

WORKPACKAGE 1: “Illiberal Democracy and Right-wing Politics”

ESR 1: Illiberal trends in incumbent parties and comparative democratic development in Central Europe

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# Linkages between civil and political society: Women’s mobilisation and the Polish U-turn



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## **Structure of this presentation:**

- **Aims and Research Questions**
- **Theoretic Framework**
- **Fieldwork Progress Report and Preliminary Findings/Arguments**

## Research Problems and Questions

**Problem 1: Understanding the Polish illiberal turn in 2015 and the consequent developments**

**Problem 2: What is civil society good for in a liberal democracy?**

**Q1:** *What kind of network structure between civil and political actors is conducive to democratic regression?*

**Q2:** *Which structural features of the network between these actors may account for the rise of illiberalism?*

**Q3:** *And which features enable liberal democratic actors to counteract these pushes?*

**Q4:** *Investigating on local social network, what can we learn about polarisation/pillarisation? In an increasingly polarised society, does cooperation between civic-minded actors that are not from the same ideological background decrease, increase, or stagnate? What can we learn about more moderate actors?*

## Theoretical Framework: Pillarised Society

"Thus, after three decades of democratic transformation, Polish civil society has evolved into a deeply **divided and polarized entity** with **two** distinct organizational pillars representing antithetical value systems, visions of politics and scenarios for Poland's future development. Moreover, the **unholy alliance between a state with its authoritarian ambitions and the illiberal/nationalist pillar of civil society** has created new opportunities for far-right extremism to flourish, intensified Poland's culture wars and changed the underlying structure of Polish politics. As a result, Poland is **drifting towards authoritarianism** and away from European democratic values."

(Ekiert, 2019)

## Pillars and mobilisation in women's and gender issues

- Why looking at gender issues and mobilisation?
- Which pillars do exist in this field?



**Radical  
Feminists**



**Liberal Feminists**



**Conservative  
Civil Society**

Graff, 2019



## Research Design to address these issues

- Two stages (I am currently at the first stage)
- Mapping out the social network between civil society and political actors in Krakow that are involved in gender and women's issues
- Analysing this network based on ideological/value affinity and resource exchange (Diani, 2015)
- Using qualitative in-depth interviews with political and civic actors to understand their own interpretation of their network
- Additionally: participant observation in events such as Manifa Krakow on International Women's Day

## Progress Report and Preliminary Findings/ Arguments

- Data collection
- Establishing contacts with gatekeepers
- There is a tri-partite ideological division among civic actors in gender and women's mobilisation
- Resource cooperation and ideological affiliation reflect each other but are not identical
- The nationalist/conservative illiberal pillar is marked by a stronger cooperation with political actors
- Gender issues go far beyond questions of gender mainstreaming and reproductive rights, LGBTI issues become increasingly salient

Conservative activists interrupting the Manifa with recorded baby cries and posters against homosexuality and abortion



“Krakow needs feminism” banner in front of Kraków’s Adam Mickiewicz statue on the main square



**MANIFA KRAKOWSKA**  
**08.03.2020**



“The best present for the 8<sup>th</sup> of March are flowers on the grave of the patriarchy”

