

School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES)

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UCL

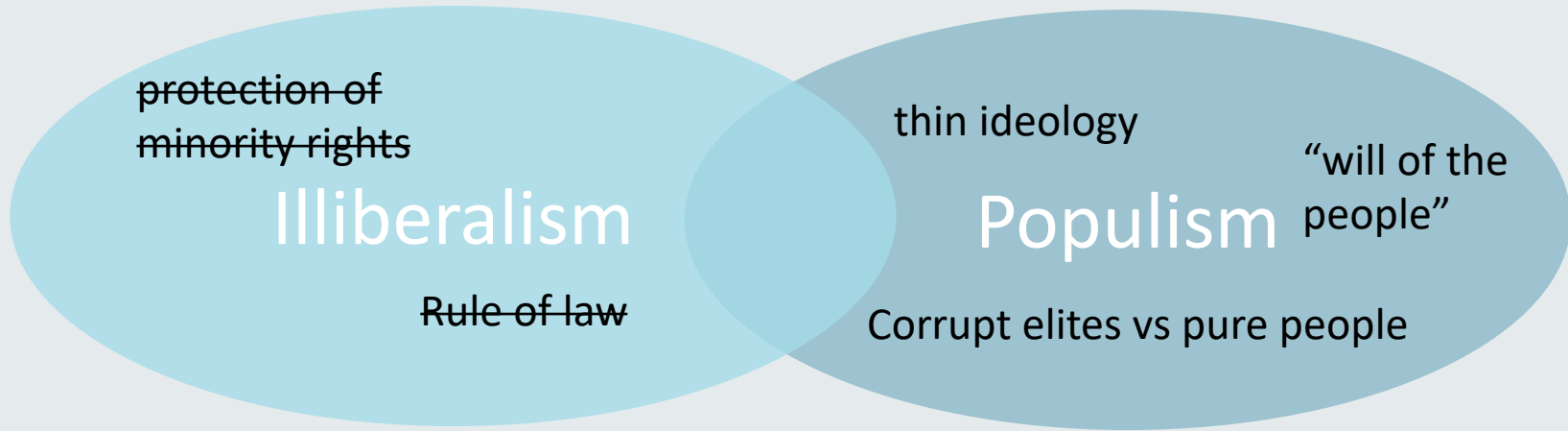
# Civil society in a pillarised society:

*First insights from civil society mobilised around gender in Kraków.*

# Structure

- Key concepts: illiberalism, populism;
- Why gender matters and the Polish example;
- Theoretical framework: pillarised society and relational approach;
- actors mobilised around gender in Kraków.

# Key concepts and challenges to liberal democracy



- Exaltation of the *volonté générale*, i.e. the will of the people, that trumps liberal democratic procedures (Kubik, 2012).
- Rule of law and minority rights as a target.

# Why gender matters

- **Illiberalism:** rule of law (Constitutional Tribunal decision to restrict abortion Oct 2020), rights of sexual minorities;
- **Populism:** gendered definition of the “pure Polish people” and the “corrupt elites”.



! ACTION

POLAND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND ACTIVISTS

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**Poland: Drop the charges against Elżbieta, Anna  
and Joanna**

WRITE A MESSAGE

## Theoretical Framework: pillarised society and relational approach

“Pillarization is the vertical segregation of civil society into distinct compartments with limited interaction across a dividing boundary (religious, ethnic, political). This creates the potential for social conflicts, contentious mobilization and political instability. In fact, the recent rise of populism can be traced to the emergence of pillarized civil societies across the world.”

(Ekiert, 2019)

# Case: Civil society mobilized around gender in Krakow



# First insights

- tendency to understand activities as apolitical;
- **among civil society groups:** most of them mostly cooperate with other Cracovian organisations, more identity sharing ties> awareness and support for each other's goals but not necessarily cooperation;
- low connections to political parties;
- **towards political parties:** low material cooperation, mostly with Lewica Razem, Wiosna, SLD; for events: members of parties from a wide spectrum attended events; no group actively supported any political party;
- Half of the responding organisations stated that politicians are not supportive to reach their goals (7), most useful for goal realisation: national politicians;
- growing formalisation of queer activism since 2015 (assertive role of Campaign Against Homophobia).



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