech where the author distinguishes between direct and indirect modes of reporting an utterance. Lucy’s approach permits us to extend the analysis of reports by connecting modes of reporting with the propositional content of an utterance. I am going to demonstrate that by maximising or minimising predication of an utterance via differing modes of reporting speech, a reporter is able to transform its propositional content.

Following Lucy’s methodology and some other useful references (Richardson 2007; Talbot 2007), I look into three aspects. Firstly, I take into account explicit or implicit forms that provide a means for framing one communication within another, such as reporting verbs and evaluative framing structures (e.g. ‘I agree with …’, ‘I like the idea that …’). These structures may play an important role in signalling the reporter’s attitude (Voloshinov, 1973). Secondly, I pay close attention to the reproduced form and content of a reported utterance differentiating between direct and indirect quotations. As a general rule, direct quotations tend to be less ‘predication’ and ‘presentational’ (‘linear style’) and indirect quotations
quotations are associated with being more characterising (‘pictorial style’) (Voloshinov, 1973: 120). As Richardson (2007: 106) pointed out, ‘the further away from direct quotation that reported speech moves, the greater the interpretative influence of the reporter is and hence the greater the potential for distortion or misrepresentation’. However, direct quotation may also be used for pragmatic purposes in media discourse as it effectively conveys its expressive qualities. Finally, I consider the relationship between the quote and a reporter’s point of view that can be characterised in terms of refusal/acceptance or alignment/misalignment with the viewpoints of ‘others’. An awareness of a reporter shaping this relationship and engagement between official and alternative voices is crucial given ‘the ability of powerful individuals and groups to shape reporting agendas’ (Richardson, 2007: 106). The analysis also demonstrates the relationships and forms of engagement between official and alternative points of view with regards to the term ‘civil society’. Following the detailed methodology, a number of framing strategies deployed by the reporter have been identified. Below, I provide selected utterances from the discussion in sequential order followed by my comments and analysis.

*Alignment with an alternative voice with maximum predication (via indirect quotation)*

The dialogic structure of the reporter’s utterance (2) can be identified and detailed when compared to the original reported utterance (1):

1) **Catholic priest Ksiondz Ihar** (in Belarusian): I think there must be a memorial at that place […] There is human suffering there, this is the suffering of the whole of our motherland. […] The memorial should be set up not at the cost of the state, but by contribution from the entire nation (*narod*).

2) **Editor in Chief P. Iakubovich** (in Russian): I like the idea expressed by Ksiondz Igor that the memorial must not become a state driven initiative. The development (in all senses) of Kuropaty must be, first of all, a civic initiative. I believe that our ‘round table’ today is, indeed, the first step of this initiative.

The reporter Pavel Iakubovich indicates agreement with one of the opponents, providing a summary of what was said not via indirect quotation. The verbal structure chosen to characterise reported speech (‘I like the idea expressed…’) frames the reported utterance in such a way that allows the establishment of an atmosphere of consent between the official and alternative voices. However, the reporter reorients the utterance with his own words maximising its predicational aspect; this results in the transformation of the original
utterance. Via his further comment, ‘first step in civic initiative to take care of the memorial site’, the reporter implicitly claimed that there had been no ‘civic initiative’ before, thus failing to acknowledge the contribution of democratic civil society. This presupposition\(^{86}\) did not pass unnoticed by Maia Kliashtornaia, Research Director of the memorial ‘Kuropaty’, who challenged this in her response by re-quoting the editor with direct negation. The example is analysed in next subsection.

\textit{Misalignment with authoritative voice with minimal predication (via direct quotation)}

3) **Research Director Maia Kliashtornaia** (in Belarusian): This step is not the first. Civic initiative in this case has not dwindled from the very moment the people were awakened by Kurapaty. […] Here, ‘taloki’ (people’s gatherings in Belarusian), look after graves and, set up and repair grave signs. […] In addition to this civic initiative, the participation of the state is required to perpetuate the memory of the victims. The actions that left us the ‘Kurapaty’ graves occurred at state level. The state must reveal the historic truth of these specific events, express apology and set up a memorial to that tragic time and those fallen in the Kurapaty forest. Even today people with good intentions risk harassment through mass arrests or dismissal from work. […] A young man, who detained two vandals damaging crosses, was subject to a tirade of insults that nearly resulted in him requiring admittance to a psychiatric hospital.

Maia Kliashtornaia opposes Pavel Iakubovich’s view (utterance 2) by re-quoting the reporter’s words in Belarusian and transforming the quotation into a negative utterance, minimising his point of view. She further provides a counter-argument to his presupposition, referring to civic gatherings at the site as ‘talaka’ (in Belarusian). She also assigns an evaluative point to civic activists calling them ‘people with good initiative’. Maia Kliashtornaia contradicts the reporter’s viewpoint, which attempts to de-politicise the issue, by insisting that the state’s involvement is crucial and it should recognise the historical events on an official level and acknowledge the Soviet state’s responsibility for the atrocities. She also implies (using the passive voice, omitting the agent) that the current regime should stop persecuting the activists. This example shows that the dialogue is still staged in fairly oppositional terms, although slightly obscured by implicit forms.

\textit{Misalignment with alternative voice with maximum predication (via indirect quotation)}

4) **P. Iakubovich** (In Russian): As you wish, Maia Todorovna, but I have not witnessed any case where a man detaining a criminal would result in his dismissal from work.

\(^{86}\)Presupposition is an ‘implicit claim embedded within explicit meaning’ of an utterance (Richardson, 2007:63).
This seems to be just another urban myth. But I will agree in fact that today some parts of the population continue to consider Kuropaty as something … dubious.

Iakubovich paraphrased Kliashtornaia by deploying an authoritative legislative discourse. The re-accentuation of the original quote is indicative of the fact that the reporter is aware of ‘another’ viewpoint, of alternative civil society. However, he implicitly de-voices it, framing it as non-existent through the evaluative reporting construction ‘I have not witnessed any case...’. Framing the utterance this way allows the reporter to imply that some of the propositions his opponent makes are not valid (‘an urban myth’). However, he attempts to disguise the controversy by the co-operative construction ‘but I will agree …’. But what Iakubovich actually agrees with has little to do with the original Kliashtornaia’s quote. ‘Kuropaty as a dubious place’ is more characteristic of the official point of view, implicitly assigned to the opponent. Framing the report in this way allows the reporter to obscure and de-legitimise the oppositional voices.

Pseudo-alignment with alternative voice with maximum predication (via strategic quotation) 87

5) **P. Iakubovich** (in Russian): In any case we need to say thank you to those young volunteers who, regardless of time, on a daily basis, ‘tolokoi’88 (gathered together), maintain the area, repair the commemorative crosses, and even trace and hand over to the police ignorant and barbaric minors. But together with the latter, those mature people who tirelessly try to transform Kuropaty into the filial of Bangalor89 cannot expect a kind word from me. […] If only they left Kuropaty in peace!

The attempt to ‘pseudo-align’ with the opponent was briefly covered in the previous subsection; a strategy apparently employed frequently by the mediator. Iakubovich re-quotes Kliashtarnaya ‘strategically’ - ‘tolokoi’ (in Russian) – ‘particularising’ her point of view by enclosing the word in quotation marks and indicating the acceptance of the view. However, the reporter goes on to assign his own understanding of the quoted word, distinguishing between ‘young volunteers looking after the site’ and ‘those mature people’ from Bangalor (implying the institutional opposition who organised a number of protests at the Bangalor square in Minsk), thus defining who is included in and who is excluded from the category ‘civil society’. Implicit dialogism is manifest by addressing the same referent by different descriptive means – ‘talaka’ v. ‘those mature people’. Quotations with an

87 Strategic quotations – ‘the reported speech, writing or thoughts of others […] often placed in quotation marks in order to indicate their contentious nature’ (Richardson, 2007:104).
88 Belarusian word spelled in Russian.
89 A square in Minsk where a number of protests were organised by opposition.
attached different propositional content appear to be a frequent discursive device in reporting alternative voices:

6) **P. Iakubovich** (in Russian): Yes, support from authorities is needed. Let’s say, to repair drainage in Kuropaty […], improve access roads, keep away greedy ‘property developers’ from the area assigned by law and etc. […]. I think you will agree with the fact that it is important to remove the artificial politicisation of Kuropaty, which has not led to anything good anywhere.

Iakubovich expresses agreement with Kliashtornaia, quoting her indirectly. Then he minimises her proposition by maximum predication and replaces the propositional content with a new, apolitical one.

*Extolling reporter’s view through framing official voices as alternative*

7) **Dr N. Smekhovich** (in Russian): I insist on my own thesis: it is time for us to get out of the habit of thinking that it is only the state that plays the main and all-embracing role in society. We cannot help but fail to suggest the simple idea to ourselves that it is man, not the state that is important. And it is *civil society* which all initiatives should come from.

By the use of the construction ‘I insist on my own thesis: …’, Dr Nikolai Smekhovich, Head of the History Department at the Academy of Science, reports his own voice in attempt to present it as an independent point of view. In fact, the utterance contains an implicit indirect quotation of the presenter’s speech; this creating a problem for the validity and verifiability of the claim that follows. The indirect internalisation of the presenter’s words signals an alignment with his viewpoint. What is interesting, however, is that the historian (together with the reporter) appropriated the alternative discourse of ‘civil society’ independent of the state and attempted to present it as an ‘official’ word. Framing the reported speech this way serves to promote the official view on the relationship between the state and civil society and works as a mobilising and voice unifying factor, contributing to the monopolisation of discourse.

Finally, Pavel Iakubovich summarises the discussion:

8) **P. Iakubovich** (in Russian): As far as Kuropaty is concerned, we will be asking for support from local authorities to put the area in order. Of course no *civil society* alone will be able to solve these problems. Only executive committees will be
able of this. Let BRSM and ‘Belaia Rus’[^90] get involved as well as the unregistered ‘Young Front’[^91] – enough rage, we are all Belarusians!

In his last utterance the reporter attempts to unite the official and alternative civil societies and encourage closer cooperation with state authorities, strategically employing the inclusive pronoun ‘we’. Whilst attempting to maintain a dialogic style, the reporter clearly internalises the official position, implying that civil society by itself is unlikely to achieve much. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that throughout the discussion, the reporter demonstrated a great ability to maintain the required perception of dialogue, whilst simultaneously attempting to promote and legitimate the authoritative viewpoint.

Through the analysis detailed above I have demonstrated that this dialogic perspective provides a useful tool set to explore the complexity of ‘civil society’ discourse as mediated in the press. As the analysis above demonstrated, the mainstream periodical attempted to engage the alternative discourse in dialogue. However, this dialogue between the official and alternative representatives turned out to be sporadic and eclectic. From one perspective, the mere fact that it occurred was a significant step forward towards the emergence of heteroglossia – the inclusion of different views on the issue in the official periodical. As demonstrated, attempts have been made by the reporter to maintain a dialogic style, at least, in form. The use of neutral reporting verbs (e.g. ‘expressed’) together with positive evaluative reporting structures (e.g. ‘I liked the idea…’, ‘I agree with…’) indicated the openness to the dialogue with the opposition. In this view, this discursive shift illustrates its interdependence with the social environment, the change in domestic policy and the nation-building strategy of this period. At the same time, a closer look at the discussion revealed a number of strategies aimed at subjugating alternative viewpoints under the authoritative voice of the reporter. The deployment of non-direct quotations allowed the reporter to maximise predication of the utterances generating change on a propositional level and this way attempted to monopolise the discourse. In view of this, it is possible to conclude that the official periodical created the appearance of inclusiveness as the reporter granted direct access to alternative voices whilst simultaneously restricting and controlling them. However, the degree to which the authorial voice of the reporter could manipulate the entire scene was challenged by alternative voices (e.g. Kliashtornaia) through direct misalignment and critical engagement with the former. Furthermore, scepticism about such dialogue can be found among the

[^90]: Pro-governmental youth organisations.
[^91]: Pro-democratic youth organisation.
non-moderated comments attached to the article. As ‘Dervish’ (Kirilenko, 29.10.2009, in Sovetskaia Belorusiia) put it in his comment:

Kuropaty is a memorial to the victims of Russian bolshevism. They [the government] tried to silence Kuropaty and destroy it. Now they try to de-politicise it, [...] to tame and to appropriate it.

However, the mere fact that space was provided within the official periodical where different voices could co-exist and compete with each other signified an important shift in the cultural, social and political context in Belarus. The next sections offer analysis on the disposition of voices and discursive styles in the alternative press with regards to ‘civil society’ and provide a comparison of those with Sovetskaia Belorusiia.

5.5. The appropriation of EU voices in the alternative press: ‘civil society’ as the ‘third sector’

As with Sovetskaia Belorusiia, the alternative press responded to the rhetoric of both EU policymakers and the pro-European Belarusian community, demonstrated by an overall increase in instances of the use of ‘civil society’ in the periodicals over the period (see Graph 4). Belorusy i Rynok contains a clear gradual rise of ‘civil society’ (‘grazhdanskoe obshchestvo’ in Russian); Narodnaia Volia’s index represents the total use of the term both in Russian (‘grazhdanskoe obshchestvo’) and Belarusian (‘hramadzianskaia supol’nasts’’) with the highest point in 2009. Nasha Niva, published in Belarusian, mirrors a similar trend in 2008 and 2009. However, the reason for the dramatic decrease in the intensity in 2010 remains unclear.
Changes associated with the shift in foreign and to some extent domestic policy could not pass unnoticed by the media. In the alternative press, references to the metaphor ‘thaw’ can be found describing the current socio-political situation. The term, originally used during the Soviet era (under Khrushchev’s rule) is associated with liberalisation observed in Soviet society after Stalin’s death. This parallel signified change in Belarusian society after a long period of stagnation and expressed hope for societal transformation. Also, more recent historical references came into play as parallels were drawn with the early 1990s, a period of intensive nation-building and democratisation. The title of the article ‘The Assembly took “a second breath”’ by Barbarich (16.03.2009, Belorusy i Rynok) provided an implicit reference to the period (associated with ‘the first breath’). Now civil society was attributed a key role in the process of democratisation (three extracts from the article are presented below):

S. Matskevich\textsuperscript{92} highlighted an important, critical characteristic of the current situation in Belarus. It is possible that the current confrontation with the authorities will become history and Belarus will turn towards democratic values. ‘Without the opinion of such an active component of society as the third sector, it would be incorrect to implement any further changes in society.

The language of civil society, previously often focused around radical interpretations of the term and explicit contrast to state institutions, now gained a variety of different meanings and tones:

\textsuperscript{92} The Speaker of Civil Society Forum of EaP
The Assembly passed a number of documents. In its Resolution it is pointed out that the third sector ‘with hope and moderate optimism welcomes the steps of the Belarusian authorities towards the rapprochement between civil society and the state, as well as Belarus’s aspiration to move closer to European standards’.

As the extract demonstrates, the relationship between the state and civil society grew more amicable, with the two actors portrayed on the equal footing. Anchored in the EU agenda, the liberal-democratic perspective encouraged cooperation with the state and implied a less politicised, NGO-centric version of ‘civil society’. The de-politicisation of the notion is observed in the increasing usage of the term ‘third sector’, echoing the EU definition of ‘civil society’ (see section 5.3.) and thus further distancing it from the political notion of ‘opposition’. The EU definition stressed the institutionalised model of civil society promoting ‘good governance’ and welfare service provision, seeing the state and civil society as equal partners in development. However an air of scepticism remained and the limitations of this model were partly acknowledged in the media. As the following extract demonstrates:

The Assembly participants do not conceal the fact that the capacity of civil society to impact the situation in the country is not great. Matskevich stated, ‘such a state of the public sector does not meet European standards. There, civil society supports the state, takes part of the state’s responsibilities upon itself. Here, the state treats any independent activity with suspicion and even with animosity. Everything is problematic – the registration of associations, the acquisition of a legal address, the receipt of help and many others’.

‘Spatial indexicals’ (‘here’ and ‘there’) underscore the incompatibility of the EU model in the context of Belarus. The articulation of ‘civil society’ as an ‘agent’ in the EU case, and as a ‘patient’ in the Belarusian context, further exacerbates the difference. In addition, the extract provides an alternative position on NGOs’ registration in the country that contrast with the official point of view provided in Sovetskaia Belorussiia, as discussed in Section 5.3. This indicates that although the official and alternative press demonstrated the

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93 The Assembly of NGOs is one of the leading structures (together with the consortium ‘EuroBelarus’) who became representatives at EaP Civil Society Forum.

94 As an example, my Belorusy i Rynok dataset for the period 2006-2007, which comprised eighteen articles referencing ‘civil society’, presented only one instance of the term ‘third sector’. During 2008-2010, within the dataset of eighteen articles (coincidental number), there were nine instances of the term ‘third sector’.

95 ‘Spatial indexicals’ are linguistic resources, related to political and geopolitical space, ‘used to perform deixis’ – ‘that is, to prompt the interpreter to relate the uttered indexical expression to various situational features’ (Chilton, 2004: 56).

96 In discourse studies, political agency is reflected in the notion of ‘subject position’ (also ‘agent’) – ‘occupying a subject position is a matter of doing (or not doing) certain things’ (Fairclough, 2001: 32). As opposed to ‘agent’, the prototypical category of ‘patient’, causally affected by another participant or event (Chilton, 2004: 54). These categories may be used to demonstrate how discourse determines and reproduces social structure.
ability to narrow the difference in mediating ‘civil society’, deploying the rhetoric of
dialogue and appropriating liberal and democratic discourse, some issues continued to be
reported asymmetrically.

The appropriation of EU rhetoric by Belarusian social and political actors together with the
media, contributed to some extent to the institutionalisation and consolidation processes of
Belarusian civil society. However, the use of ‘civil society’ as a western liberal category –
in terms of the network of NGOs – may have been dismissive of other forms of activism
and social solidarity. As Carothers, (1999/2000: 19) argued, NGOs play crucial roles in
both developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to associate civil
society with NGOs exclusively. According to the author, ‘civil society’ is a broader
concept, ‘representative of the entire nation, when civil society is legitimised by other
structures’ (Carothers, 1999/2000: 19). Without such support by a wider spectrum of
institutions, without the appeal to a more diverse set of values and symbols, civil society is
more likely to become a subculture of a political minority, dependent on and guided by the
agenda of their donors and hindering the opportunity of change that may come from below,
in contrast, for example, to what ‘Solidarity’ did in its time. Indeed, within the content of
the periodicals, critical voices towards the liberal discourse of ‘civil society’ were
identified expressing concerns about the dismissal of the ‘cultural component’ of civil
society, the topic of investigation of the next section.

5.6. The reporting of voices from the ‘culturally-minded’ community: historical
and cultural roots of the term

A deep concern within the ‘culturally-minded’ community was that their voices were not
included within the EaP agenda. In the section ‘May I speak’ (Prashu slova!) in Narodnaia
Volia, a Belarusian writer Vasil Iakavenka states in his article ‘When a form does not
match content properly’ (Iakavenka, 2010, in Narodnaia Volia):

Europe attempts to provide its inhabitants with a peaceful, free and worthy life. […] I
am reading the resolution of the National Civil Society Forum’s conference that took
place on the 5th and 6th of July, 2010 in Minsk. […] My only regret is that the Forum
failed to include pro-democratic arts associations such as artists, writers and theatre
representatives. With this in mind, the criterion for the ‘consolidation’ of ‘civil society’
or the National Forum remains unclear to me. […] This type of forum should present a
wide range of organisations representing national interests. The national culture and
language add colour to such forums that define the character and identity of the nation.
The dialogism in the extract is represented by a number of points of view that the author accommodates differently in the extract. On the one hand, he evaluates the European efforts in positive terms. On the other, the author expresses scepticism towards what the representatives of the National Forum call ‘consolidation’ and ‘civil society’; the terms are enclosed in quotation marks to ‘particularise’ (Voloshinov, 1973: 131) the speech of others and to indicate its contestable nature. Instead, the author promotes a wider model of ‘civil society’ that includes ‘cultural’ representation. Harsher scepticism towards the EU and the Belarusian Government rapprochement and the neglect of the cultural perspective were found in Nasha Niva. As Editor-in-Chief Dyn’ko (2010, in Nasha Niva) wrote in his article ‘Lukashenko: version 4.0’:

In his [electoral] programme Lukashenko talks about the liberalisation of initiative and even freedom: ‘What is not forbidden will be allowed’. However, in his programme he does not mention a word about the national culture and the Belarusian language’. Nothing is said about democracy and decentralization of authority. Some time ago Condoleezza Rice named him ‘the last dictator of Europe’. He wants to become the first dictator of Europe – silently accepted. […] Without democracy and language Belarus will not become a European nation.

In contrast to ‘Sovetskaia Belorussiia’, in the alternative press official documents and speeches are frequently transformed into indirect discourse by a ‘pictorial’ style of reporting with extensive predication and coloration, demonstrating an explicit polemic with the official point of view. Irony is a key characteristic of the previous passage and it is achieved through the use of transformed indirect quotations. By paraphrasing the Belarusian president and also the USA’s ex-Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, the reporter ridicules and delegitimises the official point of view. The passage also contains an utterance indicating disagreement with the European point of view in more subtle form, by omitting the subject of the sentence ‘silently accepted’ and creating the implicature ‘the EU accepts the undemocratic policy of the regime’. Such stylisation, by ‘not talking straight’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 275) represents a form of parody and ‘verbal masquerade’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 275) aimed at criticising the EU officials. This together with a sharply polemical style aimed at unmasking the Belarusian authority constitutes a marked manifestation of ‘heteroglossia’. The dialogue exhibits a political bias and ‘suggests a link between popular interests and deconstruction’ (Hirschkop, 1996: 92).

The tensions between the Euro-centric principle of universality and the recognition of difference observed in the analysis of ‘civil society’ discourse has been further underscored
by the use of culture-specific terms to describe participation in democracy and social life. In other words, what some refer to as ‘civil society’ may exist under other names in other linguistic and cultural contexts, since different political cultures may use different vocabularies (Keane, 2006: 53-5). As an example, the use of the term ‘independent society’ (‘nezalezhne hramadztva’) in the periodical Nasha Niva, emphasises the concern to have one’s own traditions and language as a democratic nation, as previously acknowledged in my research. In addition to this, I have discovered two other terms that describe the idea of social solidarity in nativist terms. The first one is ‘talaka’ (see the extracts by Maia Kliashtornaia in ‘Kuropaty case’) that resonates with the Belarusian ancient tradition of talaka, which is ‘a communal effort to help the needy or misfortunate’ (Zaprudnik, 1998: 2002). According to the Belarusian Literary Language Thesaurus97, the term may be used as a noun referring to ‘mutual help in performing a large task’ or as an adverb, describing the way something is done – ‘together, mutually, as a group’. In this sense, talaka is the term that addresses links, bonds and trust within society, mutual help and support and resonates with the contemporary term ‘social capital’. In the contexts of the Revival movement, ‘talaka’ signified the adherence to national and cultural values. Talaka became the name of a cultural association of students in Minsk established in 1988 that contributed to the ‘revival’ of national awareness and the political movement Belarusian Popular Front (see Zaprudnik, 1998: 2002). Therefore, Maia Kliashtornaia used the term ‘talaka’ (‘taloki [plural for ‘talaka’] maintain the Kuropaty site’) to emphasise the historical, cultural and political components of civic activity.

There is another such term - ‘hramada’. In the Belarusian literary tradition the use of ‘hramada’ is used as part of the vocabulary of nation-building, expressing a sense of identity and civic solidarity. As an example, in a polyphonic poem by Ianka Kupala, ‘And, Say, Who Goes There?’ (1905 – 1907) (Translated into English by Vera Rich in 1971)98, ‘hramada’ is used in the following context:

And, say, who goes there? And, say, who goes there?
In such a mighty throng (hramada) assembled, O declare?

Byelorussians!
[...]

And what is it, then, for which so long they pined,
Scorned throughout the years, they, the deaf, the blind?

_To be called human!_

Another vivid example of the use of ‘hramada’ can be demonstrated by the quote from the
poem ‘To My People’ by Iakub Kolas⁹⁹, [1939] (translated by W. May)¹⁰⁰. Notoriously,
this quotation became the motto of _Narodnaiia Volia_ cited as part of the headline in each
issue:

To the plains, to the wide open space,
Go out, my dear folk, _in a mass (hramadoiu)…_

In both versions of the translation of ‘hramada’, the semantic component of ‘size’, ‘might’
and ‘collective’ is emphasised by the use of the term that can be understood as a ‘social
movement’ striving for national independence. The struggle to preserve the independence
of the nation has been a continuing tradition in Belarusian literature, dating back to the
sixteenth century, manifest by the principles of ‘hramadzianskasts’” (civicmindedness,
patriotism, political opposition), which is a characteristic of the alternative Belarusian
press.

The contemporary use of ‘hramada’ constitutes an effort to create a continuity of civic
activity in historical terms. Ales Belako, the founder of the Museum of Belarusian Literary
Study in Gudzevichi, a town in the western part of the country, gave an interview to a
 correspondent Chyhir from _Narodnaiia Volia_ (Chyhir, 2010, in _Narodnaiia Volia_). Belako
refers to the early period of Belarusian nation-building processes, when the museum was
founded:

_We started not from scratch, as there was a remainder of national consciousness from
the wave of national revival, that had arisen in 1926 thanks to the Belarusian
Peasants and Workers Union (Hramada)’.ⁱ⁰¹_

The term ‘hramada’ is used in the institutional sense here. Then he goes on to explain the
challenges they faced in attempting to preserve the museum:

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⁹⁹ Iakub Kolas (1882-1956) was a prose writer, poet and a prominent figure of the revival movement. He is
considered as one of the founders of modern Belarusian literature (Zaprudnik, 1998: 135-6).
¹⁰⁰ Available at http://kupala-library.iatp.by/bel_lit/content2.html (accessed 5 April 2014).
¹⁰¹ The Belarusian Peasants’ and Workers’ Union was a socialist political party created in 1925 in Poland-
controlled West Belarus that stood for independence of the country and social rights for the Belarusian minority.
This was not appreciated by the authorities as this activity was not in line with Communist ideology and who especially during the 1960s became hostile to everything national. We were threatened with lynching, arrests and violence.

To the reporter’s question about the nature of people’s patriotism in his town, Belako answers in the following way:

When will the Belarusians finally feel as a nation, a civil society, and not as voiceless ‘tuteishyia’ (locals), who were and still are despised by various oversees ‘brothers’ and various home-grown klutz? This has been the question for a man, who during the Communist regime and equally during the German occupation, during the Polish and the current regime, has always held on to ‘Belarusianness’ – the very citizenship position that never contradicted national interests. […] Hramada and hramadzianskasts’ are paronymous words. It is important that hramadzianskasts’ become the essence of hramada; only then we will succeed.

According to the extract, ‘hramada’ becomes ‘a strong assembly’ or ‘civil society’ when underpinned by the principle of ‘civicmindedness’ comprising of political and cultural components. ‘Hramadzianskasts’ can also be interpreted as what Dahlgren (2009: 63) calls ‘civic agency’. Emphasising identity as a key to understanding citizenship as civic agency, Dalhrein (2009: 63) pointed out ‘in order to act as a citizen, to participate in active citizenship, it is necessary that one can see oneself as a citizen’. In this view, ‘tuteishasts’ (‘localness’) becomes an oppositional category to ‘hramadzianskasts’, as suggested in the extract. ‘Tuteishyia’ are those deprived of civic agency. Originally the term was used around the turn of the 19th century by Belarusian peasants who, unwilling to identify themselves as either Russian or Poles, would use the term ‘tuteishyia’ (Zaprudnik, 1998: 207). Later, ‘Tuteishyia’ became the title of a satirical play by Ianka Kupala (1922), in which the author ridiculed some of his characters who shifted their national identity according to various rules established over the territory at the time – tsarist Russian, Bolsheviks, Poles, or Germans. From the point in time that Kupala used the term, it can be used to refer to Belarusians with a weak sense of national self-awareness, as the extract demonstrated.

Both examples (the use of ‘talaka’ and ‘hramada’ to refer to ‘civil society’) present a case of intertextuality, of cultural and historical dialogue, embedded in the alternative discourse of ‘civil society’. By the ‘insertion of history into a text and of this text into history’ (the definition of ‘intertextuality’ by Fairclough (2006: 102)), the utterers promote a sense of continuity in nation-building and civil society formation established by their predecessors that was interrupted by the Soviet regime and more recently, by the contemporary government in Belarus. By re-working and re-accentuating past texts, the authors help both
to make history and produce a new vision of the present and future, thus contributing to wider processes of change.

It can be argued therefore that the Belarusian historical tradition identifies close links between the notions of ‘civil society’ and ‘civic agency’ and does not conflict with cultural identity. Identity is perceived as the foundation of civic culture and ‘civic agency’ (hramadzianskasts’). The validity of this tradition can be reinforced by the argument that a shared sense of national identity is essential to the formation and survival of a vibrant civil society (Gellner, 1983; Shils, 1995; Keane, 2006; Dahlgren, 2009). The challenge of this tradition has been acknowledged earlier in this dissertation and is metaphorically described by Ioffe (2006: 157) as the ‘unwillingness to build bridges’. This ‘tight-knit’ culturally-minded community (‘sviadomyia’), united by their devotion to the Belarusian language, culture and a post-colonial national liberation ethos, holds a risk of creating a non-inclusive sphere that is prone to exclude those who do not share their cultural aspirations. This contradicts the mere principle of plurality and inclusiveness of civil society. On the other hand, the idea of civic agency that includes multiple social and cultural identities may help to overcome this dilemma.

5.7. Conclusion

In summary, in the period between 2008 and 2010 certain attempts at the ‘dialogisation’ of public life were observed, giving a greater voice to civil society and the opening of new spaces for the articulation of diverse social identities and interests. The shift in discursive practices, both in the official and alternative press, was documented with the attempts by politicians, journalists and newsmakers to move away from explicit counter-argumentative practices. This led to a reduction in the distance between points of view, sometimes resulting in conceptual and discursive overlapping. The internalisation of the EU voices in the context of Eastern Partnership policy, as observed in the official and liberal discourses, resulted in the predominant use of a NGO-centric version of ‘civil society’ – the ‘third sector’. Partnerships between civic associations and the state were highlighted as an essential part of this approach. Simultaneously proclaimed as a ‘dialogue’, these discursive practices revealed numerous tensions and contestations. The clashes, although in more subtle forms than previously encountered, were identified between the official (empirical) and normative perspectives of ‘civil society’. These resulted in the modification of certain truths and meanings circulated in the media discourse in favour of the former approach. At
the same time, an air of scepticism and disbelief remained strong in the alternative discourse with regards to the intention of officialdom to democratise. Also, the tensions between universalist inclusion and the recognition of cultural diversity within the alternative discourse were particularly evident in *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaia Volia*. The conflict of viewpoints was revealed by numerous implicit and explicit linguistic constructions. Therefore the way one defined ‘civil society’ still was found to be dependent on ideological predispositions.

A hierarchical, top down approach in mediating ‘civil society’ in *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* still remained, to a great extent, a characteristic of the period, as the form and content of the term ‘civil society’ was initially shaped and approved at the top (by officialdom) and then circulated and promoted by the official media. However, there was an attempt to include direct alternative voices in the negotiation, as the case of the round table demonstrated, creating a potential for diversification and dialogisation of the official public space. The inclusion of alternative voices also showed the potential for establishing a more ‘horizontal’ approach in mediating ‘civil society’. However, the analysis of reported speech revealed that there was still a prevailing tendency towards the unification of alternative points of view and for preventing them from being directly critical of, or being misaligned with official positions. To achieve this, a range of strategies were employed by the reporter that served not only to extol authoritative voices, but which also at times changed the propositional content of the original utterances. Therefore, the discursive style observed during this period in the periodical may be described as dialogical in form and monological in essence. Behind this style lays not so much the intention to democratise and to inform the audiences of certain real changes in policy, but rather to send a certain signal to some recipients, be it Russia, the EU, or Belarusian voters on the brink of the Presidential elections. According to Wilson (2011: 230-236), it appeared to be a pragmatic strategy of President Lukashenko and his government to rebalance his relationship with Russia. 102 Lukashenko required just enough of the West in the political landscape to ensure that Russia continued to subsidise his social model whilst ensuring the survival of the authoritarian regime. Therefore this ‘façade’ of liberalisation did not progress further. And yet, it had the potential to develop and bring genuine change to Belarusian society in the longer term.

102 The period is known for the deteriorating relationship with Russia, which launched new energy wars in 2010 (Wilson, 2011: 230-231).
The content of the alternative press in the environment favourable for the diversification of social life, demonstrated increasing ‘polyglossic’ and ‘heteroglossic’ value, represented by a multiplicity of social actors, accents, languages and points of views. The alternative use of ‘civil society’ has been circulating between liberal democratic ideas of civic participation and good governance rooted in the EaP rhetoric and a more ‘communitarian’ or national-democratic discourse that emphasised national identity as the foundation of ‘civic agency’. Often such circulation occurred jointly and in solidarity, while in other cases, the voices clashed producing vibrant dialogue. Importantly, it can be argued that such practices and conditions constituted a discursive realm of civil society.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that the discourse of ‘civil society’ is not static and monotonous, but it is constantly adapted and re-negotiated by various actors and within different conditions provided by the press. Furthermore, despite some claims that the official and alternative discourses exist and function independently of each other as counter-public spheres, the chapter has shown that alternative and official voices engaged in a dialogic way, both implicitly or explicitly, demonstrating the ability to respond to each other adapting ‘monoglossic’, ‘polyglossic’ and ‘heteroglossic’ forms and styles of communication for their own purpose. Such a common discursive space, in which alternative and official viewpoints on ‘civil society’ communicate and often struggle with one another, represents a differentiated arena of conflicting values that maintain a constant pressure on one another in a dialogic way; the mere idea of this fundamental principle – dialogism – overcomes any binaries (e.g. official and alternative) in such a way that if considered separately, each discourse or point of view on ‘civil society’ would constitute ‘its necessary unfinished character’ (Hirschkop, 1999: 262).
Conclusions

This dissertation set out to evaluate the mediation of the concept of ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press over the period from 1991 until 2010. It aimed to map the appropriation of the term in the Belarusian press with a focus on investigating how the articulation of ‘civil society’ shifted over time and in response to contextual conditions. It sought to report on the multiplicity of social forces and points of view that formed and informed discourses on ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press as well as on the nature of their mediation. It also explored how the term ‘civil society’ was used by new actors in new and evolving contexts, and for what purposes. This concluding chapter revisits the main findings derived from my research. It summarises the response to each research question posed in the Introduction, then it identifies the thesis’s contribution to knowledge. Finally, it acknowledges the thesis’s limitations and proposes further areas of investigation.

Revisiting objectives, research questions and major findings

This research has provided a novel perspective on civil society and the media in Belarus. As my literature review demonstrated, scholars tend to focus on the institutional and structural aspects of civil society and the media not considering the dialogic and dynamic relationship between media texts, contexts and power embedded in society and how these relationships shape discourses and understanding about what constitutes ‘civil society’. The role of media in the production and distribution of discourses on ‘civil society’ has also been largely overlooked. As a result, there has been a lack of research about the meaning and discursive appropriation of the term ‘civil society’ in Belarus. To fill these gaps, I have approached ‘civil society’ not merely as an institutional realm but rather as a discursive realm within the public sphere, generated by the media. The concept of ‘civil society’ has been theorised as a discursive construct resulting from the complex relationship between various actors, socio-political events and discursive practices within the context of media influence. Such a perspective permitted me to distance myself from normative approaches and to place the emphasis on situation-specific uses of the term ‘civil society’, circumscribed by media contexts. Locating the media at the centre of my analysis allowed me to obtain a clearer view on the contextual uses of the term together with the interplay of the various voices that engaged with each other dialogically in the media space shaping ‘civil society’ through mediated communication. To meet the objectives of this thesis, I posed three main research questions, which are revisited in the
next sub-sections, where I also highlight my main ideas, drawing on material from the chapters as appropriate.

**Research Question 1: deploying the term ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press**

RQ1 aimed to identify and analyse the meaning and the use of the term ‘civil society’ as it was shaped and appropriated in the Belarusian press between the years 1991 and 2010. It looked at theoretical traditions and influences, contextual factors as well as agents of mediation that formed and informed ‘civil society’ discourses. One of the major conclusions with regard to the question that has been central to the entire thesis, has been that ‘civil society’ is not an objective and fixed notion, as frequently assumed in relevant studies, but it is subject to contextual use by relevant actors circumscribed by contextual factors and specific mediating practices. Accordingly, my analysis confirmed that there have been several evolving and overlapping discourses, which I loosely described as liberal (radical), nationalist, neo-liberal and official that engaged and often struggled with each other, thereby impacting on the term’s meaning. There was no uniform agreement upon the concept of civil society and vibrant polemics and tensions could be observed between the various points of view. Therefore, the mediation of the term ‘civil society’ has been theorised as a continuous, contextually situated negotiation between multiple voices, as ‘heteroglossia’ (*raznorechie*).

As Chapter 1 illustrated, in Belarus as in other former USSR countries, the term ‘civil society’ became evident within social and political discourse during the period of post-Communist transition. It was the product of contemporary and historical contexts, shaped by ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ communication practices. Firstly, the pre-independence period and the developments fostered by *perestroika* prepared the ground for new terms and ideas to emerge in public discourse, transforming the public space. The ideas of *glasnost’, pluralism and societal freedoms were articulated from above and, as some evidence suggested, it was Gorbachev who introduced the idea of ‘civil society’ in the former Soviet public space. Secondly, the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s saw new forms of action taking place in Belarus, such as a struggle for national revival, for human rights and civil liberties. These actions were mostly associated with the National Revival movement and parallels were drawn with social and political movements in Eastern and Central Europe such as Solidarity in Poland and National Fronts in the Baltic States. Such groups and movements were seen as a manifestation of civil society democratising authoritarian systems and nationalising the newly emerged independent
states. These new voices clashed with those of the nomenklatura and conservative forces that remained strong in Belarus, producing sharp tensions and intense contestations between the national, official and global.

Ironically, the term ‘civil society’ appeared to signify different values and meanings for various groups and it was instrumentalised for various political and ideological purposes. As Chapter 1 conveyed, in the early 1990s, the idea of civil society became an essential component of a new hegemonic project of the national and democratic elite often articulated in the language of anticommunism, rapid nationalisation and democratisation, sometimes prevailing over and overshadowing the idea. These early (and also later) articulations of ‘civil society’ in the alternative press revealed a paradox: in their attempts to establish a pluralistic and ‘heteroglossic’ civil society, the alternative discourses of national and democratic forces at times enacted exclusionary and ‘monologic’ practices. Thus, following Austin (1962), the analysis of speech acts deployed by the oppositional elite and reported in the press, as developed in Chapter 1, highlighted the tension between performative (the use of words to achieve actions) and constative (referential meanings associated with forms) aspects of the alternative articulations. The new, democratic, meanings that were shaped by the old practices and value system induced only partial and controversial transformation of societal order. Yet, these new voices coexisted and often clashed with those of the conservative elite in their battle for hegemony, which still approached the idea of societal organisation from a Marxist-Leninist perspective, complicating the nature of the post-Soviet transition. The clashes of voices and points of view produced vibrant heteroglossia thereby opening space for new meanings to emerge. The development of debate and the ideological diversity in the public space was constitutive of the emergence of civil society and the public sphere in Belarus. Whilst Svoboda, a periodical affiliated with a political party, accentuated the vocabulary of nationalisation and the mobilisation of social movements, specific to Nasha Niva was an emphasis on intellectualism. Literary writers, philosophers and historians were found frequently contributing to the periodical’s content, revealing dismissed aspects of Belarusian history, exploring the national idea, focusing on Belarusian literature and language and also introducing and reflecting on the idea of ‘civil society’. At this stage and later on, the democratic and nationalising discourses of ‘civil society’ frequently overlapped, as nationalist sentiments coalesced with the universal language of ‘civil society’, appealing for democratisation, solidarity and political sovereignty, enhancing the search for national identity. Yet, these sometimes overly radicalised and nationalised discourses struggled to find recognition with broader audiences, as they became
instrumentalised for achieving the goals of the new national-democratic elite and failed to establish a fully-fledged dialogue with society.

The national-democratic project was curtailed in the mid-1990s by Lukashenko’s regime, with the notion undergoing significant transformation, as developed in Chapter 2. The expanding centralising tendencies provoked politicisation of the public space and the radicalisation of the non-governmental civic sector, which was aligned with political parties. This contextual change engendered a discursive shift from the ideas of the national movement and intellectual debate to a more political notion of ‘civil society’. The concept of civil society was understood as a counterweight against the expansion and abuse of state power, which could also be theorised as ‘a political society’ (Arato, 2000: 29). This period also saw the initial use of ‘civil society’ by Lukashenko’s government; the concept stressed the link with pro-governmental organisations and the Soviet legacy. In this context, the notion of ‘mediation’ became instrumental in assessing discursive practices that shaped discourses of ‘civil society’. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, an authorial voice of a reporter frequently performed the role of a mediator, choosing or supporting a particular definition or point of view both in the mainstream and alternative periodicals, producing tensions with the principles of objectivity and impartiality. As for the latter, these practices, accompanied by the use of the juxtaposing categories of ‘us’ v. ‘them’, ‘state’ v. ‘civil society’, East v. West, resulted in the production of a narrow and restricted version of ‘civil society’, establishing a more explicit divide between two or, arguably, several contesting spheres. Yet, in their scrutiny and criticism towards official policies or points of view, alternative voices enacted civil society, constituting a counter force to the non-liberal regime. As for Sovetskaiia Belorussiia, rather than creating independent and original meanings of ‘civil society’, reporters frequently acted as a mediator of the ‘authoritative word’, broadcasting direct official messages to broader audiences, extolling them and speaking in one voice with officialdom. However, the official discourse at this early stage also incorporated democratic points of view and moderate pluralism manifested by a diversity of voices was still evident in the periodical, providing space for dissenting voices. Gradually, however, as shown in Chapters 2 and 3, the establishment attempted to reconstruct and appropriate the notion, linking it to the processes of consolidation of state power. In early 2000, ‘civil society’ was attributed a new role, which was to support the official state-building project. The new rhetoric was not only constative. The use of the term ‘civil society’ performed a pragmatic function in the legitimisation of rule during the electoral processes, in the deconstruction of discourses of the nationalist and democratic opposition, and in the mobilisation of society against real and imagined threats. The
rhetoric was also enacted in the official policy aimed at restructuring the civic sector in Belarus.

During the mid-2000s ‘civil society’ was also used in the official press to articulate a number of security concerns associated with ‘colour’ revolutions, as Chapter 4 demonstrated. At this point, the official understanding of ‘civil society’ was becoming firmly established, constituting the ‘closure’ of the official discourse and its unification. Contrary to alternative understandings, ‘civil society’ was defined as a constituent component of the regime, supporting the government in the implementation of official policy, rather than a domain separate from the state, manifested by the repetitive formula of ‘pillars of the state’. The official articulations evoked the Soviet legacy and conveyed a strong anti-Western stance. At the heart of these discursive transformations were strategies aimed at the monopolisation of the concept of ‘civil society’ in an attempt to prevent changes associated with the ‘revolutions’ as well as to disguise excessive state power exercised against pro-democratic civil society. The discursive unification was contested by the de-centralising forces of the alternative press, as demonstrated in Chapter 4. The diversification and pluralisation of the alternative public space observed in the middle and at the end of the decade could be seen as indicative of the emergence of new forms of societal organisation, understood as a self-organising realm of Belarusian citizens. There were not only shifts, but also continuities in ‘civil society’ discourse. The notion ‘nezalezhne hramadzstva’ (independent society) rooted in nationalising discourses played an important role in mobilising public activism in the second decade. Yet this vibrant heteroglossia, conceptualised as the ‘public square’ discourse, paradoxically, was found to be shaped by exclusionary categories and practices, as the analysis of the term ‘sviadomyia’ demonstrated, thereby hindering the development of vibrant and democratic civil society.

Conversely, my analysis also showed that the official discourse was not as uniform as often described in literature. Contrary to common assumptions, a certain level of heteroglossia was detected in the official discourse, in which dissenting voices sometimes belonging to officialdom revealed themselves, expressing a certain level of consensus with the opposition, both explicit and implicit, as argued in Chapters 2 and 3. Furthermore, the differing political environment observed over the period 2008-2010, associated with the change in foreign policy, provoked a certain liberalisation of the regime. It was accompanied by a more dialogic tone of official messages, inclusion of alternative voices in the content of the periodical and a shift towards a more liberal understandings of ‘civil
society’. There were attempts in Sovetskaia Belorussiia to establish a dialogue with the oppositional civil society based on cooperative rather than contestative logic, as the Kuropaty case in Chapter 5 demonstrated. Thus, the official articulations successfully adopted and shifted between different discourses and ideas – from Soviet to Liberal – in an attempt to gain space to operate between East and West, to legitimise its practices and to sustain its power. When framed in democratic terms, however, the term appeared to be more a rhetorical construction than an actual phenomenon, serving as a tool to sustain the power of the Lukashenko’s regime and to prevent changes in society and revealing contradictions embedded in official practice between declaring (discursive act) and performing (metadiscursive act). Therefore, I may conclude that in contrast to the common assumptions regarding the static and monologic nature of the official discourse, it turned out to be a hybridised discursive construct that internalised a mixture of discourses, from Soviet to democratic, circumscribed by a specific social and political context and the purposes of the term’s use.

Similarly, alternative discourses, have not only been characterised by contesting and radicalised rhetoric, rooted in a dissident tradition, as it may appear in some political literature and media texts. By the end of the second decade, according to my investigations, the response that followed in the alternative press with regards to the idea of ‘civil society’, while not without scepticism, implied a less politicised and confrontational notion and was accompanied by a more neutral style of reporting. A more moderate idea, implying cooperation with the state became pronounced during the ‘liberalisation’ period, as Chapter 5 explained. It was seen as an instrument to implement democratic reforms within the Eastern Partnership framework initiated by the EU. Such articulations of ‘civil society’ sometimes were found to be dependent on the rhetoric and ready-made recipes of European bureaucratic structures while dismissing local-specific, cultural components of the idea. This produced tensions and contestations between the local and universal. Furthermore, as examples throughout my thesis have demonstrated, selective approach to reporting transnational voices from both East and West became a pronounced discursive practice for both official and alternative periodicals, which acted as both centripetal and centrifugal force. This led to the conclusion that mediation of ‘civil society’ was not limited by national boundaries, but it was found to be a transnational phenomena. It became apparent that ‘civil society’ is a conflicted and contested notion subject to negotiation and re-negotiation. Therefore, I have argued that while the use of the concept can facilitate the establishment and development of democracy, it can also serve as a tool for the legitimisation of non-liberal regimes. Whilst fostering a sense of national identity
and solidarity in some cases, it may also create divisions and alienation in society. Behind these practices, it was the media that provided the space where the discursive battle over the term unfolded, while reinforcing or hindering certain points of view and meanings, as is further developed in the following sub-section.

Research Question 2: power, discourse and social change

RQ2 was aimed at exploring the power relations that accompanied the discursive practices of ‘civil society’s’ mediation in the press and the potential of these relations to impact on social life. To address this question, the thesis has approached media space as a complex and dynamic model of communication based on the differing logic of power relationships between different components of communication, including authors, texts, readers and contextual environments. I have suggested that power is embedded in the Belarusian media in a more explicit and coercive way, when compared to Western media. Rather, the straightforward presence of power, represented by ‘centripetal’ forces (producing centralising, unitary, official discourses) and ‘centrifugal’ forces (producing decentralising, diverse discourses associated with different social groups, views, languages and evaluations) produced a more explicit struggle over the production and reproduction of forms and meanings.

These tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces, which have been characteristic of the Belarusian public space over the two decades, established a leitmotif of this thesis. During certain periods, centralising forces prevailed and they witnessed the reinforced use of the media as an instrument of ideological manipulation. Such a ‘monologisation’ of the public sphere was observed particularly during electoral campaigns, with journalists’ and commentators’ position appearing to gravitate towards a unifying official point of view on ‘civil society’ and to promote a monologic unity of discourse. Thus, the tumultuous and ‘heteroglossic’ early 1990s witnessed the replacement of a plurality and diversity of voices by predominating monologic tendencies by the end of the decade, as Chapter 2 demonstrated. Another vivid moment of such dynamics was observed in 2006, which was characterised by the monologisation and monopolisation of ‘civil society’ by officialdom, was associated with the preventive strategies employed by the regime to counter ‘colour revolutions’. Yet, during other periods, de-centralising tendencies prevailed, opening space for more diverse meanings and relations. As Chapter 5 showed, the period 2008-2010 saw a dynamic multiplicity of voices, languages and points of views present together with a shift in power relations within the media space, which appeared to favour societal consensus.
rather than contestation. Finally, my research ended chronologically in December 2010. This witnessed the closure of discourse, which in its turn provoked a discursive battle with de-centralising voices. This dialectic logic of mediation was both the cause and the result of a perpetual discursive struggle over the term ‘civil society’. This means that power relations are not stationary, as may appear in normative accounts of democratic transition in Belarus, rather they evolve dependent on historical context. Importantly, this dynamic showed that, despite the claims that the official and alternative spaces exist and function in parallel to each other, official and alternative voices engage explicitly and implicitly; the relationship is based not only on the logic of contestation, but also guided by more cooperative principles.

Power is also manifest in the ability of the media to create impact and generate change. This thesis has focused on the connection between power and discursive practices through critical analyses of the media and has been contrasted with ‘non-critical’ approaches. The latter frequently approaches media by dismissing the issue of power and stating that the media simply provide space for public debate, following Habermasian approach, or that it merely reflects the state of affairs (indexing theory, e.g. Bennett (1990, 2006)) and is therefore powerless. Similarly, this research has been juxtaposed to structural approaches, where the Belarusian media’s autonomy and its capacity to change the state of affairs are severely challenged, due to the restrictive environment in which the media operate (Aliaksandraŭ and Bastunets, 2014; Richter, 2008). This thesis has demonstrated that, indeed, due to this hostile environment, the media were prevented from becoming a principal agent of societal transformation. However, although restricted, the periodicals, whether liberal-oppositional or national-democratic, contributed to the de-centralising tendencies within the bounds of an environment that attempted to marginalise and silence them. As numerous examples throughout my thesis have demonstrated, even in such a controlled environment as Belarus, the media had the ability to shape discourses and create new terms (such as *nezalezhnae hramadztva* or self-organised society). It opened spaces for new meanings to emerge with a transformative effect on society. The media established and conveyed these meanings and forms in a particular way that sometimes created and sustained relations of dominance, shaping and maintaining boundaries in society. These boundaries frequently defined who was included or excluded under the category of ‘civil society’. They were continuously redrawn and redefined, constituting a power struggle within and over ‘civil society’ discourse. In such practices, as particularly shown in Chapters 2 and 4, the press clearly not only ‘indexed’ the ideas created by others, it also extolled and amplified them. Despite testifying to a high dependency of the official media
on the governmental agenda, whereby *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* frequently functioned as a channel for the official message, and in spite of the restrictive environment, which inhibited the potential of the alternative press to serve as a viable public forum, the press has proved that it has some power. It has been demonstrated throughout the thesis that the power arose from the press’s ability to mediate - to enhance and reinforce, as well as to re-articulate and contest specific viewpoints, fostering both pluralisation and unification of society and allowing it both to sustain and undermine the status quo. This discursive manifestation of power associated with the mediating role of the media has been a particular concern of the thesis and a number of mediating practices and strategies have been identified in the media discourse as the next section demonstrates.

*Research Question 3: strategies of mediation*

RQ3 dealt with the mediating practices and strategies that were deployed in the press over the articulation of the idea of ‘civil society’. The thesis has provided an overview not only of the ‘themes’ and ‘topics’ together with social and political environment in which the term ‘civil society’ was used, but it has also provided analysis of the communicative practices, styles and strategies through which power and influence were executed. The exploration of these strategies provided a lens through which meanings were established, enforced and circulated with differing values being attached. The research has engaged with a number of metalinguistic, macro-level, mechanisms derived from Bakhtin’s studies and CDA theory, such as ‘interdiscursivity’, ‘intertextuality’, ‘voicing’, ‘heteroglossia’, ‘polyphony’ and ‘addressivity’ together with a number of the following discursive tools that constitute a micro-level: reported speech and various styles of quotations; use of personal pronouns (‘us’ and ‘them’); ‘evaluative accent’; metaphors; irony; and the use of speech acts. It has been argued that together with the contextual factors, these (meta-)linguistic processes played a significant role in the production of civil society discourses by providing legitimation or de-legitimisation of a particular meaning attributed to the notion. These mechanisms ensured that meaning is never completely fixed; it can be exploited, manipulated and transformed, establishing one of the key motifs of the thesis.

The analysis of reported speech in Chapters 2, 4 and 5 showed how various styles of reporting employed by news producers became an essential tool for the incorporation of the opinions and points of view of others into a report. Reporters in both the official and alternative press demonstrated the capacity to side with some views whilst misaligning and challenging others; thus, on numerous occasions, reporting was found to be value-laden. In
the case of *Sovetskaia Belorussiia* the reporter’s position frequently appeared to gravitate towards a unifying official point of view on ‘civil society’ and to promote a monologic unity of discourse. The alternative press demonstrated a higher capacity among journalists to initiate a more balanced dialogue between various social views. Commentary and a ‘pictorial’ style of reporting were frequently used among authors reinforcing ‘heteroglossia’. Whilst not devoid of neutrality of opinion and having employed some mobilising discursive strategies, the reporting style tended to remove the authorial voice of the journalists and make it just another voice among co-existing positions and opinions, contributing for the diversification of public space, conceptualised through the notion of ‘public square’ in Chapter 4. The analysis generated further thoughts and considerations with regards to issues of ‘objectivity’, ‘political position’ and professional culture of the journalist. It was demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 5 that in conflicting realities, which produce an explicit struggle over meaning, what is understood as ‘objective reporting’ in normative approaches may not be entirely applicable. This is due to the fact that the role of the media in such restricted realities is to mobilise politics against the threat of centralisation and monologism, to open and expand spaces for public dialogue creating opportunities for more diverse and complex environments.

Furthermore, the tension between unity and plurality exists in both established and emerging democracies. In the West with increased social mobility, cultural diversity and global flows of information, the challenge arises of how to unite this centrifugal force in the pursuit of a sense of unity (Voltmer, 2013: 18-19). In Belarus and other illiberal environments the challenge is how to establish and maintain diversity within the dominant centralising tendency. However, it was also acknowledged that there are risks associated with excessive ‘heteroglossia’ resulting in ambiguity in the meaning of the term and a divided civil society, which may have detrimental effects on civic activity and political culture. Furthermore, politicisation of reporting may reduce the meaning to certain values and points of view of particular individuals and groups, which equally contradict the principles of plurality and dialogic communication leading to the monologisation of discourse. However, discourse can never be completely monologic, at least due to the fact that there are several possible ways a text is perceived.

Whilst this dissertation has not attempted to address readers’ reception of media texts, one important tool related to the dialogic relations between news producers and their potential readers or addressees has been utilised. The notion of ‘addressivity’ (*obrashchennost’*) derived from Bakhtin’s studies implies that meaning is constructed in a dialogic way in
contrast to a linear perspective that considers readers as passive recipients of fixed meanings. It presupposes a degree of reciprocity between a media message production and reception, whereby a media message is always directed at someone, addressing a particular audience(s). As numerous examples throughout the thesis have demonstrated, in monologic texts, such relations occurred in a hierarchical way and *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*’s messages were repeatedly addressed at the ‘people’ instead of ‘citizens’; by perceiving them collectively they disempowered their readers. It was predominantly the representatives of the authorities and administration, the official scientific elite and the president who were the producers of ‘civil society’ discourse. Whilst frequently appealing to the notion of ‘the people’, people’s voices were not included. The press was frequently used to channel the official message and influence. The use of directive speech acts and direct discourse was utilised in such messages. The authorial voice of the reporter was frequently found to dominate. In such a mode, the periodical appeared to impose meaning upon their readers, approaching them as a target of influence rather than as participants in the creation of a media message.

It was ascertained that the reader was not necessarily free to choose which way to read texts in both the official and alternative press, since a range of strategies were deployed that limited and imposed boundaries upon discourse. As demonstrated, there were multiple attempts to create a unifying discourse in which certain meanings appeared salient, making the term ‘civil society’ ‘uni-accentual’ (Voloshinov, 1973: 23). Strategies employed for encouraging certain ways of reading and a specific reception were particularly pronounced during socio-political milestones; elections, referendums and civic protests. As the thesis has conveyed, such a mode was not necessarily a specific feature of official discourse. Political speeches aimed at the mobilisation of publics that involved directive speech acts at times equally appeared as the manifestation of unbalanced power relations in the alternative press. Yet, on many other occasions, such relations were ‘polyphonic’, which meant that the dialogic relations between voices representing differing points of view, engaged in a dialogue on an equal basis and the authorial voice was just a voice amongst many. Furthermore, readers’ voices were frequently included in the content relevant to discussions on ‘civil society’. This created spaces in which the meanings of ‘civil society’ were co-constructed, empowering society and increasing the media’s potential impact.

Furthermore, the research has illustrated that influence and domination were not only expressed by means of use of language. As Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated, power was also exercised by the press through the amplification of certain terms and ideas by increasing
their frequency and intensity within periodicals’ content (such as ‘human rights’ and ‘security’), as well as by symbolic means – by indexing authoritative voices, both national and transnational (such as Hans Georg Wieck and Aleksandr Dugin) and by the choice of language itself. The Belarusian language may be used not only for conveying information, but also to signify alternative to the regime values. It became the domain of the nationalist (democratic) discourse, perceived as an essential component for a developed national statehood and civil society. Yet, as my multiple examples demonstrated, the idea of ‘civil society’ was articulated in both languages, Russian and Belarusian, with some periodicals publishing bilingually (Narodnaia Volia). Therefore, both languages served as a language of civil society, national identity and democratisation. The thesis has argued, therefore, that the term ‘civil society’ was legitimised through mediation, understood as the continuous circulation of meaning. It was also shaped through the reinforcement in the media of certain meanings that emerged from multiple ideas generated by national and transnational political and cultural elites, media professionals and journalists as well as citizens and readers. These processes were further circumscribed by contextual conditions of media production. The research questions that guided my analysis were crucial, as they enabled the discovery of aspects previously ignored in research on civil society, discourse production, media and communication in Belarus and elsewhere. In view of this, the thesis has contributed to explaining one of the outcomes of post-Soviet development with the focus on the key components that shaped the discourses of civil society, while reflecting on the controversial transitional path in Belarus; context, power, discursive practices and social change. The contribution the thesis makes to the knowledge base is further explained in the next section.

**Contribution to knowledge**

The research contributed to overcoming the widely-acknowledged dilemma associated with the multiplicity of perspectives, which leads to the conceptual vagueness of ‘civil society’. It has been argued that the concept of civil society is contextual and historical; it cannot be assessed separately from a given social order and culture of a particular society. Therefore, the overall concern of this thesis has been that instead of pursuing any univocal concept of ‘civil society’, we should focus the investigation on a particular contextual environment. Simultaneously, the study has not entirely dismissed the normative perspective, since, in some cases, an emphasis on the contextual meaning would risk justifying the authoritarian notion of civil society. The notion was found to be rooted in the Soviet tradition, which did not recognise the autonomy of society from the state and
excluded dissenting voices. In a similar way, the content of the claims to ‘civil society’, as shaped by the radical (oppositional) or nationalist interpretations, at times, appeared to be in tension with the ideas of a pluralistic society, since national and radical appeals for social mobilisation have been based on the exclusion of and antagonism towards ‘others’ failing to create solidarity and trust. However, operating within the context of an authoritarian state, it was these articulations that challenged and opposed the non-liberal regime, acting as a force for democratisation. Therefore, the assessments of the interpretations of the idea of civil society were guided by the assumption that it maintains its core democratic values whilst locating and adapting it to the local context. Importantly, even within western contemporary discourse of ‘civil society’ there is a wealth of interpretations and these ideas also evolve and are renegotiated (see Wallace, Pichler, and Haerpfer, 2012). Accordingly, this thesis aimed to critically reflect and integrate both normative and contextual approaches in a balanced way, fostering debate and interdisciplinary dialogue.

The research has offered an original framework for the analysis of the term ‘civil society’ that involved an interdisciplinary method, which has contributed to the expanding qualitative approaches to studying the mass media and civil society. The interplay between media and cultural studies, together with political studies and linguistics, has helped to explore the relationships between context, language, power, meaning creation and social change, thereby revealing intricacies and nuances that have previously been overlooked, as outlined in the section above. In this way the thesis has added complexity to the commonplace ‘last European dictatorship’ paradigm. Importantly, the thesis has diverged from the dominant understanding of Belarusian public space conceptualised through the binary categories of ‘official’ and ‘alternative’ public spheres. Instead, it has demonstrated the dynamic multiplicity of languages and points of view, reflecting on conflicting meanings and objectives. Despite claims that official and alternative discourses in Belarus function independently of each other as separate counter-public spheres, the thesis has shown that alternative and official voices engaged in a dialogic way, both implicitly and explicitly, and both adopted ‘monologic’ and ‘dialogic’ styles and practices. In this way the thesis has contributed to extending knowledge with regard to the notion ‘civil society’ per se while together reflecting on the complex practices involved in its meaning formation and use in the Belarusian press.

The framework, while enabling the exploration of context-specific articulations of ‘civil society’ in Belarus, is generally applicable to conflicting and polarised environments,
thereby helping to understand how meaning emerges. It has contributed to a broader scholarly concern regarding the role of a contested media in shaping meanings and how they function in contemporary social and cultural life. In contrast to western public spaces, which tend to pursue public consensus as a desired outcome of public communication as explained by Habermas (1989: 83; 196-235), whilst welcoming diversity and plurality, the thesis has emphasised the contradictory and contested nature of public dialogue in Belarus. It has been demonstrated that in such a dialogue, rationality is frequently replaced by irrational argument, with the challenge being committing to the principles of objectivity, truthfulness and inclusion. Coercion, hierarchy and a centralised message rather than consent, horizontal power relations and plurality are a frequent modus operandi in the articulation of the concept. With no model of communication practice being ideal, however, it is important to recognise the challenge faced by both Western and non-Western media. In the former case, the problem may appear in overcoming hegemonies imposed by the consensus. In the latter, the challenge arises with regard to how to avoid centralisation, hierarchies, divisions and exclusionary practices. This methodological framework may be useful for analysing uses of the term ‘civil society’ in similar contexts within post-Soviet space and other regions that face political challenges, radical societal transformations. Other critical ‘keywords’ such as ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’, ‘justice’, ‘gender’, ‘nation’, ‘security’ or ‘migration’ may equally be investigated within this framework.

Another key strength of this study has been its long chronological duration and the creation of an extensive database. The corpus, which comprised data covering two decades, permitted the tracking of the emergence and the evolution of the idea of ‘civil society’ in the Belarusian press in a more detailed and systematic way, a task not previously undertaken. Contrary to the ideas of a non-existent civil society or the non-applicability of the term to post-Communist contexts, my research has revealed that not only do the ideas of ‘civil society’ that are articulated in the press grow in a linear progression, but they also evolve and develop and are used by multiple actors in various contexts and situations. It was the product of both national and transnational flows of communications, coming from both western and eastern directions. Yet, it was domestic voices of local journalists, editors, experts, intellectuals, politicians and citizens (readers) who filtered, amplified and translated meanings adapting them to local contexts. This perspective addresses a broader scholarly concern with regard to the impact of the international media on the Belarusian media, which particularly emphasises the embeddedness of the latter in a larger Russian
media space. Conversely, the transformation of civil society’s discourse in the Belarusian press has demonstrated a dynamic interplay between transnational influences from both East and West together with nationally determined tendencies circumscribed by the context of post-Socialist development and the establishing of an independent state. Therefore, it is possible to characterise the mediation of the term ‘civil society’ as a transnational, continuous and contextual negotiation and re-articulation between multiple voices.

Finally, whilst scholarly attention towards Belarus is rising, in general, the country has enjoyed limited interest among Western commentators and researchers. This research has contributed to filling this gap and demonstrated that Belarus is a case worthy of research due to its distinct development in the context of other post-Soviet transitions. An authoritarian style of leadership can be seen dominating political, social and cultural life. In this context, the conflict between state and civil society gains a level of pertinence resulting in a highly polarised, ideologised and conflicted public space manifested in the language of the media. At the same time, such an environment is prone to a higher level of centralising tendencies, when compared to its neighbours, which greatly hinder civil society and media in achieving its goals. On the other hand, the thesis has revealed some commonalities with developments in other regions, particularly in the states of the former USSR, the environments that produce culturally and socially diversified and conflict-ridden public spaces. In view of this, both the novel nature of my research within a unique context has the potential, firstly, to add to the discussions on civil society, mass media and social and political change both in Belarus and internationally and secondly, to contribute to the debates on disciplinary boundaries and theoretical dialogue, in particular between media, political and cultural studies. However, as outlined in the next section, there are further possibilities for enquiry.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

Whilst the study has engaged with a wide range of theories and ideas from a range of disciplines to address a broad scope of questions with regard to the mediation of the term ‘civil society’, there have been some aspects that have not been considered. Firstly, the

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103 This concern was articulated, for example, by Belarusian journalist and media expert Paŭliuk Bykowski during the panel ‘The Reform of Media Sphere: Protecting National Information Space in Belarus’ at the International Conference ‘Minsk after Riga: Forum on Reforms’, organised by the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies in Minsk on 28-29 May, 2015. The broadcast is available at http://www.belinstitute.eu/ru/node/2595 (accessed on 29 May 2015).
corpus contained data generated from a number of periodicals; however, the scope of this study was restricted to journalistic articles and did not include readers’ comments. The online libraries from which the majority of the data was collected (Kommunikat, Integrum) did not allow the collection of online comments. Comments were also not collected from the direct newspaper archives, due in part to the technical challenges of obtaining the data and its quantitative insignificance. Therefore, the systematic analysis of online comments were omitted in this research. However, if the period of investigation is brought forward, such analysis may provide new insight on the dialogic relations between news producers and readers; on how discourses on ‘civil society’ are perceived and rearticulated by the reader and how effective these reports on ‘civil society’ are in terms of audience reach and impact.

Secondly, it would be worthwhile to examine other media. Contemporary Belarus has seen innovative types of societal cooperation and new means of communication often based on the Internet and new forms of information technology. It would be interesting to assess how these new channels of communication facilitate new forms and meanings, how dialogic relations are manifested online and what prospects they may create for the development of new opportunities for citizens to communicate and organise. With the constant and intensive flow of information available in social media, especially during significant socio-political events, it would be useful to examine particularities and minor shifts in discourses on ‘civil society’ with the focus on shorter periods of time. In this respect, the long chronological duration of the current dataset may have occasionally prevented more nuanced analysis.

Thirdly, a cross-national study would help to provide a better understanding and open a broader opportunity to explore the mediation of the term ‘civil society’ in the media. Comparative perspectives of similar practices and developments in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine would be beneficial, as all three countries experienced difficulties with nation-state building, democratic consolidation and the development of free media and civil society in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR. It would be interesting to compare what uses of ‘civil society’ and discursive practices became predominant in the neighbouring states’ media context, revealing commonalities and specificities that reflect particular post-Soviet realities, together with the exploration of how these coexist with universal tendencies. Another direction to follow would be intra-national research, comparing mediating practices of the term within Belarussian and Russian media sources.
broadcast in Belarus and how these two media coexist and operate in the country. The Russian impact and influence on the media in Belarus from widely available TV channels and newspapers with Russian shareholders has been partially acknowledged in both research (Szostek, 2013) and media publications (Beliatskii, 2014). Whilst Russian influence has been to some extent recognised and addressed in my research through the notion of ‘intertextuality’, having acknowledged the presence of multiple Russian voices and sources in the Belarussian press’s content, a more comprehensive and systematic analysis is required to assess the impact of Russian media on the shaping and use of the term ‘civil society’. This could, perhaps, involve the analysis of some key Russian periodicals or TV programmes that enjoy high popularity in Belarus.

Fourthly, the dialogic approach, as with other methods, can be subject to criticism. It may sometimes appear to provide predetermined answers, especially about power embedded in society and its ability to restrain and determine certain forms of mediated communication, about continuous dialectic struggle and the fluidity of meaning. Yet, employing this approach also requires a lot of original and critical effort by the researcher to identify, reflect upon and translate texts and linguistic resources in a novel way, discovering deep and complicated scenes and mechanisms of communication. It provides ample opportunity to generate innovative and pertinent answers applicable to a particular reality.

Finally, my investigation ends in December 2010. It was the point when hopes for change were dashed following the presidential elections, as centripetal tendencies and coercive powers ensured that it was practically impossible for the opposition and civil society to challenge the regime of President Lukashenko. After the protests in Independence Square in December 2010, the country’s domestic and foreign politics remained strongly influenced by these events. The official media continued to extol the official point of view on ‘civil society’. The alternative media responded in a dialogic manner by circulating counter-discourses and citing the voices of human rights activists and the cultural and pro-democratic community who embraced the ideas of solidarity with the victims of repression. This suggested that the battle for the ownership of ‘civil society’ would continue in the contested Belarusian media landscape. It remains to be seen whether the centrifugal tendencies will manage to shift the power balance opening new spaces for

105 Available at http://n-europe.eu/article/2014/07/20/ales_belyatskii_lukashenko_%E2%80%93_uzhe_ne_poslednii_diktator_evropy (accessed 15 April 2015).
meanings to emerge dialogically during the forthcoming Presidential elections in October 2015, circumscribed by new political developments in neighbouring Ukraine and Russia. As Bakhtin (1981:428) stated, ‘at any time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions […] that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions’. The real challenge, however, with reference to Belarus and the neighbouring CIS states is to introduce conditions that foster and favour inclusive and genuine dialogue instead of contestation and conflict, together with ‘civil society’ that does not contradict core democratic values and which celebrates cultural diversity.
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Evmeniov, A. (05.11.1997) ‘Mezhdunarodnaiia konferentsiia po pravam cheloveka proidiot v Minske’ [International Human Rights Conference will be held in Minsk], *Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia* (224). [in Russian]


Frumkin, V. (30.05.2006) ‘Milinkevich: U Belarusi nihto nia khocha straty dziarzhāinastsi’ [Milinkevich: No one in Belarus wants to lose its statehood], *Nasha Niva*. Available at http://nn.by/?c=arandi=2101. [in Belarusian]


Information Unit of *BDG* (04.08.1997) ‘Khel’ sinskii komitet o razrushenii grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Belarusi’ [Helsinki Committee on crushing civil society], *BDG* (394). [in Russian]


Lepeshko, B. (22.09.2004) ‘V more nadezh glavnoe – ne utonut’’ [In a sea of hope it is important that you do not drown], Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia. Available at http://www.sb.by/post/38921. [in Russian]


Lukashenko, A. (22.03.2002) ‘Vystuplenie Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus’ A.G. Lukashenko na itogovom plenarnom zasedanii postoianno deistvuiushchego seminara rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov respublikanskich i mestnykh organov’ [Speech by President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko at the final plenary session of the permanent seminar of executives of national and local government agencies]. Available at


Makhovsky, A. (19.08.1996) ‘Iskat’ kompromiss s politicheskimi silami president ne nameren’ [The President is not inclined to seek a compromise with political forces], BDG, 52 (310). [in Russian]


Selezneva, E. (01.11.2002) ‘Khorosho tam, gde niet odinochestva’ [It is where there is no loneliness, is nice], *Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia*. Available at http://www.sb.by/post/22646/.[in Russian]


Secondary sources


Appendix 1: Data gathering and creating a database for *Nvivo10*

After reviewing the tools available for efficient data collection and processing I decided to use the application *Nvivo10*. *Nvivo10* provides complex search and tagging functions that allow the references to ‘civil society’ to be identified automatically in my text sources. To gather and collate my database efficiently some automation of the data gathering process was required. The diversity of sources, the inconsistence in data availability and the relatively recent online appearance of the periodicals resulted in a number of stages in data collection and the following method was employed.

*Data Gathering 1: Nasha Niva and Narodnaia Volia*

The Belarusian electronic library archive *Kamunikat* (www.kamunikat.org) provides issue by issue access to a large number of periodicals including *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaia Volia*. Access to each periodical is provided by a series of linked HTML index pages. Each index page contains a series of abstracts followed by a URL to a PDF document on their database. *Download It All*, a plugin for the *Fire Fox* browser, was used to download all the HTML pages, which were post processed to facilitate the downloading of all the PDFs, resulting in the database described in Table 1:

Table 1. Downloaded Data: *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaia Volia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Issue Date</th>
<th>Total No. of Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nasha Niva</em></td>
<td>1991-2010</td>
<td>682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Narodnaia Volia</em></td>
<td>2006 - 2010</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The downloaded PDF files were used to create the corresponding *Nvivo10* projects. A *PDF converter* that used a Cyrillic optical character recognition engine produced by ABBYY was used to allow the automatic conversion of the custom fonts to a format recognised by *Nvivo10*.

*Data Gathering 2: Sovetskaia Belorussiia – Belarus’ Segodnia*

The newspaper’s website (www.sb.by) provided a search facility that enabled me to select articles related to ‘civil society’. The search results were sorted by relevance from 99% to 36% (806 articles in total) and displayed on index pages with twenty links per page. The *Fire Fox* browser together with *Download It All* plugin was then used to download all the articles with the relevance ≥ 50% as separate HTML files, as Table 2 demonstrates:
Table 2. Downloaded Data: Sovetskaia Belorussiia – Belarus’ Segodnia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Article Date</th>
<th>Total No. of Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sovetskaia Belorussiia-Belarus’ Segodnia</td>
<td>2000-2010</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovetskaia Belorussiia</td>
<td>1991-1999</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These HTML files were processed to remove banners and irrelevant side panes. Total HTML Converter was used to convert the files to PDF format. A database was created in NVivo10 containing 213 sources (articles) from Sovetskaia Belorussiia. Eight queries were performed in NVivo10 to narrow down the database by identifying references with direct relevance to the term ‘civil society’. This resulted in 133 articles with direct references to the concept. Furthermore, during my field study in Belarus and the National Library, one quarter of each year from Sovetskaia Belorussiia’s archives for 1991-1999 was chosen for data gathering, the choice determined by its affinity with significant socio-political events. Over 120 selected articles from the periodical were digitised for closer investigation; they were coded identifying instances of ‘civil society’ use.

Data Gathering 3: Belorusy i Rynok and Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta

Data containing references to ‘civil society’ from Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta (BDG) was generated from the electronic database Integrum. It was coded to identify key themes and trends. Data for Belorusy i Rynok was downloaded from the periodical’s archive. Similar method as outlined in previous subsections was employed.

Table 3. Downloaded Data: Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta and Belorusy i Rynok

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Article Date</th>
<th>Total No. of articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belorusskaia Delovaia Gazeta</td>
<td>1994-2000</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belorusy i Rynok</td>
<td>1999, 2002-2010</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining archives were processed in a similar manner resulting in a database of approximately 8GBytes. This database was imported into NVivo10 creating six corresponding projects.

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107 The data for 1999-2008 is available at http://br.minsk.by; the later data was downloaded from www.belmarket.by (all accessed 20 September 2012).
Appendix 2: References to sources in their original language

Chapter 1


Наконец, что исключительно важно сегодня,— рыночная экономика позволит стране стать органичной частью мирового хозяйства. Для этого нужно иметь общие правила предпринимательской деятельности, свободу обмена товарами и ресурсами, устойчивую валюту, а главное — правовое гражданское общество. Только обеспечив все эти условия, мы сможем занять достойное место в мировом разделении труда и благодаря этому полнее удовлетворять собственные потребности, экономнее расходовать свои природные богатства.

Остро стоит вопрос о влиянии партии в молодежной среде. Ушли в прошлое времена, когда оно обеспечивалось изданием директив, обязательных для комсомола. Сама эта организация находится в трудном поиске своего места в молодежном движении. Конечно, речь не может идти о возвращении к прежнему типу отношений, но оказывать постоянное внимание комсомолу, распространять социалистическое сознание в молодежном движении — прямой долг всех партийных организаций. Программа создает для такой работы хорошие возможности. Ориентация на свободное развитие личности, инициативность, предпринимчивость, открытость миру — все это дает молодым поколениям шанс для полнокровной и деятельной жизни.

Sovetskaia Belorussiia (09.08.1991) ‘Программа Коммунистической Партии Советского Союза’.

Стремясь выразить чаяния народа, извлекая уроки из своей истории и учитывая мировой опыт, КПСС будет в своей политической деятельности руководствоваться […] принципами демократии и свободы во всех ее многообразных проявлениях — общественной и личной, экономической и политической, интеллектуальной и духовной. Свобода неотделима от гражданской ответственности и немыслима без становления гражданского общества и правового государства, опирающегося на народовластие.


Сограждане! Наша страна извивается от продолжавшегося более семи десятилетий социального и духовного рабства. Нежизнеспособные теории, экономические эксперименты, подавление прав и свободы личности — все это уходит в прошлое. Но путь очищения сложен. Мы все еще больны нашим прошлым, не изжили страх, свыклись с несправедливостью. Надо еще очень многое сделать, чтобы настоящему распялиться человек в нашем обществе. С этой целью мы объявляем о создании “Движения за демократические реформы” в Белоруссии. Конкретные задачи Движения: Замена устаревших государственных структур тоталитарного типа на современные демократические. Создание в республике гражданского общества, основанного на Всеобщей декларации прав человека и опирающихся на нее законов. Защита суверенитета.

Сегодня надо очень взвешенно подходить как к оценке сложившейся в стране и республике общественно-политической ситуации, так и состоянию партии, отнесенной шестью годами перестройки на задворки общества, иногда стыдливо называемого социалистическим. Не хочу, уподобляясь многим, считать, что только от центра все наши беды, однако горечь охватывает от того, что все мы, в том числе и партия, оказались заложниками у “архитекторов перестройки”.

Galko, I. and I. Karpenko (16.08.1991) ‘Исчезла ли идеологическая борьба?’ Sovetskaia Belorussiia


Эти лозунги были искусственно привнесены в рабочее движение во время апрельских событий в г. Минске и некоторых других регионах нашей республики. Вопросы “департизации” были навязаны и для рассмотрения IV сессии Верховного Совета БССР.[…] Преследуется определенная цель — убрать Компартию из политической структуры общества, устранить влияние коммунистов в трудовых коллективах с тем, чтобы определенным политическим силам занять их место; и проводить политику отнюдь не в интересах трудящихся. Ратуя за “департизацию”, новые политические партии (в частности, Белорусская крестьянская партия, Белорусская социал-демократическая громада и Белорусский народный фронт) в своих программных и уставных документах зарезервировали за собой право создания первичных ячеек (суполак) на предприятиях, в учреждениях и организациях 2 июля 1991 г.

Разумеется, все это не означает, что мы не должны совершенствовать наш государственный механизм. Усилия в этом направлении сегодня крайне необходимы. Положительную роль здесь, безусловно, сыграют принятые Верховным Советом нашей республики законы об основных принципах народовластия и о местном самоуправлении и местном хозяйстве в Белорусской ССР. Нынешняя ситуация диктует поиск более эффективных форм и методов работы партийных комитетов и организаций. […] Поэтому очень важно, чтобы Компартия Белоруссии нарабатывала и творчески осваивала все, что присуще партии парламентского типа. Нам необходимо учиться тактически грамотно вести политическую борьбу в условиях многопартийности, мы должны овладеть искусством полемики, разумного компромисса.

Sovetskaia Belorussiia (05.07.1991) ‘Постановление IV пленума Центрального Комитета Компартии Белоруссии О работе коммунистов в Советах народных депутатов’.
Оказыць кammersцтам-депутатам неабходнуюмую памоць ў выкананні
обязанасцей у ўзбіральных аўقتах, састаўляць фарміраванне ў ніх
широкаага актыва із представіцелей рабочага, крэсцянскага, женскага,
млодзенага дывіжэнняў, грамадзенскім-папятатых організацыяў асацыялістычнай
орыентацыі. [...] Консольдыраваць з прафсюзаў, комсомолам, грамадзянасцям
організацыямі і дывіжэннямі асацыялістычнай напрамленасці, дабавіць
шырокага представіцеляства ў Саветах народных депутатаў рабочых, крэсцян,
млодзені і жаніц. [...]. Ідэалагічнаму аддзелу ЦК Кампартыі Беларусі
каварднаваць дзейнасць партыійнага палітычнага. Памагаць жарныкам
фарміраваць грамадзенскае манне, направленне на падтрымку пазіцыі
кammersцтва-депутатаў, даваць оператыўную і аргументаваную адпаведь
антрасацыялістычным выпадкам, моральныму тэрэру ў адносіннях кammersцтва
[...].

**Grishan, I.** (23.08.1991) ‘Народ зацягіла дэмакратыю’. *Sovetskaia Belorussiia*

Перастроўка падтрымліваецца, і ўжо нават адзін імкнуць час усціць, вараздрыць
прыслуваць адміністрацыйна-кімандинскую сістэму. [...] Забавта к прышлому не і
не будзе. Мы ўсё ўжы успелі ўдохнуть жыватварны азон дэмакратыі, глеаснасці,
собственнай сілы.

**Sovetskaia Belorussiia** (20.10.1992) ‘Обрашчэнне Коордынацыйнага Совета
Об’яднання Народных Депутатаў “Беларусь” к грамадзянаў і народным депутатам
Рэспублікі Беларусь’.

Орэнтавірамі ў дзеянасці аб’яднання народных депутататаў “Беларусь”, ў састав
котарога ўхідзіць больш як ста дэпутатаў, уваходзяць падтрыманне грамадзенска-папятатага
стабільнасці, нудзіцце раскал, прыватнасці, враждзі і
насіллі ў грамадстве, пасляваўвяя ўтрыманне папятатых і
эканамічных рэформ. [...] Наўнымі прырыятатаімі ў папітакі ўваходзяць: стварэнне
эфэктивна функцыянуіруючай экаімікі [...]; стварэнне грамадзянскага
грэмадства; уплывание грамадзянскай власнасці, борбарсць з нарастаюцей
прыстугасцю; духавае зяўленне Беларусі, развіцця беларускай культуры і
культур другіх нацый, прыжываючых на тэрыторыі рэспублікі.

**Svaboda** (24.04.1991) ‘Статут Беларускага Народнага Фрэнту “Адраджэнне”’.

Беларускі Народны Фрэнт “Адраджэнніе” — гэта шырокі грамадзяна-папятатные рух
за параўнарэнне грамадства і адраджэнне беларускай нацый на прыцыпах
дэмакратыі й гуманізму, развіцця культуры карэнной нацыянальнасці, ды ўсёх
нацыянальных супольнасцяў на Беларусі. Галоўная мэтва БНФ — ўсталяванне
дэмакратычнага грамадства, дасягненьне незалежнасці Беларусі.

**Svaboda** (24.02.1991) ‘Пра адносіны БНФ “Адраджэнніе” да палітычных партыяў і
грамадскіх організацыяў’.

У нашай Рэспубліцы складаецца новая палітычная сітуацыя. Вынікам барацьбы
dэмакратычных сілай грамадства з таталітарнасцю сьстэмаю, стрыйжнем якой
зьвязваць КПБ ~ КПСС, паўсталі новыя палітычныя партыі й грамадзяна
арганізацыі, незалежна ад структуры папятатычныя, АГУЛЯ й гэтых
аб’яднанняў - мірна ўсталяванне дэмакратычнага прапаанта дзяржавы, развіццё
структуры грамадзянаскага супольнасця ды нацыянальна-культурна-адраджэнне.
Разам з тым адыбылася кансалідацыйы рэакцыйных сілаў, якія пагранчаюць далейшаму руху Беларусі да дзяжнарэнны, незалежнасці, народнасці дабрыбыт, імкнуцця да рэстаўрацыі неабмежаванага панавання камуністычнае нэмэнклатуры. У гэтых варунах найважнейшым змяншо тусіх дзяжнарэнных грамадзянскіх арганізацыйі ёсьць адрэзництва дзеяньняў, памяркоўнасці ва ўзаемадачыненьняў. Перад нашым народам доўга шлях да канцавой мэты, перададлець які могчыма толькі ў адрэзінстве.


Тут могуць быць узаемныя супярэчнасці (напрыклад, паміж беларускімі інтелектуаламі і палітыкамі, бо першыя не прымаюць выкарыстання нацыянальнай сымантэкі ў якасці ідзэлагіі).

Nasha Niva (1991) ‘Запіска ад рэдактара’. Nasha Niva

Рэпарцёр, палітолог, гісторык распавядаюць не пра тое, якая сытуацыя ёсьць “на самой справе”, а пра тое, якой яны як сабе ўяўляюць. [...] Суб’ектъынае бачаньне і адчуваньне людзеi, сабрана ў адным выданні – гэта й ёсьць нацыянальны сьветапогляд.


У рэалінсці людзьмі вазацца, нацыянальнае адраджэнне й беларускі шлях могуць разглядацца як метафары месца. Країна Беларусь як толькі самавызначаецца, але й прыходзіць на вызначанае ёй ва ўжо складзенай зуравейскай інтэрацыі месца. [...] Вынікі іхняга [Польшчыны, Нямеччыны, Францыін] і нашага шляху істотная ў адзінай метафіцыйнай пасторы. Яны змагаліся і стыўвердылі прыварытай правое чалавека, грамадзянская супольнасць, адкрыцтага грамадства, - тое, на што без фармулёвак пагаджаеца наша звячаёвая сьведамасць. [...] Усе нашыя цяжкасці звязаньня ня столькі з самастанаўленнем, колькі з вызваленнем ад чужих, пакінутых стэрэатыпаў, найперш – ад чужой імпэрскай гардзіны.


Chapter 2


Рэалінне становленьне беларускай гаспадаркісты на прынцыпах дэмакраты, реформаванне эконоцкі невозмозна бяз решения праблем молодзі, ее образаванне, фэдэразыяной падготовкі і воспитанні на істарычных, культурных, трунных, патрыятычных традыцыях народа, без павышения ролі молодзі, ее общественных объеданенняў в
государственном, экономическом, культурном строительстве. В республике создан Государственный комитет по делам молодежи, реализующий основные направления молодежной политики, определяемой руководством страны.]


Республика повторяет общий путь постсоюзной, постсоветской эволюции из куска некогда единого и могучего государства в суверенное европейское среднее государство, нарабатывает свои институты гражданского общества, Конституцию трудным путем проб и ошибок. Мы только в начале пути, и поэтому ни один из документов, принятых очень часто поспешно, в атмосфере большого эмоционального напряжения и накала, не может считаться окончательным: ни Конституция, ни законы... Все нуждается в совершенствовании, реформе, отработке деталей, все надо решить по возможности внутри страны, не вынося свои споры и обиды на европейский и мировой уровень, выбирать при этом союзников себе самим. Однако избегая при этом опираться на радикальные силы как правого, так и левого толка.

Что касается политических атак на Беларусь и на ее Президента, в частности, то российские эксперты не побоялись отметить их инспирированный, несправедливый характер. Было отмечено, например, что стратегия западных средств массовой информации состоит в том, что говорят о правах человека в основном там и в тех странах СНГ, где они не нарушаются. С удивлением было зафиксировано полное молчание западной печати о нарушении прав граждан русскоязычного населения в Прибалтике, о правозащитных неблагоприятных ситуациях в Закавказье, Приднестровье и т.д.


Деидеологизация, деполитизация, деструктуризация общества, слабая самоорганизация гражданских структур позволяет этому режиму выжить. Власть сознательно препятствует формированию гражданского общества, стремится искусственно консервировать нынешнее состояние апатии, индифферентности, нигилизма, социальной аморфности. […] Наоборот, искуственно используя демократические формы, атрибуты и лозунги, он лишь укрепляет авторитарную власть.

Zlotnikov L. (26.08. 1996) ’Добро пожаловать в азиатскую страну Беларусь’. BDG

Противостояние президентской команды с парламентом и политическими партиями - это, действительно, борьба за собственность и власть. Но это не только борьба старой номенклатуры, которая сама в прошлом персонифицировала собственность и власть и которая хотела бы вернуться к прежним временам. Гораздо важнее то, что значительная часть элиты отстаивает сегодня либеральный вариант развития в рамках европейской цивилизации. Т.е. в рамках такой цивилизации, в которой собственность отделена от власти, в которой существует свободное от государства гражданское общество и жизнь людей не зависит от милости или гнева монарха.

Предполагается, что представители различных политических сил страны соберутся за круглым столом 21 августа. Для участия в работе форума приглашены все политические партии, общественные организации, профсоюзы и представители органов власти. […] Констатируя тяжелейший экономический и политический кризис в государстве, авторы проекта резолюции видят спасение в создании гражданского общества. Всем участникам круглого стола предлагается взять на себя обязательство: “Всю свою деятельность осуществлять исключительно в рамках Конституции и законов” и установить мораторий на всякие конституционные изменения.


Двухтомник Светланы Алексиевич, вышедший в московском издательстве <Остоженка>-почти год назад, появился наконец и в Минске. Этому событию был посвящен творческий вечер писательницы, состоявшийся в прошлую среду в кинотеатре <Победа>. Сама Алексиевич способна на труд души, который называет адской работой, что под силу не каждому. В ней нет менторства и категоричности - эти качества, как правило, редко сопутствуют уму и таланту. Она не стремится поучать и переделывать все человечество, не торопится судить, чтобы не плодить ненависть - порождение культуры борьбы и баррикад, заложниками которой оказались мы все. Она не любит неолигармий типа <совок> и <быдло>, свидетельствующих о бесспособности и бесконечных колебаниях перед выбором тех, кто неуютно чувствует себя вне строя, в котором маршировали несколько поколений. […] Все, о чем говорит Светлана Алексиевич сегодня, вроде бы уже сказано и ею – в книгах, и другими - в других книгах. Но если до сих пор все это остается либо непонятным, либо недоступным, остается одно - повторять. Что ни одна идея не равна человеческой жизни. Что наши проблемы нельзя решить на баррикадах. Что, не имея гражданского общества, нельзя нарастить мускулы, необходимые для новой жизни. Что нельзя жить так, что, оглядываясь назад, видишь в прошлом лишь огромную братскую могилу и лужу крови.


Фабрикой либеральной мысли называет себя Независимый институт социально-экономических и политических исследований, который, кстати, через несколько месяцев собирается отметить свой пятилетний юбилей. Девиз научного учреждения: “Политикой могут заниматься немногие, а в “гражданском строительстве” должен участвовать каждый”. Чтобы читатель получил более полное представление о работе вашего института, расскажите, какую программу вы завершили и чем заняты сейчас? В рамках последнего проекта “Принципы свободной рыночной экономики в программах и деятельности основных субъектов политики и экономики Беларуси” мы провели серию семинаров. Посвящены они были проблемам экономических реформ в посткоммунистическом обществе. […] Поэтому, проводя семинары, приглашали на них представителей самых разнообразных структур гражданского общества — лидеров десяти ведущих политических партий, руководителей общественных объединений и крупных экономических структур, представителей госструктур — Верховного Совета […] Кроме того, звучали предупреждения о том, что централизация власти — вещь, с которой надо обходиться крайне осторожно. […] Что же касается рекомендаций дальнейшего совершенствования гражданского строительства — они просты. Не народ должен служить государству, а государство — народу.
Шумарова, Е. (08.06.1996) ‘Модель милосердия’. Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia

Фонд “Детям Чернобыля” в особом представлении не нуждается. Ну а его президент Геннадий Грушевый едва ли не самая яркая фигура в международном гуманитарном движении помощи жертвам Чернобыля. Сделанное за семь лет фондом показало, каким потенциалом обладает гражданская инициатива в решении многих социальных проблем. В частности, в организации детского оздоровительного отдыха. […] Я считаю, что опыт нашего фонда красноречиво показывает, насколько эффективно могут действовать гражданские объединения не только в плане “постановки проблем перед государством”, но в первую очередь в плане их качественного практического решения за счет личного потенциала людей. Мы создали модель, образец такого общественного движения, которое способно самостоятельно, без организационной и финансовой поддержки государства, осуществлять масштабные социальные программы. И если бы на нашей работе знали побольше, то же сегодня можно было бы по-новому строить отношения между государственными и негосударственными структурами, занятыми решением одних и тех же социальных проблем. Не диктат и не бюрократический контроль, а перераспределение ответственности, прав и обязанностей между государством и гражданским обществом. От этого выиграли бы все, кроме корруптированного чиновничества. […] Было время, когда чуть ли не признаком хорошего тона считалось бросить в сторону вашего фонда камуфлет. Это уже позади, угомонились ваши противники? […] Мы взялись доказать, что не только государство, но и самостоятельное объединение простых граждан, даже вопреки желанию тогдасской власти, может решать социальные проблемы десятков тысяч людей.

Тропецкая Г. (07.10.1997) ‘Чего хотят белорусские Женщины?’ Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia

Завтра меня осудят. Отсутствие женской солидарности, несознательность, непонимание исторического момента — тот минимум прегрешений, в которых я буду уличена. И тем не менее, рискну говорить о том, чего в сущности нет (хотя, признаться, это довольно утомительно) А именно о женском движении в Беларуси, которое, как полагают дамы-лидерши независимых женских организаций, имеет место быть, но о котором большинство из нас — не лидер — практически ничего не слышало и не знает. Странные дела: едва я завожу разговор об этих самых независимых женских организациях, собеседницы, словно сговорившись, спрашивают: “Где они? Назовите хоть одну!”. Факт примечательный, хотя бы потому, что на сегодняшний день в республике зарегистрированы и действуют около 20 чисто женских объединений, в том числе политическая партия. Все вместе они дружно вознамерились бескомпромиссно отстаивать права и законные интересы белорусских женщин, содействовать повышению их значимости в жизни общества, развитию интеллектуальных способностей и повышению материального благосостояния соотечественниц. Цели, чего говорить, чрезвычайно актуальные и благородные. И, между прочим, “отстаивают” и “содействуют” уж как минимум года два-три. А ежели мы результатов на себе никак не ощущаем, так это, надо думать, исключительно по причине собственной отсталости. […] А слышу привычные, ни к чему не обязывающие, сентенции на предмет отсутствия в обществе истинной демократии и доверия, несоблюдения прав человека, нежелания государства на деле, а не декларативно озаботиться женскими проблемами. […] Есть и более определенные позиции. Как, например, решительно потребовать возвращения белорусского общества в правовое русло Конституции Беларуси 1994 года, проведения демократических парламентских выборов. Право, не знаю, такое ли уж
непосредственное отношение к улучшению положения женщин имеет последнее требование. И уж по-прежнему гремя в догадках, какие меры наши активистки станут предпринимать, ну хотя бы против феминизации бедности.


Выступая на встрече, председатель наблюдательного Совета БЖК, писатель Василь Быков отметил, что в Беларуси нет так называемого гражданского общества и оно не создается. Вместо этого в жизни страны остается пустая ниша, которую доверху заполняет власть и зависящие от нее политические силы. В этом раскладе нет места объективной нейтральности и неангилированности. Участники круглого стола сообщили о многочисленных нарушениях прав человека в различных регионах Беларуси, преследовании инакомыслия, запрещении деятельности демократических организаций и профсоюзов.

Information Unit of BDG (04.08.1997) ‘Хельсинкский комитет о разрушении гражданского общества в Беларуси’. BDG

Хельсинкский комитет выразил обеспокоенность тем, что за последнее время Александр Лукашенко удалось похоронить все демократические завоевания, достигнутые в начале 1990-х годов. Особенно беспокоит эту крупнейшую правозащитную организацию нарушение прав масс-медиа и неправительственных организаций в Беларуси.


Однако и сам фронт был в ответе за разгром, который его постиг. При посещении его офисов накануне голосования 28 мая 1995 года наблюдались лишь слабые признаки активности, а в 17.30, казалось, все ушли домой. Не сомневаясь в общем в единстве их членов, зачастую трудно избежать чувства, что демократические движения в бывшем Советском Союзе являлись лишь бледным подобием политических партий.

Права человека в Беларуси. Эта проблема уже не первый год муссируется в зарубежных СМИ. В зависимости от угла зрения этот вопрос подается то в чересчур темных, то, наоборот, в светлых тонах. Истина, конечно, посередине. И ближе всего к ней оказывают те, кто изучает проблему вдумчиво, спокойно и объективно. Несколько раз в нашей стране побывала английская неправительственная правозащитная организация. Англичане очень серьезно изучили вопрос и опубликовали в Лондоне доклад, который сегодня мы представляем на суд читателей.


На территории стран СНГ и в государствах бывшего коммунистического лагеря применение Западом двойных стандартов дискредитирует всеобщие ценности прав человека и демократии.

Уровень развития гражданского общества в Беларуси, может быть, и ниже по сравнению с некоторыми самодовольными западными государствами, но действительно ли он ниже, чем в большинстве бывших советских республик? В Беларуси в настоящее время нет политических заключенных, и тем не менее страна
была избрана в качестве объекта для особенно жесткой критики. [...] Законные основания для озабоченности потонули в риторике, маскирующей сомнительные интересы.

Почему же тогда смещение Александра Лукашенко так важно для всех от правых до левых как на Западе, так и на Востоке? Прежде всего потому, что им не легко манипулировать. Несмотря на все разговоры о Сталине и “советском тирании”, Лукашенко может оказаться по иронии судьбы истинным белорусским патриотом… Хотя он, может быть, и не носится с флагами и символами, он верит в то, что независимость имеет смысл лишь при значительной поддержке населения. На простых граждан также не производит впечатления националистические атрибуты. Они чувствуют себя белорусами, впитывая все то из своего советского прошлого, что они считают лучшим.

**Evmeniov, A. (05.11.1997)** ‘Международная конференция по правам человека пройдет в Минске’ *Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

[в] МИДе мы высказали свою позицию по поводу опубликованного в “Советской Белоруссии” доклада Британской Хельсинкской группы о ситуации в вашей республике. Сразу хочу пояснить, что эта группа не имеет никакого отношения ни к белорусским неправительственным, ни к международным правозащитным организациям, в том числе и к нашей Хельсинкской федерации. По нашему мнению, опубликованный доклад не соответствует требуемым качественным стандартам и фактически только наносит вред гражданскому обществу Беларуси.

**Dorokhov, V. (27.11.1997)** ‘Одной свободой стало меньше’. *BDG*

Тихая “чистка” сохранившихся после референдума демократических “типов” сменялась решительным наступлением на независимую прессу – последнюю структуру гражданского общества, реально противостоящую нынешним властям. Теперь с полным основанием можно говорить о переходе режима Лукашенко в новое качество.

**Lukashenko, A. (08.04.1999)** ‘Послание Президента Национальному Собранию’. *Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

Принятие на республиканском референдуме 24 ноября 1996 г. новой редакции Конституции Республики Беларусь озаменовало собой качественное изменение правовой системы, [направленной на] существенное повышение эффективности мер государственного регулирования всех сфер общественной жизни при одновременном развитии институтов гражданского общества. Для этого следует использовать широкий спектр прямых и косвенных рычагов государственного воздействия на процессы воспроизводства.

Я убежден, что Беларуси удалось сделать свой выбор в пользу стабильного постепенного движения вперед, в пользу концепции устойчивого развития. Права человека, демократия, рынок не должны превращаться в очередную доктрину, которая ломает жизнь и судьбы людей. [...] Мы реально движемся к общим идеалам прав человека, демократии и свободной экономики”. Однако достичь этих идеалов мы можем, только продвигаясь по собственному пути, учитывая и разумно используя мирвой опыт, ни в коем разе не копируя слепо чужие образцы. Для нас неприемлемы как полный возврат к практике исторического прошлого, так и бездумное насаждение западноевропейского либо американского пути.
Формирование развитого гражданского общества, отвечающего потребностям социальной практики переживаемого страной исторического этапа, — вот магистральный путь нашего развития в перспективе.

Chapter 3


Беларусь вступает в новый век как состоявшееся суверенное европейское государство. […] Суть этого момента состоит в том, что мы создаем свою государственность, государственность на более высоком уровне. [...] Развитие демократических институтов, создание общественных организаций и объединений - все это определяет современный облик Беларуси. [...] Суть гражданского общества - не конфронтация, а совместная конструктивная работа общественных организаций, движений, политических партий и всех ветвей власти. Нам не нужны потрясения и смута, нам нужен порядок и процветание страны!


Как отметил на пресс-конференции председатель Конституционного суда Григорий Василевич, особенность нынешнего периода заключается в интенсификации конституционного контроля. […] Во многом это обусловлено тем, что гражданское общество становится более активным участником демократических процессов. В это время усиливается и внимание государственных органов к защите прав и свобод граждан.


Любого здравомыслящего человека сам факт появления подобного постановления способен повернуть в шок. Во-первых, власти официально признали, что гражданского общества в Беларуси нет. То есть граждане никак не самоорганизованы и не в состоянии защищать свои права и свободы. От кого? Во всем мире структуры гражданского общества существуют для того, чтобы защищать права и свободы граждан… от государства! Именно развитостью институтов гражданского общества, эффективностью их деятельности и определяется степень демократизации государства.


Беларусь - “унитарное демократическое социальное правовое государство”. Это положение закреплено в Конституции нашей страны. […] Насколько мне известно, никто из высших руководителей Беларуси никогда не заявлял, что государственное устройство республики идеально. Напротив, неоднократно подчеркивалось, что мы постоянно развиваемся в направлении сближения с опытом европейских стран, который и там нередко далеко не идеален. То, что наша государственность и наше гражданское общество развиваются, несмотря на все трудности переходного времени, очевидно для любого непредвзятого человека.В оценках нынешней ситуации с реализацией основных прав человека со стороны оппозиции много надуманного, политизированного. Оппозиция критикует власти, имея в виду некий достаточно абстрактный идеал, сформированный во многом ею самой. Да, я
согласен с теми, кто говорит о неполной развитости белорусской демократии. Но нынешняя государственная система Беларуси гораздо совершеннее той, которая существовала еще несколько лет назад, и, главное, что она постоянно улучшается.

Белорусский президент считает, что “несправедливо закрывать глаза на те шаги, которые предпринимает власть Республики Беларусь, особенно в последние годы, по дальнейшей демократизации страны. Важным подтверждением этому служит констатация международными наблюдателями за президентскими выборами 2001 года наличия гражданского общества в Беларуси”.

Домашу сымпатызуючь тыйя, како мы звыкля называцыць “незалежным беларускім грамадзтвам” — сцэва суполак, партыйных групаў, гуртыкоў, асветніцкіх, правабарончых, рэлігійных і спартовых арганізацыяў ва ўсеі краіне. Патэнцыял незалежага беларускага грамадзтва абмежаваны, але правераны. Яно выгрыва-ла цяжар шасці гадоў супраціў Лукашэнку.

Сур’ённым рэзэрвам апазыцыі — і гэта вылупча Беларусь на прастораах СНА — ёсьць широўка разгаліванаенне сетка няўрадавых арганізацыяў, у якіх знаходзіцца прыгулулу і шмат хто з апазыцыіных палітыкаў. Наступствамі кіравання беларускіх уладаў, заклопачаных заахаваннем свайго манапольну становішча ва ўсіх сферах грамадзкага жыцця, сталася апазыцыйная палітыка інтыяцый беларускага “трыццягам сэктару”.

Вялікая заслуга Кансульта тыўна-назіральнай групы — развязцё ў Грамадзянскай сувольнасці жыцьцёздольных палітычных структураў і кааліцыяў, якія ў стане выйграць выбары і ўтварыць стабільны ўрад. […] Кааліцыя нацыянальных і дзяржаўных структур, апазыцыянных прэзыдэнту, — новы фэнэмэн для беларускай палітычнай культуры. Ідэя стварэння такой кааліцыі стала другой па сіле ідэя, вакол якой зтруўваліся грамадзяне краіны, пасяля нянявода ідзі перадачы ўлады “моцная асоба”, дыктатару.

“ННI”: Якая сіла ў сённяшняй Беларусі можа ўзяць на сябе задачу дэмакратызацыяў грамадзтва? Г.-Г.Б.: Палітычныя партыі, незалежны ад Лукашэнкі недзяржаўныя арганізацыі і незалежныя СМІ адкрываюце вялікую ролю ў змаганні за дэмакратычны ў Беларусь Незалежная міжнароднае супрацоўніцтва з гэтымі групамі, бо дзяржаўныя органы рэзным чынам падаўляюць дэмакратычныя сілы ў Беларусі і ўжываюць сродкі, каб перашкодкіць развіццю палітычных структур і Грамадзянскай супольнасці. Грамадзянскія супольнасці ў краінах белага СССР павінны навучыцца будаваць кааліцыі палітычных і грамадскіх сіл, каб супрацоўніцтва кандыдату ад прэзідэнцкай улады пераканаўча і вар тага даверу суперніка. Калі грамадзянская супольнасць зможа дзейсна і пераканаўча прадстаўць сябе выбарцу, аўтарытарная систэма пахіснеецца.
Abramova, O. (05.03.2004) ‘Доктрина доктора Вика’. *BDG*

Процессы по консолидации оппозиционных сил страны я называю для себя частью “доктрины доктора Вика”. Сегодня бывший руководитель КНГ ОБСЕ в Беларуси, посол Ханс-Георг Вик утверждает, что является единственным человеком, который знает, что надо делать с Беларусью. Под словами “надо делать” он, очевидно, имеет в виду прежде всего смену власти. Процессы по консолидации оппозиционных сил страны обставляются со стороны г-на Вика некими условиями. А именно: он предлагает не предоставлять внешнего финансирования тем структурам гражданского общества, которые не входят или не желают входить в объединенную коалиционную структуру. Вершиной этого проекта, по всей вероятности, должны стать президентские выборы в Беларуси, в которых будет участвовать единий кандидат от оппозиционной коалиции. [...] Конструкция выглядит достаточно логичной, но только из “прекрасного западного далека”.

*Sovetskaia Belorussia - Belarus’ Segodnia* (05.09.2001) ‘Операция “Белый аист”. (Иностранные спецслужбы - против Беларуси)’ *Sovetskaia Belorussia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

Сообщает источник. [...]Авторитарный характер установленной Лукашенко власти препятствует упрочению “либеральных ценностей”, развитию “гражданского общества”, внедрению политических, экономических и культурных свобод. [...] Ярко выраженная антисоветская орентация Александра Лукашенко, стремление воссоздать союз России и Беларуси, с последующим включением в него других республик бывшего СССР, противоречат интересам Запада на обширных пространствах постсоветской Евразии, служат детонатором воссоздания СССР в духе идей и ценностей нынешнего белорусского Президента. Все это, вместе взятое, побуждает Запад желать устранения Лукашенко как главного препятствия на пути к геополитическим моделям “нового мирового порядка”.

Политической и социальной средой, на которой базируется проект “Белый аист”, является белорусская оппозиция, БНФ, оппозиционные организации и кружки, независимые СМИ [...].”

*Lukashenko, A. (22.03.2002)* ‘Вывопление Президента Республики Беларусь А.Г. Лукашенко на итоговом пленарном заседании постоянно действующего семинара руководящих работников республиканских и местных государственных органов - 22 марта 2002 года’.

Надо постепенно повышать роль общественных организаций в системе государственного управления. [...] Они должны стать на деле выразителями интересов общества, а не отдельных вонзующихся политиков или политиканов. Только в таком случае их деятельность позволит активизировать борьбу с волокитой, бюрократизмом и коррупцией, будет способствовать эффективной работе управленческого механизма.

*Lukashenko, A. (27.03.2003)* ‘Лукашенко, А. Г. О состоянии идеологической работы и мерах по ее совершенствованию. Доклад Президента Республики Беларусь А.Г. Лукашенко на постоянно действующем семинаре руководящих работников республиканских и местных государственных органов 27 марта 2003 г.’.

Наши гражданское общество опирается на недавно избранные Советы депутатов, профсоюзы и молодежную мощную организацию и ее союзников. Вот три основные опоры нашего общества, которые призваны обеспечить связь народа с органами
власти, вовлекая граждан в активное государственное строительство вместе с другими участниками политического процесса и осуществляя контроль за теми структурами власти, которые имеют много этой власти и распоряжаются материальными ресурсами.

Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus' Segodnia. (04.03.2003) ‘Выбор, где выигрывает большинство. Пресс-служба Президента’.

Президент высоко оценил прошедшие выборы в местные Советы депутатов и подчеркнул, что ява 73 процента избирателей свидетельствует о высочайшей ответственности белорусского народа за налаживание жизни в собственной стране, о высокой гражданской позиции жителей Беларуси. “На данном этапе вижу своей дальнейшей целью системную организацию работы Советов всех уровней и формирование на этой основе опоры гражданского общества”, - заявил Александр Лукашенко.


Ведь определение гражданского общества во многом основывается на менталитете. Скажите, может ли быть сформировано в стране гражданское общество без таких характеристик, как терпимость, патриотизм, уважение к старшему поколению, и некоторых других? Очевидно, что это базисные понятия, вне которых говорить о гражданском обществе просто невозможно.

Гражданское общество там, где ответственность, в том числе и персональная, где дисциплина и порядок, где в рамках конституционного поля формируются структуры, поддерживающие политику государства, в том числе и антитеррористическую. [...] Так, говорят, что чем выше охват общественными организациями, тем эффективнее гражданское общество. Видимо, речь должна вестись и об ином […], гражданское общество не может строиться на фундаменте социальных потрясений. То есть нельзя одновременно стрелять в живых людей и призывать их потереть. Точно так же вряд ли получится одной и той же рукой голосовать за "свободу" и "порядок".


Эти организации называют себя и неправительственными, и общественными, и самодейственными. Еще их именуют “третьим сектором” - в отличие от структур власти и политических партий. О себе они часто говорят: мы, дескать, и есть представители гражданского общества, а интерес наш - социальные, культурные и другие общезначимые проблемы.

Там дискутировали, продолжая давно длившейся спор: кто мы и зачем, в чем наша миссия, куда идем и хотим прийти. Представитель общественной организации “Женский ответ” Светлана Королева, например, считает, что “руководство ассоциации политизирует ее деятельность в ущерб общественной работе, действует в интересах и под влиянием политических партий националь-демократического спектра. Пора решить, какой союз нужен общественным организациям - профессиональный или политический”. Противоречие явно имеет место. Листая всякую печатную продукцию, распространяемую на конгрессе, я все время натыкалась на темы, лозунги, аргументы “из другой оперы” типа “государство ведет решительное наступление на
свободу слова”. В лексиконе, допустим, Объединенной гражданской партии это более чем привычный, обязательный оборот, но эти-то организации занимаются политикой в другом измерении - молодежной, социальной, правовой, просветительской. Участие в различных политкампаниях - наравне с оппозиционными партиями, - как показала практика, ни к чему хорошему не приводит. В этом, похоже, со временем убедились гражданские инициативы.


Но не всегда власть планирует опираться только на силу. Куда проще заняться подменой понятий. И вот уже элементы гражданского общества становятся ячейками государственной “вертикали”. Не каждый заметит подмену. […] На дворе XXI век, и как-то так без видимых причин и прямых указаний формируется гражданское общество. Да, да, то самое гражданское общество, которое “опирается на недавно избранные Советы депутатов, профсоюзы и молодежную мощную организацию”.


Они внесли самый большой вклад в год наведения порядка, каковым был объявлен год безобидной Овцы. Общими же усилиями год принес нам ликвидацию более десятка газет и общественных организаций, тотальный контроль за FM-эфиром, введение должностей заместителей руководителей по идеологии на предприятиях и в организациях, едва ли не повальное зачисление людей в возрасте от 15 до 30 в “ньо-комсомол”.


Ликвидированы такие крупные общественные организации, как гомельские “Гражданские инициативы”, гродненская “Ратуша”, барановичская “Варуга” и некоторые другие. С подачи Министерства юстиции устрили самых активных - тех, кто действительно работает с людьми, осуществляет социальные проекты, а не просто чисится на бумаге. Закрывали быстро и по сомнительным причинам, например, за ограхи в делопроизводстве. Это даст повод международному сообществу и белорусским правозащитникам утверждать, что власти желают уничтожить влиятельные и неподконтрольные им элементы гражданского общества. Вместе с тем с конца лета удары по общественным организациям, пользуясь военной терминологией, наносятся уже не точечно, а приобретают характер ковровых бомбардировок.


Во-первых, надо учредить на бюджетные средства ежемесячный журнал “Открытая трибуна”, в котором без всяких цензурных изъятий смогут публиковаться политики, экономисты, культурологи. Во-вторых, ввести на Первом национальном телеканале субботнюю дискуссионную программу, для участия в которой будут приглашаться все значимые и значимые фигуры нашей общественной жизни. И в том, и в другом случае не должно быть никаких персональных или идеологических ограничений: чем шире будет разброс оценок и мнений, тем лучше для нашего общего дела. […] Это повысит международный авторитет государства и, главное, оздоровит политический и нравственный климат в стране, даст мощный импульс законотворчеству и поможет смести бюрократические преграды, держащие
Предпринимательскую инициативу и становление гражданского общества, чертами которого являются многопартийность, парламентаризм и местное самоуправление.

**Posokhov, S. (16.08.2004)** ‘Горизонты политической «вертикали»’. *Belorusy i Rynok*

Проблема власти в Беларуси в том, что она не взаимодействует с гражданским обществом. Но общество очень слабо политизировано, поэтому схема не работает. Власть не может провести замер “температуры общества”, нет обратной связи. […] В последнее время президент сам предпринимает усилия, чтобы возникла эта обратная связь, — призывает активнее работать профсоюзы, молодежные организации. Он это чувствует: здесь вакуум. Но у них не получается. Потому что не сформировалось гражданское общество. Для него нужно несколько условий: самоорганизующиеся граждане, свободная пресса и рыночная экономика. И самое главное — политический процесс. Он подразумевает публичное обсуждение насущных, стоящих перед обществом проблем — реформу ЖКХ, здравоохранения, пенсионного обеспечения и т. д. Этого нет, и вся громада властной “вертикали” оказывается подвешенной в вакууме. Председатели горисполкомов если и консультируются, то, максимум, — с директорским корпусом или с “прикомплектными” общественными объединениями.

**Chapter 4**

**Lukashenko, A. (25.05.2006)** ‘Строго по курсу!’ *Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

Исторически определилось, что в основе нашего общества четыре столпа, они существуют, их надо развивать: профсоюзы, Советы депутатов, молодежные и ветеранские организации. Мы сохранили преемственность. Это не просто наиболее массовые объединения. Это сформировавшиеся, зрелые, испытанные временем и доказавшие свою эффективность инструменты самоорганизации и самоуправления народа.

**Lepeshko, B. (29.09.2005)** ‘Не вместо, а вместе’. *Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

Заявленная А.Лукашенко идея формирования “опор” государства в виде мощных профсоюзного, молодежного движений (плюс, естественно, Советы, ветеранские и женские организации) достаточно привлекательна и наверняка найдет союзников в обществе. Речь идет ни много ни мало о сохранении и развитии как белорусского государства, так и белорусского общества в целом. Слишком сильны вызовы XXI века, чтобы разрешить самим себе вольность отказать подставить плечо тем, кто пытается на деле реализовать общенациональные задачи.


Именно тесное сотрудничество государства и общественности в мире принято считать основным признаком гражданского общества. Заметим, конструктивное сотрудничество, а не бесполезное противостояние, которым иной раз склонны подменять истинные понятия теоретики шаблонных демократий. “Некоторые зарубежные политики считают, что для Беларуси нужна именно конфронтационная, направленная против государства структура гражданского общества. С этим мы согласиться не можем, — однозначно заявил Александр Лукашенко. — Беларуси
нужны единство народа и власти, в том числе конструктивно настроенные организации, работающие на благо людей и государства. Вот наше видение сути демократии и структуры гражданского общества”.


Если белорусские демократические силы не будут финансироваться из–за рубежа, то они станут маргинальными и исчезнут вообще — примерно так высказался на “Немецкой волне” бывший глава миссии ОБСЕ в Беларуси Х.–Г. Вик. Очень откровенное и честное высказывание. И очень точное. Вик — опытный политик и знает, что говорит. Иными словами, если Беларусь оставить в покое, не вмешиваться в ее дела, не оплачивать наемых революционеров, то она будет спокойно развиваться, постоянно повышая благосостояние своих граждан и занимая все более достойное место в мире. Но почему–то это как раз и не устраивает наших западных друзей.


Интересно мнение известного российского политолога Сергея Карта-Мурзы, высказанное им в интервью корреспонденту “СБ”. […] Я не могу считать, что белорусская оппозиция, которая демонстрирует нерациональный подход, демократична. Я думаю, что ваша оппозиция - это часть интеллигенции, которая впала в какой–то момент в состояние “маниловщины”, утопического сознания: ими нарисован какой–то облегченный путь к западному благополучию, без оврагов и крутых поворотов, похоже, реальный взгляд на вещи ими вытеснен на периферию сознания.

Dugin, A. (27.01.2006) ‘За кулисами некоторых НПО’. Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia

Но в том–то все и дело, что в современных условиях именно общественные неправительственные организации, объединения и фонды становятся главными проводниками глобализации и американизации. […] Фактически мы имеем дело с разведывательной деятельностью эпохи информационного общества, которая проводится, в отличие от традиционных форм шпионажа, почти открыто. Мы видели, какую роль неправительственные организации и фонды сыграли в Сербии, Грузии, Украине.

Lukashenko, A. (25.05.2006) ‘Строго по курсу!’ Sovetskaia Belorussiia - Belarus’ Segodnia

В нашем понимании гражданское общество — не структура, направленная на конфронтацию различных слоев населения, на противопоставление государству. Государство и демократия — это две составляющие единого целого, которые взаимосвязаны на принципах партнерства и конструктивного сотрудничества. Ведь делать–то нечего: плаваем в одной лодке, раскачивание которой может обернуться бедой для всех. […] Мы, еще раз подчеркиваю, идеем и должны идти от жизни: искусственно ничего не придумывая и не насаждая чуждого. Исторически определилось, что в основе нашего общества четыре столпа, они существуют, их надо развивать: профсоюзы, Советы депутатов, молодежные и ветеранские организации. Мы сохранили преемственность. Это не просто наиболее массовые
объединения. Это сформировавшиеся, зрелые, испытаные временем и доказавшие свою эффективность инструменты самоорганизации и самоуправления народа. Конечно, их потенциал далеко не полностью реализуется. На новом этапе развития страны от них ожидается более эффективное участие в решении государственных задач. Но еще важнее, чтобы их деятельность была “заземлена” на интересы и нужды простого человека.


Але ў сакавіку 2006 г., пасля падзеяў на Кастрычніцкай плошчы, у беларускім грамадстве — прынямі ў часы яго — нешта скраунулася зь мёртвай кропкі. Гэтым амаль наўлоўным, неўсявядомым даванца адчуваўтэма того, што нешта змянілася, мабыць, адрозьнівающца палітычная кампакція высы 2006 г. ад 11-ці папярэдніх вёснаў.


Klaskoўski, A. (24.03.2006) ‘Выбух на Кастрычніцкай плошчы’. Nasha Niva

Біпаларная схема — палітычная апазицый цупраць рэчыму — занадта спроцчаная. Кастрычніцкая плошча паказала: паўстае грамадзянская супольнасьць. Жыхар намётавага лягеру Стась Пачоўбут зазначыў: там сабраўся не партыйцы, не актыўсты, а “рэальныя эўрапейскія людзі”.


По словам В. Ивашкевича, за 20 лет, прожитых с момента катастрофы, отношение властей к людям практически не изменилось. Если раньше на головы белорусских крестьян осаживали радиоактивные облака, гнали пионеров на первомайские демонстрации, то теперь “власти скрывают объективные данные о состоянии пораженных территорий, не допускают гражданское общество к контролю за своими действиями, ведут пропаганду”. “Потому, как и 20 лет назад, перед всеми нами, белорусским обществом, стоит одна главная задача — добиться, чтобы власть была подконтрольна гражданам”, — считает политик.

Khodosovskii, V. (03.05.2006) ‘Интервью за час до камеры’. Belorusy i Rynok

Нужно придумать форму сотрудничества. Лучшая из них — самоорганизация. Независимые самоорганизованные структуры берут на себя определенные функции, от них, а не из штабов, исходят инициативы. Например, интернет-сообщества. Они очень многое могут сделать. Вот над этим мы работаем.


Если бы не было весенних событий, то, наверное, в Европе сегодня бы сомневались, а есть ли в Беларуси гражданское общество, есть ли в Беларуси потребность свободного слова, есть ли в Беларуси народ. Накануне президентских выборов было много подобных вопросов. Весна 2006 г. показала, что есть. Сегодня никто не сомневается, что Беларусь — это европейская страна, заслуживающая демократии и свободы”, — считает А. Милинкевич.
Sadovskaia, M (06.02.2006) ‘Шансы на перемены’. Belorusy i Rynok

При этом А. Милениевич выступает за дифференцированный подход к сотрудничеству: “Я всегда говорю, что существует две Беларуси. Первая — это власть. За эти годы белорусская власть получила много предложений и авансов: президент был изначально избран демократическим путем, имел кредит доверия от народа и мог проводить важные для будущего процветания реформы. Однако был выбран путь отката от реформ, регресса. И все предыдущие попытки Европы наладить диалог с нынешней белорусской властью не привели к какому-либо успеху. Но есть вторая Беларусь — это общество, которое фактически является заложником белорусской власти. И наиболее активная его часть — это гражданское общество. И именно с этой Беларусью Европе нужно как можно более активно контактировать, поддерживая неправительственные организации, партии, независимые СМИ и профсоюзы.”


Сегодня в нашей стране нет серьезных конфессиональных, национальных или классовых противоречий и антагонизмов. Все граждане и жители Беларуси чувствуют себя совершенно равноправными, ни на ком не стоит печать второго сорта, как в некоторых других странах.


Веду́чы зма́ганьне за захаванне́ нашай культуры, нава́т калі мы не перама́гаем сё́ньня, мы перама́гаем гі́стары́чна. Ты́я, хто сё́ньня адча́йна зма́гачацца за старую Гораднюю, за стары Менск, ствара́ючы мадзь бу́дучы грамадзянскае су́полнасці адказных і небы́кавых людзей. Гэтая тая “соль зямлі”, што абавязкаў спатра́біца вольнай Беларусі. Не непаўтарна́й у сваім вандалі́зме, а звы́чайнай, эўрапейскай краіне.


Лепшыя, свядомыя сілы ў грамадстве ста́ць за адраджэнне, за нармальны ўжытак ды жыццё беларускай мовы. Адно важна памятаць, што мова — гэта мы, хто называе
себе беларусамі. Не будзе мовы — і нас не будзе, а будзе мова — і мы будзем заусёды.

**Zhukai, M. (25.09.2008)** ‘Ці не лепш цяпер сказаць праўду, чым заўтра расчароўваць людзей?’ *Narodnaia Volia*

Тэатралізаваньня прыстаўленні на “лініі Сталіна” несвядомым маладым беларусам паказваюць тое, што павінна быць, а не тое, што было ў сапраўднасці. Як, напрыклад, у супастаўленні даваенага савецкага савагандысцця кінафільма “Есці завтра война...” з сапраўднай вайной.

**Nasha Niva (30.06.2006)** ‘Фольксваген: “Кааперация з Лукашэнкам сьмерці падобна”. Галоўнае пытаньне, праць якое існуе канфрацтацція паміж рэчымі і яго апалиўтамі — гэта не пытаньне дзяржавы (яно вырашанае) і нават не пытаньне дэмакратыі, а пытаньне нацыі. Пытаньне, якой мусіць быць беларуска нацыя, застаецца адкрытым і падтрымвае супольныя праць інтэлектуалаў, незалежна ад палітычных поглядаў і маўнай арэштацці. Відавочна, што гэта ня мусіць быць абрэзкам агульнасуўковага калалос ў межах былой БССР — праект, які цяпер уладай і рэалізуецца. Паўстанне нацыі як супольнасці грамадзянства, які падтрымляюць асабістую адказнасць за захаванне калектыўнага дзяржаўныя, ясну неабходным чыньнікам таго, каб улада Лукашэнкі “зацісталася”. Толькі тады магчыма і варыйнт “ратаваньня ў Расею”. Аднак у такім выпадку фактарам ратаваньня незалежнасці стане менавіта нацыя, а не рэчым.

**Chapter 5**

**Lukashenko, A. (24.04.2009)** ‘Посланне Президента беларусскому народу і Національному собранню’. *Sovetskaia Belorussia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

Четвертое. Развитие отношений партнерства между государством и общественными институтами. Ведь чем разнообразнее их спектр, тем больше возможностей для проявления социальной активности у граждан.


Беларусь будет работать над реформами в плане демократии, развития гражданского общества, свободы деятельности неправительственных организаций, верховенства закона и соблюдения прав человека, но по тем аспектам, которые действительно считаются важными для себя.

**Lukashenko, A. (27.11.2010)** ‘От сохранения – к приумножению. Предвыборная программа кандидата в Президенты Республики’. *Sovetskaia Belorussia - Belarus’ Segodnia*

СОВЕРШЕНСТВОВАТЬ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ВЛАСТИ. Гарантирована открытость государственных органов для людей и гражданских инициатив. Усилиется роль общественных объединений и местного самоуправления в жизнедеятельности государства.

Общественные объединения активно сотрудничают с государственными органами, беря на себя заботу о ветеранах, молодежи, решениях экологических проблем, сохранении памятников истории и культуры, укреплении семьи, заботу о подрастающем поколении. По сути, они оказывают содействие государству в проведении социально–экономических и правовых реформ.


Дело не в том, что их якобы “зажимают”, препятствуют регистрации и деятельности. Это пустые отговорки. И стремление собственного неудачи списать на государство. Соблюдайте, как все, законодательство, и никто не сможет отказать вам в регистрации или помешать работе. Основная причина в ином. Как говорил классик, страшно далеко они от народа, от реальных проблем людей!


Ксендз Игорь: Пани Мая сказала, что Курапаты павшись быц гістарычным сімвалам, знакам, як Хатынь, Траснянец. Мне здаётся, на тым месяцы павінен быць мемарыял [...]. Там бол чалавечча, гтэта бол усёй нашай зямлі. [...] І зрабіць яго не за дзяржаўны кошт, а за ахвяравання ўсіго народа. Гтэта будзе паміц аб усіх бязвінна загінуўсіх на нашай беларускай зямлі, не істотна, ў якім часе.

П.Якубович: Мне нравится мысль, высказанная ксендзом Игорем, что мемориал не должен стать какой–то государственной идеей. Обустройство (во всех смыслах) Куропат должно быть прежде всего общественной инициативой. Полагаю, что наш сегодняшний “круглый стол” и есть первый шаг этой инициативы.

М.Кляшторная: Гэты крок не першы. Грамадская ініцыятыва ў гэтай справе не зникала з момантu абуждэння людзей Курапатамі. Тут (ин Kuropaty) кожную суботу збіраюць талокі, людзі парадаюць мацілы, усталёўваюць надмагільньія знакі, рамантуюць пашкоджанья. [...] Акрамя ініцыятывы грамадства, патрэбы ўдзел дзяржаўны ў справе ўвекавачэння памяті ахвяраў. Падзеі, што пакінулі нам мацілы “Курапаты”, адбываліся на дзяржаўным узроўні. Дзяржаўная павінна раскрыць гістарычную праўду гэтых канкрэтных падзей, прынесці прабачэнне і стаўць помнік тра́гічныму часу і палеглым у курапатыкім лесе. Яшчэ і сёння людзі з добраі ініцыятывай рэцькуюць быць знявацьнымі там хаўпункам і звальненным з працы. [...] Малады чалавек, які затрьмаў двух вандалаў, што ламалі крыжы, перажыў такі зняваў, ледзь у пси́хушку не трапіў.

П.Якубович: Ну, как хотите, Майя Тодорова, но я не сталкивался с таким фактом, что если человек задержал преступника, то его за это уволили с работы. Похоже, это очередная городская легенда. Но согласишься с тем, что сегодня некоторая часть населения продолжает считать Курапаты чем–то таким... сомнительным.

П.Якубович: [...] Во всяком случае, сказать спасибо тем молодым волонтерам, которые, не считаясь со временем, ежедневно, “толокой” приводят в порядок территорию, обносят памятные кресты, даже выслеживают и сдают в милицию варваров–недорослей. Но от меня не дождутся доброго слова и те взрослые люди,
которые неутомимо пытаются превратить Куропаты в филиал Бангалора. […] Пусть бы оставили Куропаты в покое!

Да, нужна помощь власти. Скажем, в Куропатах нужно отремонтировать ливневую канализацию, которая просто уродует мемориал, благоустроить подъездные дорожки, отогнать за установленное законом расстояние жадных “застройщиков” и т.д. — надо думать о том, что речь не идет всего лишь о смене “знаков”. В том смысле, чтобы мы не столкнулись с очередной “заорганизованностью”, чтобы вместо колонн с транспарантами политического содержания в Куропаты не устремились стройные шеренги мобилизованных “масс”. С казенными венками и столь же казенными речами. Думаю, вы согласны с тем, что с Куропат надо снять искусственную политизированность, которая никогда и нигде не приводила ни к чему хорошему.

Н.Смехович: Настаиваю на своем тезисе: пора нам отывать от мысли, что главную и всеобъемлющую роль в обществе играет только государство. Мы никак не можем внушить себе самую простую мысль, что главное — это человек, а не государство. И именно от гражданского общества должны исходить все инициативы.

П.Якубович: Что касается Куропат, то будем просить и помощи у местной власти, чтобы навести порядок и благоустроить территорию. Эти проблемы, конечно, никакое гражданское общество никакими инициативами не решит. Это под силу исполкомам. В том числе вопросы охраны, поддержания порядка на территории были бы не лишними. Пусть подключаются БРСМ, “Белая Русь”. И “Молодой фронт” незарегистрированный тоже — хватит ярости, все — белорусы!

**Barbarich, G. (16.03.2009)** ‘Ассамблея включила «второе дыхание»*. Belorusy i Rynok

С. Машкевич отметил важный, переломный характер нынешней ситуации в стране. Есть вероятность, что конфронтация с властями уйдет в прошлое и Беларусь повернет к демократическим ценностям. “Без мнения такой активной составляющей общества, как третий сектор, дальнейшие изменения в обществе осуществлять было бы неправильно. […]”, - сказал С. Машкевич в интервью “БР”.

Ассамблея приняла ряд документов. В ее резолюции отмечено, что третий сектор “с надеждой и сдержанной оптимизмом приветствует шаги белорусской власти, направленные на сближение отношений между гражданским обществом и государством, а также стремление Беларуси приблизиться к европейским стандартам”. Однако “с обеспокоенностью” отмечается, что пока эти шаги “носят точечный характер и не связаны с системным улучшением положения в области прав человека, в том числе свободы ассоциаций”.

Участники ассамблеи не скрывают, что возможности гражданского общества влиять на ситуацию в стране невелики. “Такое положение общественного сектора не отвечает европейским стандартам. Там гражданское общество помогает государству, берет на себя часть его ответственности. У нас же к неконтролируемой деятельности государство относится настороженно, а то и враждебно. Проблемы во всем - и с регистрацией объединений, с юридическими адресами, с получением помощи и со многим другим”, - констатировал С. Машкевич.

**Iakavenka, V. (30.06.2009)** ‘«Уходящие партнёрства»: как форма не мае належнага зместу’. Narodniaia Volia
Еўропа спрабуе наладзіць мірнае, вольнае і гаднае для чалавека жыццё на сваім кантыненце. [...] Чытано рэзалаць канферэнцыі Нацыянальнага форуму грамадзянскай супольнасці: “Дарожная карта “Усходняга партнёрства” для Беларусі”. Канферэнцыя адбылася 5—6 ліпеня 2010 года ў Мінску. І перада мной гэты важны друкамент, хоць, калі шырця, у ім ёсць і істотны прагал. Мяя думка... У самым канцы, пад тэкстам, пералічаны больш за два дзесяці грамадскіх арганізацый, ад Асамблеі прадмакратычных НДА Беларусі да незалежных рафсаюзаў і Рэспубліканскай асацыяцыі інвалідаў-калясачнікаў. [...] Адно, пра што я тут жа пашкадаваў. Нацыянальны форум абшыўся без дзякватычных творчых аб’яднанняў, скажам, мастакоў, пісьменнікаў, тэатральных дзеячаў... І таму для мяне застаўся нерэшткам крытычны “гуртаванне” як грамадзянскай супольнасці, так і Нацыянальнага форуму для ўздзелу ў гэтай надзвычай важнай партнёрскай канферэнцыі. [...] А калі так, тады за падобнага роду форумам павінна стаць широкае прыдставіўцтва, якое адстойвае нацыянальныя інтэрэсы. Афарбоўку такім форумам прыдзяць, як правіла, нацыянальна культура і мова, далей прыз іх ужо выяўляюча характер і менталітэт народа.


У сваёй праграме Лукашэнка гаворыць пра разнявольванне ініцыятывы і нават свабоду: “Будзе дазволена ўсё, што праця не забаронена”. Але ў праграме няма ні слова пра нацыянальную культуру і беларускую мову. А таксама ні слова пра дзяквачнаю і падзел уладу. Канэліза Райс у свой час назвала яго “апошным дыктарам Еўропы”. Єн хоча стаць першым дыктарам Еўропы — маўківа прынятым. [...] Без дзяквачы і без мовы Беларусь не стане еўрапейскай нацый.

Ianka Kupala (1905 – 1907) ‘А хто там ідзе?’

А хто там ідзе, а хто там ідзе
У агроныстай такой грамадзе?
— Беларусы.

А чаго ж, чаго захцелася ім,
Пагарджацьм вею, ім, слабым, глухім?
— Людзьмі звашці.

Iakub Kolas (1939) ‘Свайму народу’.

На прастор, на шырокі разлог
Выходзі, мой народ, грамадою [...]


Калі ўсё ж такі беларусы адчуючы сябе нацый, грамадзянскай супольнасцю, а не безгаласнымі “тугтэйшымі”, якімі пагарджалі і дагэтуль пагарджаючы забугорныя “браты” і розныя айчыннія недарэкі? Пра гэту карцеля зведаць у чалавека, які пры камунальным рэжыме, роўна як і пры акунацыйным нямецкім, і пры польскім, і пры цыцераўнім, заўсёдзяцьтамаўся і трэмежаць Беларушчыны, той самай грамадзянскай паціцы, якая — па вызначанні — нідзэ і ніколі не супярэнцяла нацыйнальным інтэрэсам. [...] Грамада і грамадзянская — слова аднакарэннія. Але гэта ўсё толькі слова. А павінна, каб грамадзянская стала сутнасцю грамады. І тады ў нас усё адрымаецца.