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The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Old and New Democracies: An integrative framework and empirical evidence from two countries

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Abstract

Purpose

According to current research, the functions civil society organisations (CSOs) perform differ considerably between countries. As Austria is said to have a predominately service providing and the Czech Republic a predominately expressive third sector, we

- i) investigate whether these assignments can be supported when a more detailed conceptual framework of CSOs' functions is applied;
- ii) compare the relative importance of CSOs' functions between the two countries and
- iii) reflect on our findings in view of the different stages of democratic development, with Austria representing an 'established' and the Czech Republic a 'new' democracy.

Methodology

Referring to a theoretical framework of CSOs' functions, we collected organizational data from a sample of 523 CSOs in the two countries. The analysis of quantitative data is supplemented by descriptions of the activities and objectives of CSOs, which derive from interviews with key informants from eighteen CSOs from Austria and the Czech Republic.

The paper enhances existing research by a conceptual framework on CSOs' functions, which does not restrict CSOs to fulfilling either the service or the expressive function, but enables to measure contributions to several functions simultaneously. Furthermore, as we used a harmonized approach for data gathering in both countries, our findings are based on well comparable data.

Findings

While Austrian CSOs devote significantly more work time to service delivery than Czech CSOs, the advocacy and community building functions are of greater relevance in Czechia. The different structure of the third sectors in both countries – shaped by corporatism in Austria and the legacy of the communist regime in the Czech Republic – and the unsettled situation of the third sector in Czechia, where most CSOs were established or re-established after 1989, are found to be the main reasons for the differences.

Our findings contradict the assumption made in some literature that Czech CSOs are predominately expressive. Additionally, they reveal that there is a difference between what many CEOs of CSOs think is important for their organisations to do and what they are actually doing.

Keywords: Civil Society Organisations, Functions, Austria, Czech Republic, Democracy

Introduction

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) constitute an essential feature of functioning societies. In Europe they take a key role in the provision of social services, but also perform a large variety of other functions, such as giving voice to unaddressed issues, offering alternative ways of occupational socialisation, or facilitating social inclusion (cf. Kramer, 1981; Rose-Ackerman and James, 1986; Kendall, 2003). Current research findings suggest that the third sectors' societal roles differ considerably between countries, depending on the regimes they are embedded in. According to Salamon/Sokolowski et al. (2000), Austria belongs in the *'social democratic'* nonprofit regime, with CSOs being predominately busy with service delivery. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, is characterized by the so-called *'statist'* nonprofit regime, showing prevalingly expressive CSOs.

Against the backdrop of these classifications, in this paper we (i) empirically investigate whether these findings can be supported when a more detailed conceptual framework of CSOs' functions is applied and (ii) compare the relative importance of the individual functions between Austria and the Czech Republic. Furthermore, we (iii) provide explanations for the identified differences and similarities between CSOs' roles based on the political, economic, and social configurations and the different stages of democratic development in the two countries, considering Austria as an 'established' and the Czech Republic as a 'new' democracy.

To this end, we analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. Referring to a theoretical framework of CSOs' functions, with service delivery, advocacy, and community building as the main functions, we collected organizational data from a sample of 523 CSOs in both countries. In order to be able to compare our findings, we used a standardized questionnaire for data collection. The analysis of these quantitative data is supplemented with descriptions of the activities and objectives of CSOs for a better understanding of the way they fulfil their societal role. These data arise from interviews with leaders of eighteen CSOs from Austria and the Czech Republic.

In doing so, we enhance existing research on CSOs' functions by a conceptual framework that does not constrain CSOs to either performing the service or the expressive function, as the convenient concepts applied in comparative studies have done so far. Our framework enables to measure CSOs' contributions to several functions simultaneously, which represents a completely new approach. Also worth mentioning is the harmonized procedure of data gathering in both countries, which makes the comparison of our findings highly reliable. Finally, the reflection on our results against the backdrop of the democratic developments in Austria and the Czech Republic opens a new view on the topic.

The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Society

A literature review on the societal roles of CSOs reveals that multifarious functions are associated with third sector organisations. Partly, this is because several disciplines deal with the role of the third sector, with each of them identifying and emphasizing different aspects. Another reason is provided by the fact that CSOs emerged from different traditions, which can be best captured by the various terms used for CSOs (cf. Lyon 1996, in Nowland-Foreman, 1998): The notion of the nonprofit organisation on the one hand, rooted in the United States and constituting a modern legal and economic paradigm, primarily describes a special form of a 'firm'. In most cases this nonprofit firm is a public-serving or charitable organisation. The civil

society approach, on the other hand, has a much older tradition – anchored in European scholarship – and draws mainly from sociology and political science. Here the role of civil society, in which CSOs can be seen as the organized part of civil society (cf. Zimmer and Freise, 2005), is rather that of providing “people with the opportunity to organize” themselves, “to discover shared views and advance those views, and to provide facilities or services to be used by themselves or by others” (cf. Lyon 1996, in Nowland-Foreman, 1998). These various approaches might be reflected in the heterogeneous composition and the different roles of third sector organisations between different countries, too.

Apart from this, we know from the findings of the *Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project* (CNP) that third sector organisations in different countries focus on different functions. In the framework of the CNP, a distinction between countries with a predominately service providing and a predominately expressive third sectors is drawn (cf. Salamon et al., 2004). Salamon/Anheier (1998) explain these variations through their social origins theory, which takes the historical developments, especially the interrelationships between social classes and social institutions, into consideration. They argue that the roles of CSOs¹, as well as the size of the third sector, substantially depend on the welfare regime they are embedded in. This reasoning starts from (and expands on) Esping-Andersen’s (1990) classification of welfare regimes, assuming that the level and type of welfare state activity leaves more or less room for CSOs either to complement or substitute the public provision of services and express the needs of groups in society. Based on quantitative data from 40 countries Salamon/Sokolowski et al. (2000) identified four different nonprofit regimes², each representing social forces that affect the size and shape of the respective third sectors and the functions of CSOs (Salamon and Sokolowski, 2001). However, when identifying the dominant function of the third sector in each country – either the service or the expressive function – they classified each CSO according to their primary activity as belonging to one field of the *International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations* (ICNPO) and then divided the fields into service fields and expressive fields. Although this is convenient to do, it is apparently too coarse: it does not take into account the fact that CSOs in real life contribute to more than these two functions, nor that most CSOs contribute to several functions simultaneously. As a result, the empirical findings of the CNP on CSOs societal contributions are narrowed down to two roles only, though other literature offers a large number of other functions that CSOs’ perform.

Civil Society Organisations’ Functions in Literature

The broad range of functions that CSOs are believed to perform are mostly discussed separately by different disciplines. Only few scholars dedicated themselves to the functional spectrum of CSOs and have tried to compare and systematize them. Table 1 gives an overview of these concepts, showing that the most prominent role attributed to CSOs in all concepts is service delivery, but that it is accompanied by other functions, different in different authors.

James/Rose-Ackerman (1986) as well as Salomon/Sokolowski et al. (2004) draw a distinction between the service and the expressive functions. The latter involves activities that provide

¹ According to the definition of CSOs used in this paper, CSOs have a formal organisational structure, are self-governing, do not distribute profits, and are private entities. Furthermore, they are voluntary organisations, ie. non-compulsory and involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation (cf. structural-operational definition (Salamon and Sokolowski, 2001)).

² Countries clustering in the liberal or the corporatist regime are characterized by a large third sector, while countries with a statist or social democratic regime have a rather small third sector.

avenues for the expression of cultural, spiritual, professional or policy values, interests and beliefs. This approach restricts CSOs to being either service providing or expressive.

Not all scholars follow this either-or approach. They offer concepts that recognize that CSOs perform several functions at the same time: Land's (2001) concept in which service delivery is accompanied by philanthropy, charity, and fellowship reflects the situation of the US. While charity refers to the transfer of resources from groups that are better off to the more needy (Wolpert, 2001), philanthropy embraces all activities that aim at setting up and sustaining CSOs.

Frumkin (2002), on the other hand, who offers the most systematic concept found in literature, mentions the service, the expressive, the advocacy, and the social entrepreneurship function. Advocacy, the representation of interests of a certain group or a certain issue, can be seen as part of the expressive function. It can be best defined as *"every activity that focuses on changing policies or securing collective goods"* (Jenkins, 1987). Social entrepreneurship refers to the possibility offered to people by CSOs to gain organisational skills and to get socialized differently, which generates entrepreneurs that are different from those in for-profit firms.

The remaining three concepts presented in Table 1 are quite similar, as all of them include the service, the expressive, the advocacy, and the innovation function. Innovation assumes CSOs to be pioneers that *"identify unaddressed issues and focus attention to them, formulate new approaches to problems, and generally serve as a source of innovation in the solution of societal problems"* (Salamon et al., 2000). Unlike the other two, Kramer (1981) does not mention the community building function, as it represents a younger concept, based on the work of Putnam (1993). Community building, sometimes referred to as social capital or fellowship, refers to the integrative role of CSOs. CSOs encourage social interaction, generating a sense of community that is based on mutual trust, common norms and reciprocity. Salamon/Hems et al. (2000) broaden the definition of community building by including in it the democratization role. Moreover, the expressive role to them also covers the leadership role, which could be interpreted as similar to social entrepreneurship.

Table 1 about here

While the table indicates the existence of numerous and varying categorizations, a closer look at the definitions of the individual functions shows that the authors mentioned above either offer differing definitions under similar headings or similar definitions under different headings. It becomes clear that the concepts lack a common definition of the term 'function', which makes it quite challenging for readers to compare various papers on CSOs' functions and for empirical investigators to operationalize the functions.

Conceptual Framework of Civil Society Organisations' Functions

In order to come to a common understanding of the term 'function', we refer to a conceptual framework that introduces a systematic approach to CSOs' contributions to society. This approach was developed on the basis of a literature review and on case studies in Austria and the Czech Republic. It condenses the variety of CSOs' functions into the empirically relevant

ones.³ Thus, it identifies service delivery, advocacy, and community building as CSOs' three most important functions. Unlike the most prominent concept used in empirical research on CSOs' functions by Salamon/Sokolowski et al. (2004), the concept applied here assumes that CSOs contribute to several functions at the same time. Thus, it presumes CSOs to be multifunctional, contributing to up to three different functions, albeit to various degrees. Thus third sector organizations active in the field of social services, for example, do not only provide society with social services, but also contribute to advocacy and community building, as our qualitative analysis of the interviews with social service CSOs clearly shows.

Figure 1 about here

The theoretical background of this conceptual triangle refers to social systems theory (Luhmann, 1984, 1998), with each of the functions referring to one of the main subsystems of society: economy, politics and community.

- Service provision is the function oriented towards the subsystem of economy as here CSOs deliver outputs that can be priced and are paid for in some way or other – either by the beneficiaries themselves or by some other public or private organisation. These services are, for the most part, marketable, though often the positive externalities are more important than the service itself (merit goods) or some non-marketable benefits are linked with these services (public goods such as social security or democratic participation).
- The public good is crucial for the second function, which is consequently tied to the political system of society: advocacy. Here CSOs contribute to political decision-making and governance, and thus to the making of collectively binding rules. There are various ways of fulfilling this function; they range from formal contributions to legislation and executive processes to informal lobbying and PR-campaigns to raise public awareness on specific problems.
- Community building is the third function, directed towards enhancing social capital, i.e. establishing and consolidating relationships between individuals and/or organisations. This generally means either to strengthen groups (in-groups, bonding social capital) or to foster social inclusion and integration (bridging social capital). Thus, the function comprises all activities that lead to generating a sense of community and to unifying individuals – either around a certain issue or in a locality.

According to this model, decisions and activities of CSOs result in functions that can be directed towards one, two, or all three subsystems of society.

This conceptual framework with its three major functions somewhat resembles Edwards/Foley (2001) and Zimmer/Freise (2005), who emphasize CSOs' multifunctional character and their participation *"in at least three societal spheres simultaneously"* (ibid.). Referring to systems theory, however, we provide a systematic basis for this model. While this concept that embeds CSOs' activities in three societal systems shows similarities with the welfare triangle by Pestoff (1998) and the triangle represented by Evers/Laville (2004), it is theoretically slightly different. Their triangles draw on organisations which are situated between the market, the state, and

³ The conceptual framework of CSOs' functions was developed in an earlier stage of this research project and discussed in detail elsewhere: Neumayr/Meyer/Schneider (2007a).

the community and thus categorize organizations. Our model refers to specific decisions, activities, and actions of CSOs, which serve individual surrounding systems.

Investigating the Role of CSOs – Research Approach

The data used to describe CSOs' role in Austria and the Czech Republic come from a survey among CSOs in both countries that was conducted between November 2007 and January 2008. It was based on the conceptual framework of CSOs' functions presented above. In order to be able to compare our findings, we used the same standardized questionnaire for data collection in both countries. The questionnaire consisted of questions that had to be answered spontaneously via phone-interviews as well as questions on financial and organisational facts which had to be filled in via e-mail, afterwards. Respondents were the CEOs or key informants from a total of 523 CSOs.

Interview statements regarding the activities, objectives, and achievements of CSOs in both countries, through which we try to better understand what functions are performed and how, supplement the quantitative survey data on CSOs' functions. They come from eighteen case-study-like interviews with the heads of CSOs from Austria and the Czech Republic, conducted before the quantitative survey. Additionally, we use secondary data on the third sectors of the two countries from a literature review to contextualize and explain our findings.

Sample

The Austrian sample partly derives from the Austrian business register, which is administered by Statistics Austria. However, as this register only comprises CSOs with at least one paid employee, an important part of the organized civil society is not listed there. Hence, we generated a stratified sample of CSOs without paid employees according to each federal country's population density and their respective frequency of large and small municipalities. Added together, 215 randomly selected CSOs from the business register and 37 CSOs operating with volunteer staff only were collected for our sample. Due to reasons of data security, Statistics Austria drew the sample and conducted the collection of data. The Czech sample was derived from the Albertina Company Monitor Register, which represents all Czech CSOs. A stratified sample was drawn, containing 223 CSOs including 48 CSOs without paid employees. The data were gathered by Augur Consulting, a sociological and public opinion research company. Thanks to the stratified approach, our samples represent the full ranges of the relevant populations – including very small CSOs – and thus provide a corrective to the bias towards the large, long-established organisations on which most empirical studies on the third sector tend to be based.

Measures for CSOs' Functions

Whether or not and to what extent CSOs perform the service, the advocacy and the community building functions was addressed by several questions of the survey in order to get a comprehensive picture. The findings presented in this article are based on two questions that offer different approaches to measuring CSOs' performance of the functions.

The first question consisted of 19 pre-tested statements, of which six related to service delivery, five to advocacy, and eight to community building (see Table 2). Respondents were

asked to indicate the importance of the individual statements in the framework of the mission of their organisation on a 5-point-Likert-scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Out of the means of the ratings, an overall score for each of the three functions was calculated. As displayed in Table 2, the three developed additive indices show a satisfying reliability with Cronbach's α internal consistency values of 0.694, 0.807 and 0.794 respectively. In order to examine the relative importance of each function, the means of each of the three functions were weighted in comparison to the sum of the means of all three functions.

Table 2 about here

For the second question, respondents had to state what percentage of the total working hours worked in the organisation – voluntary as well as paid work – was devoted to certain areas of duties. From a range of ten given fields, the category (i) *the delivery of goods and services* referred to the service function, and the category (ii) *lobbying and representation of interests* to the advocacy function. To calculate the share of working hours on community building, the categories (iii) *management of volunteers*, and (iv) *caring for members*, were taken together. Besides these categories, six further fields of duties⁴ were offered, making up the total of 100% of working hours. For examining the relative importance of the three functions, the percentages used on performing the functions were added up and the relative share assigned to the individual functions calculated (total of three functions = 100%).

Analysis Strategy

To picture the relative importance of the functions on the sector level we calculate the means of each of the three functions over the samples in each country. For testing the differences in the function performance between Austria and the Czech Republic we apply a non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney Test), as the variables in our samples on the relative importance of the service, the advocacy and the community building are not distributed normally. This method enables us to identify whether significant differences between both countries appear. These results are confronted with findings from our qualitative interviews, which have been analysed by qualitative content analysis.

Functions of CSOs in Austria and the Czech Republic

To examine the relative importance of CSOs' contributions to the economic, the political, and the social system of society, different approaches for capturing these functions – one resting upon subjective ratings, the other on the distribution of work time – are used. As shown in Figure 2, the application of subjective ratings deliver quite similar results for Austria and the Czech Republic: in both countries service delivery with an average of about 42% (CZ) and 38% (AT) makes up the most important function across the sample, community building the second, and advocacy the least important one. For Czech CSOs, however, service delivery is slightly, but significantly, more relevant than for Austrian CSOs. Advocacy, on the other hand, is

⁴ These categories referred to public relations, human resource management, fund raising management, project acquisition, administration, and other fields of duties.

significantly more important within Austrian CSOs (average of 22% compared to 27%)⁵. Concerning community building no significant differences appear.

Figure 2 about here

The allocation of working hours to these three functions, however, offers a different picture (Figure 3). Not only do the findings vary from the subjective ratings, but differences between the two countries appear, too. The most important function – relatively as well as absolutely – in both countries remains service delivery, as on average 74% of the labour in Austrian and 56% in Czech CSOs are dedicated to this function. That is much higher than the subjective ratings suggested, and it implies that service delivery is significantly more important in Austria. The remaining two functions occupy much less work time in the organisations than the subjective ratings seemed to indicate, and, again, the differences between the two countries are quite apparent. Community building activities are significantly more relevant in Czech CSOs, as they represent 33%, while in Austrian CSOs only 19%, of all working hours. The third function, advocacy, is of minor importance if this method of measuring is applied: Merely 7% of the labour within Austrian and 11% within Czech CSOs are dedicated to it. These results contradict the findings from the subjective ratings, as the importance of advocacy is rated higher in Czechia now, even though this difference is statistically not significant.

Figure 3 about here

Even though the results on the relative importance of CSOs' functions from these different approaches appear to be inconsistent, most variations are explainable if the way of measuring is reconsidered. Conspicuously diverting is the importance of community building, which is very high when CSOs are asked to rate its significance, but much lower when measuring the labour dedicated to it. As defined above, the community building function comprises all activities that unify individuals and generate a sense of community. Hence, community building might not only occur as a result of intentional events, meetings, and activities specifically designed for that purpose, but it also forms a part – or sometimes emerges as a by-product – of other activities, or results from institutional settings. Thus, although CSOs may contribute to community building to a great extent, it can be assumed that the share of working hours exclusively used for the purpose might be much lower.

A further cause for the smaller weight of community building in terms of working hours could result from the fact that this function is quite often carried out by volunteers. Although CSOs were asked to state the share of the paid and the unpaid labour dedicated to certain fields of duties, the unpaid labour might be underestimated by the key-informant, as it is not that visible. From regressions on the importance of community building we know that in both countries, having volunteers has a highly significant, positive effect on community building⁶, which would support this assumption.

⁵ Significance levels when applying the Mann-Whitney Test (both results highly significant at 0,001%).

⁶ Having volunteers as an independent variable was specified as a dummy in the regressions.

Differing appraisals for different kinds of work could also be a reason for the higher importance of the advocacy function when subjective ratings were questioned, since it was CEOs that were interviewed. Firstly, as advocacy is often carried out by staff working close with the executive board or even by CEOs themselves, and secondly, because staff engaged in advocacy might be better educated, CEOs would give advocacy a higher value, although the share of labour dedicated to it is smaller.

When comparing the results by the ratings and by the distribution of labour, most of the arguments referring to the decrease of the importance of community building and advocacy serve to explain the increase of the importance of the service function, too. However, the country specific difference in the increase of service delivery, which is much higher in Austria, also raises the question whether this is due to the size of the organisations, as CSOs in Austria on average are larger than Czech CSOs⁷. It is quite possible that in absolute terms the time spent on these tasks would not differ so much between the two countries, but the relative differences might be the function of size: as advocacy can be assumed to inhere economies of scale, for example, the workforce carrying out advocacy is relatively smaller in large CSOs (which perform both functions), as it is less labour intensive compared to service delivery.

Even if we can find plausible explanations for the differences between the subjective assessments of the importance of individual functions and their time allocations, what remains striking are the differences between the two countries. Czech CSOs seem to spend a much higher percentage of their energy and time on community building and advocacy than their Austrian counterparts, while the relative part of all working time spent on service delivery is much higher in Austria.

Confronting these results with the CNPs' findings on CSOs' functions, which classify Austria as a country with a service-dominated and the Czech Republic as a country with an expressive-dominated third sector, only the classification of Austria can be confirmed. Our data show that the Czech Republic, when referring to the allocation of working hours, has a service-dominated third sector, too. Our method reveals that CSOs in the Czech Republic are not predominately busy with expressive activities. Even though our method refers to the voluntary and paid workforce like the CNP does, we examine the workforce and the labour within an organisation using a functional approach instead of simply classifying the organisation as belonging to one of the ICNPO fields. Moreover, we distinguish three functions while the CNP only two, which is likely to have deducted from the expressive function.

Details on performing the Economic, Political and Social Functions

Alongside the relative importance of the service, the advocacy and the community building functions, the following section gives insights in the way these functions are performed. The findings are based on the individual items regarding the three functions, which were rated by key informants from CSOs (see Table 2).

Service Delivery – CSOs' Contribution towards the Economic System

As already shown, the relative importance of service delivery – based on ratings – in the Czech Republic is slightly higher than in Austria (see Figure 2). However, when the absolute

⁷ On average, Austrian CSOs in the sample have about 34, Czech CSOs only 15 paid employees (in full time equivalents).

importance of individual statements is compared, no obvious differences between both countries appear, as the graphs, which connect the means of each item per country, show (see Figure 4). Only the item *'offering services and products to those who cannot pay for it'* is rated lower by Czech CSOs.

Figure 4 about here

These very similar ratings are quite surprising, as the allocation of the workforce shows that Austrian CSOs dedicate a much higher share of work time to service delivery. Thus, we could conclude that service delivery for CSOs in the Czech Republic is an important issue; however, they do not offer as resource- and personal-intensive services as CSOs in Austria do. One reason might be the different structures of the Czech and Austrian third sectors: CSOs in the Czech Republic are mainly active in the fields of sports and recreation, and only marginally in the fields of social services, which are the more labour-intensive fields (Hyánek and Pospíšil, 2007). This has historical roots: the paternalistic communist state was a monopoly provider of all educational, cultural, social, health and other services and public administration still finds it very hard to accept the loss of its monopoly in the public services after 1989. Thus, in the field of public services the dominance of state and state-run organisations is clearly visible, although CSOs gradually expand their activities to these fields: *"Today, because the number of clients has been growing, we also run a short stay shelter for the mentally and physically handicapped so that our services to people with some health handicap have become more comprehensive."* (Interview with CSO, Czech Republic).

In Austria, on the contrary, CSOs are very much involved in the provision of health and social services, as a close cooperation between the public sector (financing the services) and the third sector (providing the services) is given: *"So, we are, quasi, we offer services for handicapped people, for elderly people, are active in nursing, in-patient and mobile, ..."* (Interview with CSO, Austria).

Advocacy – CSOs' Contribution towards the Political System

The advocacy function can be fulfilled through different activities, which either address political decision makers directly or focus on awareness-raising among citizens – and thus address politicians or any other institutional elite (Jenkins, 1987) indirectly. For example, *"presenting materials on the town square, or ... having cages at the ... square, well, doing politicking"* (Interview with CSO, Austria) or *"organizing education on human rights, conducting workshops in schools"* (Interview with CSO, Czech Republic) serve as indirect activities, which are labelled by the term citizen's advocacy. The more direct activities on the other hand, like political campaigns or legislative activities are labelled by the term *'public advocacy'* (cf. Boris and Mosher-Williams, 1998; McCarthy, 2001). As CSOs might emphasize different ways of how to advocate for their issues, we asked about the two kinds of activity separately.

As shown in Figure 5, for CSOs in both countries citizens' advocacy – questioned by items on raising awareness, being a public voice, or sensitising the public – is much more important than activities contributing to public advocacy. Thus, CSOs are more engaged in mobilizing the public, but less in influencing politics through more direct interventions. In addition, the graphs, which connect the means of each item per country, show, that for all single items Austrian CSOs state a higher importance than Czech ones. In particular, Czech CSOs rate

bringing about political changes or writing political ideologies or statements relatively low within their organisations mission, as the average for both is 2.0 (on a scale between 1.0 and 5.0).

Figure 5 about here

The lesser importance of advocacy in the Czech Republic, and especially of public advocacy, might be associated with the institutional settings and the relationship between the government and the third sector in both countries. While in Austria a large part of the third sector has good affiliations with one of the political parties and close links to public administration (Heitzmann and Simsa, 2004), Czech CSOs are very suspicious of any relation or contact with political parties (Hyánek and Pospíšil, 2007). The mutual mistrust and ignorance between third sector organisations and the government is one of the legacies of the communist years, which is hard to overcome: On the one hand, as under the communist regime it was quite impossible to influence public policy, people continue to believe that public engagement is not useful. On the other hand, the political representation has been more than hesitant about accepting the third sector as partner in public policy and public administration. Even though recently the relations and the cooperation between the government and the third sector have been gradually improving, the progress has been very slow as it is only limited to some central departments, some individual politicians, and a small number of the most active CSOs. Most governmental departments and most CSOs remain unchanged in their attitudes and activities, and the two sides have not managed to lead a meaningful and conclusive dialogue about their relationship. The state has not attempted to formulate its stance or policy towards the third sector (cf. Hyánek and Pospíšil, 2007).

In contrast to this, the close link of many CSOs with political parties is one of the main characteristics of the Austrian third sector, as many CSOs have their roots in the workers' movement or its Christian Catholic counterpart at the end of the 19th century (Heitzmann and Simsa, 2004). By then, the parties – as well as the church – had built up organisations of their own to bind their members, and these organisations still have close links and influence in the political decision making. For small and newly established CSOs, which do not have such affiliations to political parties, however, it is very difficult to make themselves heard and to promote their interests.

Besides these individual affiliations another important principle of Austrian society – corporatism – provides third sector organisations, especially professional associations, with significant political influence. In the framework of the Social and Economic Partnership (*Sozialpartnerschaft*), large and traditional CSOs are recognized as participants in discussing social and economic questions and are highly valued by the public administration. Thus, CSOs are involved in the process of preparing legislation, although this right is formally given only to a few associations and only for bills concerning the tasks of these associations. In practice, however, all the bills prepared by government ministries are sent to a large number of CSOs for comment (Neumayr et al., 2007). Some CSOs even have the feeling that they get involved too much in the legislative process and they fear they might be exploited:

„We are in many cases certainly exploited, too. They say that ... [our organisation] also has said so, has contributed [to the law], too.“ “[Government] massively asks us, often, yes. ... and we do, yes for sure we try to participate in formulating legislation in favour of our

clients. But we always say as well that the decision is a political decision. And we can only give advice. Not more" (Interview with CSO, Austria).

The lack of such opportunities and traditions of participating in public affairs and the political process in the Czech Republic might be responsible for the lower importance of public advocacy for Czech CSOs: *"Czech politicians generally are unwilling to acknowledge the third sector's political role. Despite institutional and legal guarantees ... they resist CSOs involvement in decision making and are still unwilling to provide information on public matters"* (Frič et al., 2004). Only some of the relevant relations and procedures have been institutionalized, most are informal and depend very much on individual relations between CSOs involved and their counterparts (Hyánek and Pospíšil, 2007).

"The worst is that there are no rules ... not like it was in the past ... in the twenties ... when everybody understood what we stood for and what we did. Today, we have to keep explaining and fighting and persuading ... and begging ... And when you have finally made the right contacts and explained things, everything changes at the next election and you are back to square one with the new councillors" (Interview with CSO, Czech Republic).

From there, many CSOs *"have turned increasingly to informal personal contacts with people in state and administrative bodies"* (Frič et al., 2004), as our interviews support: *"Well, we always went to ... we used ... we did things through personal contacts."* (Interview CSO, Czech Republic). Preferring personal contacts with relevant officials to open action and regular procedure again is a legacy of the past, as in an environment of nepotism all entities, and thus CSOs too, search for personal contacts: *"In fact, through direct talks, directly speaking with the politicians. In both chambers. With public servants, ministry officials also ... if they are people we know and can talk to."* (Interview CSO, Czech Republic). Nevertheless, for Austrian CSOs personal contracts with politicians are an important way for public advocacy, too.

A quite obvious difference between Austria and the Czech Republic concerns the use of media for citizens' advocacy, as all the interviewed CSOs from Austria stressed the importance of good relations with media and the strategic use of them for advocacy: *"... me or my press spokesman call three, four journalists in appropriate leading media and tell them that we've some troubles somewhere and, well, ask if we may tell a bit about"* (Interview CSO, Austria). It's not only that media help to distribute information and to raise awareness *"So, we've contacts, like our media databank with 20.000 addresses. And we then easily send things out and hope to receive any answers."*, but they also function to exert pressure on politicians:

"But we always have the trump card of media. So, in case we do not agree at all with something, yes, then we have for sure, I don't want to name it trump card, but for sure we can say, well, I mean, when they have another opinion on it, then, and we are asked about it, then we'll tell our view. And then, let's see. Well, with this for sure one can influence, yes. And that is important" (Interview CSO, Austria).

In the course of the interviews with Czech CSOs, media were hardly ever mentioned. Only one organisation stated that the use of media was of crucial importance to them, and another organisation said that they realised the importance of the media but that they unfortunately worked very badly with them, in fact did not work with the media at all. The activities Czech CSOs prefer to influence the political decision-making, therefore, is to offer workshops and do educational work, which almost all organizations stated.

Community Building – CSOs' Contribution towards the Social System

Like the advocacy function, community building can also be subdivided into different forms, depending on the groups addressed by the function. Generally speaking, community building stands for the integration of individuals into a larger milieu and for unifying a group on a certain topic or people and organisations of a certain region. However, though individuals benefit from the community as they are provided with the opportunity to learn norms, to acquire information, organisational skills, and political competence (cf. Kramer, 1981), the 'quality' of the information and the social contacts they gain differs largely depending on whether they unify with like-minded or not-like-minded individuals (Land, 2001). *"To recruit as many volunteer collaborators and members as possible who would take an active part in our activities and get involved in issues that concern us all"* (Interview CSO Czech Republic) or *"Bringing children to the scouts, where they every day experience things, learn things, have a good circle of friends, benefit personally"* (Interview CSO Austria) are examples for community building of like-minded individuals. Although this kind of 'bonding' community building brings people together, it inheres the danger of the separation of certain groups and of mechanisms of exclusion, too.

By contrast, when individuals build communities with *"distant acquaintances who move in different circles"* (Putnam, 2000), community building rather fulfils a 'bridging' function, resulting in building social trust and tolerance. Examples thereof from our interviews are *"Well, in many municipalities scouts play an important role for the social life there"* (Interview CSO, Austria), or: *"we offer those people that have disadvantages of a language barrier and would still like to work with us as volunteers to join an English speaking group, where they can more easily fit in"* (Interview, CSO Czech Republic). This kind of community building, that 'bridges' groups is often also cited to be a prerequisite for democratisation.

In our findings from the quantitative data, where we took the theoretical distinction between these two concepts into account, this differentiation showed up surprisingly clear. As displayed in Figure 6, Czech CSOs rate activities connecting organisational members or promoting friendships within the organisation very high on average, while to combat social exclusion or to overcome boundaries between different groups is of less importance. Community building that aims for 'bonding' thus is much more relevant for Czech CSOs. For Austrian CSOs, when 'bonding' and 'bridging' activities are compared, no difference in the importance can be identified. Only when considering the overall means of both kinds of activities, bridging appears to be slightly more important⁸.

Figure 6 about here

The comparison of the two countries indicates, all in all, that community building appears to be more important for Czech CSOs (cf. Figure 2 and 3) and that this is due to the higher relevance of 'bonding' community building. As the graphs in Figure 6 nicely indicate, bonding is – with the exception of integrating members into a group – much more important in the Czech Republic. On the contrary, community building contributing to 'bridging' is of minor relevance in Czechia.

⁸ Mean for bridging activities 3.88; for bonding activities 3.82.

A straightforward explanation offers itself in the fact that a huge part of CSOs of the third sector from the Czech Republic, and thus in our sample, is active in the fields of recreation and sports, which are inhabited by membership organisations, while the vast majority of Austrian CSOs are active in the social service and health fields.

Another reason for the higher importance of bonding, but the lower importance of bridging in Czechia compared to Austria is based on the not yet settled situation of the third sector in Czechia. The rich tradition of charitable and voluntary organisations in the country was annihilated in the fifty years of Nazi and Communist totalitarianisms (1939-1989). It therefore became a necessary task for the revived, transformed or new organisations that started mushrooming after the democratic revolution of 1989 to both build their organisations and to develop their communities. In spite of some considerable progress, their position in society and community is still far from being taken for granted by the majority of people, they are not as established and embedded in their communities as they are in Austria. So, even 18 years after the political change of 1989, the amount of energy and time devoted by Czech CSOs to community building remains high.

It appears natural that in this effort Czech CSOs pay more attention to bonding because it is more closely related to the success of their mission and to their success with their stakeholders and in their communities, rather than to bridging which requires a more political stance and higher aspirations in democracy building, as our statements illustrate: *"In the 90's, the movement was revived and was first engrossed in itself, because it was necessary to build the organisation and its organs ... structure ... and to recruit members and so on"*. Nevertheless, as the statement goes on: *"But it soon became clear that our task was wider, we felt we must work in the outside world too, help the transition to democracy, educate the public and so ..."* (Interview CSO, Czech Republic).

Thus, besides fulfilling their mission, CSOs have to invest considerable amount of resources to establishing and defending their place in their communities and societies at large (Hyánek and Pospíšil, 2007). This might be connected with the early reception of CSOs in society in general, as the sector was not taken very seriously to begin with and had a negative image, which forced the CSOs to operate out of the public view (Hoogland DeHoog and Racanska, 2001).

It is not only in the relations with the public and private sectors and with the public at large that Czech CSOs have had to overcome a lot of difficulties. The relations within the civil society sector have also evolved only slowly and gradually, the situation tending to be much better on lower levels, within the individual fields of nonprofit activity or in the regions, than on the national level. For pragmatic and practical reasons the CSOs working in the same field and/or the same geographical region have proved more likely to form alliances and mutual-support organisations to promote their common interests. Thus there are around 80 umbrella associations in the country, covering most fields of activity and all the country's regions, but, in spite of several attempts to establish it, there is no national general nonprofit umbrella organisation that would serve and represent the entire sector (Pospíšil, 2006). So, the behaviour of CSOs towards one another also seems to support the research finding that Czech CSOs pay more attention to bonding than bridging.

Nevertheless, CSOs in the Czech Republic are completely aware that coordination and collaboration with other CSOs is of crucial importance, not only in order work more efficiently: *"We try to avoid being competitors to others. One reason is that if somebody comes with a case that is not suitable for us, we can send the person to an organisation that can help him or*

her. We happily publicise other organizations that provide help" (Interview CSO, Czech Republic), but also for reasons of successful representation: "We cooperate and act in unison, because this gives us more weight" (Interview CSO, Czech Republic). By the same token, Austrian CSOs also see a need for closer cooperation: "We are linked well with the others, but I think not well enough. So, more is possible and thus more, well, we have to invest more energy in networking as we do right now" (Interview CSO, Austria). Overall, the Austrian CSOs rated the importance of this special form of community building – networking with other CSOs – slightly higher than Czech CSOs.⁹

CSOs' Role in Established and New Democracies

Although the neighbouring countries of Austria and the Czech Republic share various common roots and both had vital civil societies before the turn of the 19th century, the role of the third sector can be considered to be very different nowadays.

Our investigation of empirical data reveals that service delivery is the most important function in both countries, when the distribution of work time is considered. For Austrian CSOs, however, which spend about three quarters of their working time on service delivery, it is much more important than for Czech CSOs. On the contrary, CSOs in the Czech Republic spend relatively more of their working time on advocacy and community building than Austrian ones. In doing so, however, their behaviour appears more selfish: they do spend more time on advocacy and community building, but in their own cause and on bonding, rather than in public interest and on bridging. Regarding political activities, Czech CSOs prefer indirect advocacy through workshops and education, but hesitate to engage in more direct activities.

These findings somewhat contradict the results of the CNP, where the Czech Republic is classified as a country with a predominately expressive third sector. Our findings show that Czech CSOs devote more than 50% of their work time to service delivery. Although this disparity might appear because of the different points in time when the data were gathered, the main cause is likely to lie in the different methodologies applied. On the one hand, similar to the CNP, we refer to the voluntary and paid labour worked in the CSOs to identify the functions they perform. However, the CNP classifies CSOs as performing one or the other of the two functions (service or expression) according to the one field of activity to which the whole organisation belongs, without considering the complexity of what the organisation in fact does. Thus, as data on the organisational level show, a large part of a CSO's activities gets ignored by this method. For Austria, which is classified as a country with a service-dominated third sector, our results confirm the findings of the CNP.

One major factor responsible for the apparent country-specific differences seems to be the entirely diverged development the countries have undergone in the 20th century, since Czechoslovakia was ruled by a communist regime from 1948 until 1989. Thus, many CSOs in Czechia are quite young, since the whole sector of CSOs started to awaken and to experience a new rapid growth after the revolution in 1989 only (Potůček, 2000; Hyánek and Pospíšil, 2007). More than 67% of the CSOs in our sample from the Czech Republic, but only 38 % of Austrian CSOs, were established, or re-established, after 1990. Against the backdrop of these facts, it seems natural that the young and small Czech organisations working in the flux of the post-totalitarian situation need to spend a much higher relative part of their resources on building

⁹ Average of 3.5 compared to 3.3. on a range between 1 (not important) and 5 (very important).

their communities and on promoting their causes than the older and larger Austrian CSOs, well-established in their communities and in the democratic regime.

If we compare the characteristics of the Austrian and Czech samples, it does not only become apparent that Austrian CSOs are 'older', but they are also much 'larger' (on all counts: employees, volunteer input and revenues). The structure of funding is also different in the two countries: while in Austria half of the CSOs' incomes come from public sources (46.6%), in Czechia it is only one third (33.5%). The difference is also economic, as Austrian CSOs are richer than Czech ones. Thus, since they feel obliged or pressed to allocate quite a considerable portion of their resources to community building and advocacy, Czech CSOs can develop their service providing function to a limited extent only. Moreover, service delivery is the function which can be assumed to be the most resource-intensive one, thus when organisations lack resources, service provision would suffer in the first place.

Furthermore we have to keep in mind that the differences are also partly based on the structure of the third sectors: Due to historical reasons Czech CSOs are mainly active in the fields of sports and recreation, which are more membership based and where community building seems more important, while in Austria - due to the corporatist affiliations - service provision is emphasized much more.

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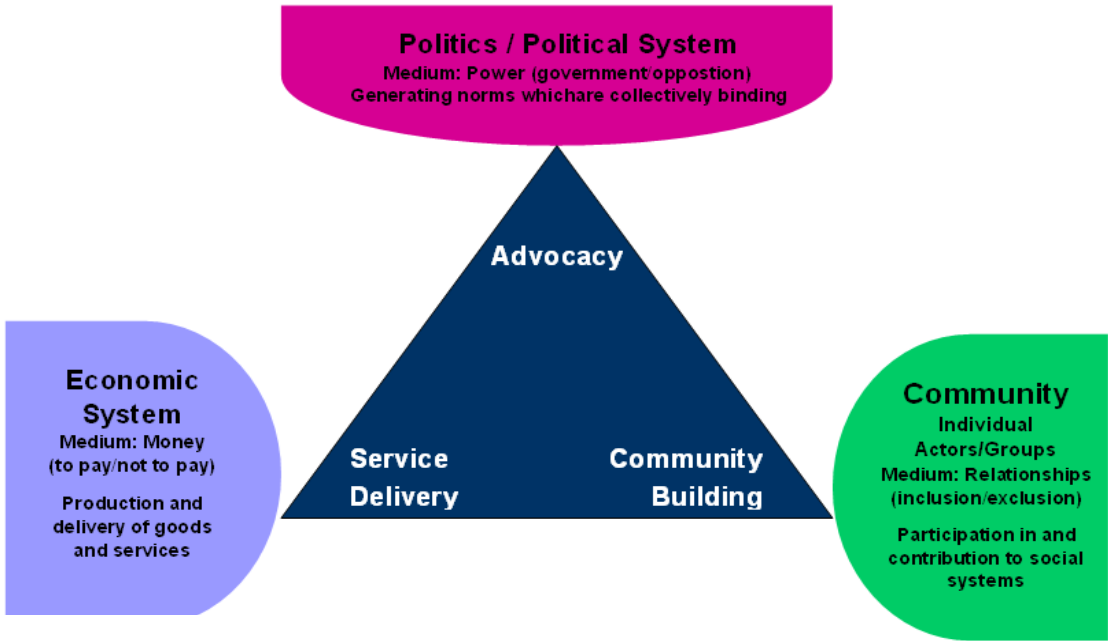
Figures and Tables

Table 1: Concepts of CSOs' Functions Identified in Literature

Function \ Author	James/Rose-Ackerman 1986	Salamon/Sokolowski et al., 2004	Land, 2001	Frumkin, 2002	Kramer, 1981	Kendall, 2003	Salamon/Hems et al, 2000
Service / Service providing							
Expressive / Value guardian							
Philanthropy							
Charity							
Improver/Advocacy							
Vanguard / Innovation							
Community building / Fellowship/							
Social entrepreneurship							

Source: Own source.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on CSOs' Functions



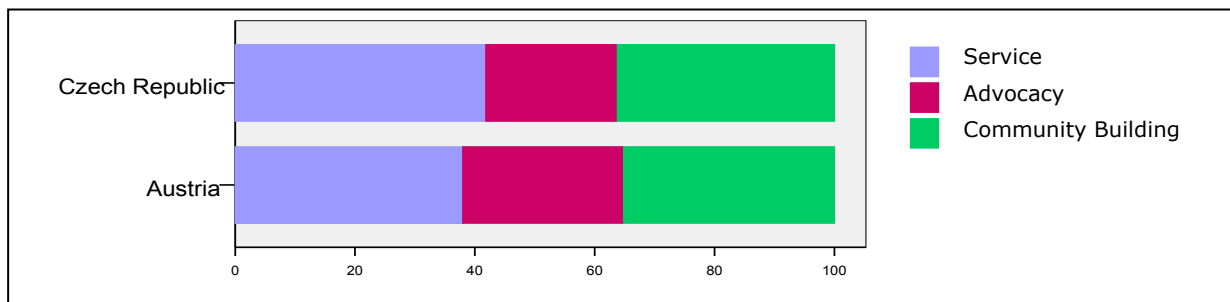
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Table 2: Indices for Measuring CSOs' functions

	Please state the importance of the following statements in the framework of the mission of your organisation from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)	Cronbach's α if item left out
Index on service delivery	(1) Providing those services demanded by our clients	.658
	(2) Improvement of the life of our clients through the services offered	.640
	(3) Continuous advancement and diversification of services offered	.642
	(4) Initiating offers according to the desires and needs of our target group	.623
	(5) Offering individual assistance for our target groups	.675
	(6) Offering services and products also to those people who cannot pay for them.	.685
	Cronbach's α (6 items)	.694
Index on advocacy	(1) Influence political and statutory decisions on behalf of our stakeholders	.765
	(2) Writing political/ideological statements	.755
	(3) Be a public voice for a certain group or issue	.784
	(4) Sensitize the general public on a certain issue	.785
	(5) To seek to bring about political changes	.759
	Cronbach's α (5 items)	.807
Index on community building	(1) Forming/establishing friendships within the organisation	.785
	(2) Integration of our members into a group, which carries out common activities	.774
	(3) Connecting people with common interests	.782
	(4) Promoting solidarity within the municipality/district/country	.763
	(5) Conquer/overcome boundaries between different groups	.754
	(6) To counteract processes of exclusion due to activities taken	.781
	(7) To foster regular meetings of members of the organisation	.780
	(8) Building confidence between people with different backgrounds.	.747
	Cronbach's α (8 items)	.794

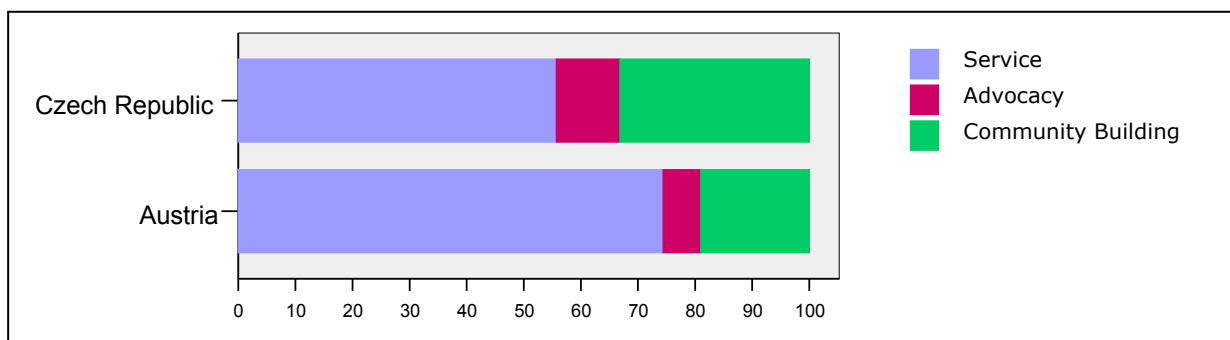
Source: Czech-Austrian NPO-Survey 2007.

Figure 2: Relative Importance of Service, Advocacy, and Community Building by Ratings



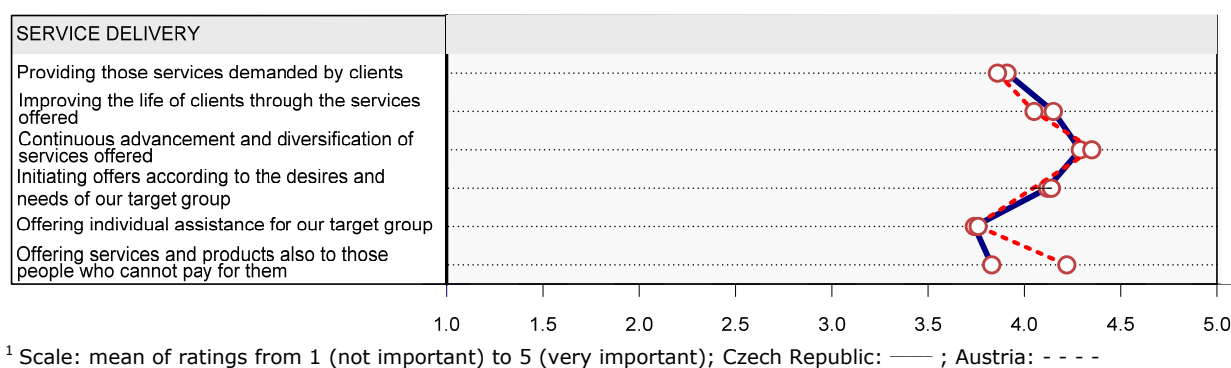
Source: Czech-Austria NPO-Survey 2007.

Figure 3: Relative Importance of Service, Advocacy, and Community Building by Working Hours



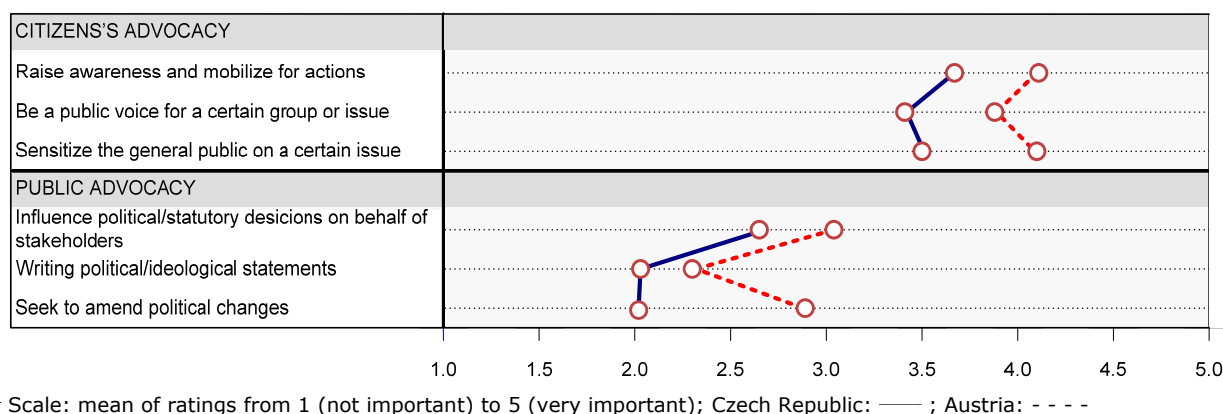
Source: Czech-Austria NPO-Survey 2007.

Figure 4: Importance of Service Delivery in the Czech Republic and Austria



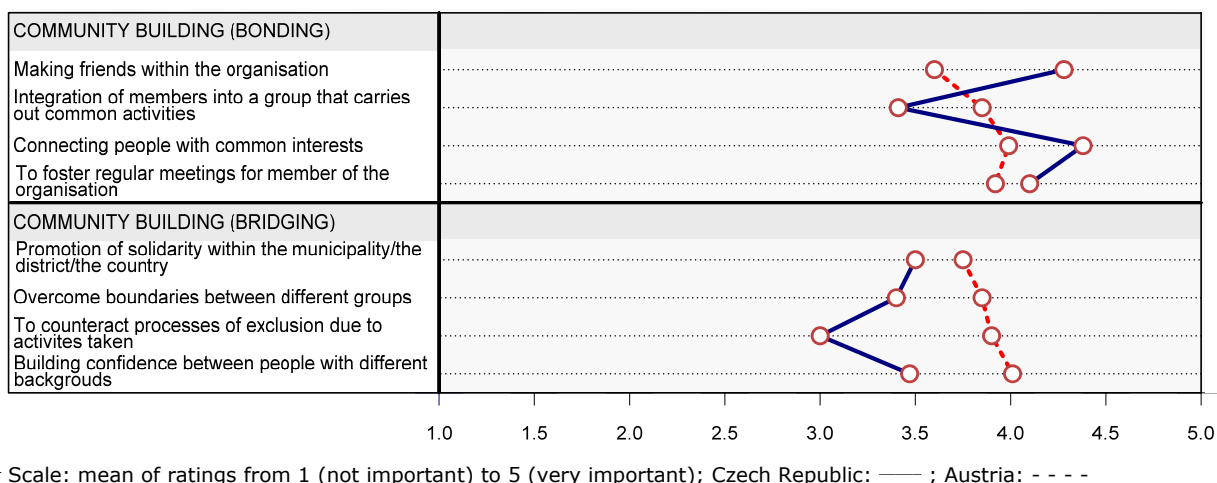
Source: Czech-Austria NPO-Survey 2007.

Figure 5: Importance of Citizens' and Public Advocacy in the Czech Republic and Austria



Source: Czech-Austria NPO-Survey 2007

Figure 6: Community Building - bonding and bridging - in the Czech Republic and Austria



Source: Czech-Austria NPO-Survey 2007