

Civil Society within Authoritarian Regimes: A Case for Positive Theorising

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Preface

This thesis, *Civil Society Within Authoritarian Regimes: A Case for Positive Theorising*, represents the culmination of the research I undertook from January 2018 to January 2024 as part of my doctoral study at the Justus Liebig University (JLU) of Giessen. My journey into the subject began with a curiosity about the role of civil society in non-democratic contexts, sparked by the tension between normative expectations and diverging realities, which I experienced first-hand in my past professional career. In democracies, civil society associations are seen as a cornerstone of public participation and accountability. Yet what becomes of civil society associations in contexts where political space is restricted and where state control is pervasive? (How) can civil society associations endure and preserve their independence under the hammer of the repressive state? Is directly confronting the authoritarian state all that matters to preserve their independence or autonomy? These questions, and much more that eventually followed, led me to investigate the subject and write a doctoral thesis on it.

Instead of demanding mere observation of a particular phenomenon or depicting specific aspects of civil society life under authoritarian rule, these questions begged rather, on the one hand, explanations of cause-and-effect relationships (How to explain independence/autonomy?), and on the other hand, reviewing and reconsidering the available conceptual lenses (What is independence/autonomy, itself?). In doing so, the study differentiated itself from the prevalent approaches in the literature, which tend to invest heavily in exposing the constraints civil society actors face in authoritarian contexts and the strategies deployed by them to overcome these constraints or by the authoritarian state apparatus to take civil society actors under control. Such an analytical strategy is often followed by the judgement of the case at hand against democratic ideals.

While civil society associations can be thought to have different levels and qualities of mobilisation, this study chose to focus on one of them: organisations. The central idea behind this is that it is not only mobilising or associating per se but also its specificities that may matter. Consequently, two concepts came to form the backstone of this study: *formal institutionalisation* and *autonomy*. By examining how different aspects of formal institutionalisation affect the autonomy of civil society organisations, this thesis provides new insights into how these organisations navigate the often-hostile environments in which they operate. The empirical findings presented here are based on an original survey of CSOs in Russia and Turkey in the period of 19 June 2021 - 19 January 2022, offering a novel dataset.

This work aims to contribute to the scholarly understanding of civil society in several ways. First, shifting the focus from normative judgment to explanation, it advocates for positive theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes—offering empirically testable explanatory frameworks. Secondly, it advances an organisational theory of civil society within authoritarian regimes. In doing so, the study brings a micro-sociological view into the study of civil society—an unduly neglected aspect. Thirdly, switching from the structural independence approach prevalent in the literature to the organisational autonomy, the present study offers a more tangible and accommodating understanding of associational life under authoritarian rule. Last but not least, the study below traces the evolution of different perspectives in the relevant literature and firmly establishes the latest of them, the *symbiosis* perspective. In addition to contributing to the scholarly perspective, the thesis can also provide insights for international donors and policymakers who seek to support civil society organisations in authoritarian contexts on how formal structures can be leveraged to sustain autonomy. Understanding the dynamics of formal institutionalisation and autonomy in these settings is not just an academic exercise but a necessary step toward maintaining and nurturing spaces for civil action where they are most needed.

During the research period, the world has changed dramatically, going from the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2022 to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 and the dramatically unfolding crisis in Gaza since October 2023. As I write these sentences, Germany is looking forward to a snap election following the collapse of the coalition government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the US is a month ahead of Donald Trump's presidency, and Bashar al-Assad's regime has already fallen in Syria. All these developments, and, generally, the processes the world has been through since 2018, have inevitably affected my way of working and approach to the matter under study. On the one hand, the unfolding events had severing implications on academic and personal life with long periods of restricted access to university facilities, the cancellation of onsite events, too prolonged home office periods, emotional times spent following the news, heated debates with colleagues, and cold offices in times of energy-saving measures of the winter of 2022-2023. On the other hand, they brought a certain level of maturity to my text that, I believe, would otherwise be not easy to attain. Ultimately, these developments shaped the final framework in which the study is presented, emphasising the necessity of developing positive theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes rather than merely describing or comparing them against ideal benchmarks. Nevertheless, it is still guided by a concern for democratic ideals. The above-noted developments have strengthened

my urge to provide such a study that can ultimately be useful for supporting civil society actors operating under authoritarian rule, whose work is not only often underappreciated but also sometimes dismissed as contributing to the strengthening of non-democratic regimes indirectly. This drive perfectly coincides with what initially intrigued me—the tension between normative ideals and diverging realities.

Throughout this research journey, I became deeply indebted to many people and institutions for their support in completing this study. My deepest gratitude goes to my academic supervisors, Prof. Dr Andrea Gawrich (first supervisor) and Prof. Dr Simone Abendschön (second supervisor), whose guidance and encouragement were instrumental in shaping this work. Professor Gawrich was not only an exceptional academic supervisor but also a steadfast supporter of me as an expat researcher and a reassuring point of contact whenever I needed one. I am deeply thankful for everything she has done for me.

Starting from its second year, from October 2019 to December 2021, this study was generously supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) under their Doctoral Research Scholarship scheme. Subsequently, from December 2021 on, I continued my research as part of a research assistant role—a qualification position—within a German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)-funded project (Grant No. 444058835) at the Chair of International Integration with a special focus on Eastern Europe (Prof. Dr Andrea Gawrich). In parallel, starting from October 2022, I was employed partly within an EU Horizon project, SHAPEDEM-EU, coordinated by the same Chair. Even though my work within these projects dealt with themes that often, if not always, sharply differed from the topic of this thesis, the chance to practice different methodologies and engage in diverse research activities within these projects certainly contributed to the methodological rigour of this study and informed the thinking in the background. Simultaneously, I delivered bachelor's and master's degree seminars at the same institute on diverse subjects ranging from *Civil Society in European Comparison* to *Seminal Works on Democratisation: A Methodological Perspective*, *Advanced Research in Politics*¹, *Research Design in Social Sciences* and *Eurasian Regional Security Architecture and Europe*. Eventually, what I initially saw as overstretching my focus and capacity turned out to be a generous source of self-training and thematical enrichment. Therefore, I am deeply thankful to all individual researchers with whom I had a chance to work together on projects and to all

¹ The title pays homage to Prof. Dr Adrian Blau, whose course at the University of Manchester during my studies in 2010–11 served as its inspiration.

the students with whom I exchanged throughout the several years of teaching I spent at the Institute of Political Science, JLU Giessen.

Nonetheless, I could not have completed this study without the unwavering support of my family. I am deeply grateful to my wife, Shabnam, for her gracious patience with my frequent shortcomings in dedicating enough time to our family and for her constant efforts to encourage me to step away from my desk during the long hours I spent working day after day. She was often the first to listen to my ideas and offer her feedback, which rightly took me down from the ivory tower of scholarship and ensured that my work remained for earthlings. Similarly, my son's curiosity about my research and his enthusiasm for sharing it with his friends continually reminded me of the value of my work. Without the steadfast support of my mother, father, and sister throughout the earlier years of my career, I would not have reached the point of writing this thesis.

In closing my preface, I dedicate this thesis to all civil society actors working tirelessly worldwide, especially those in authoritarian contexts.

Murad Nasibov

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1. Introduction

1.1. Prolusion

Following the revival of the concept of *civil society* by Eastern European intellectuals in the late 1970s-early 1980s, scholars in the West and beyond have enthusiastically adopted it, expending considerable effort to integrate it into existing theoretical frameworks. The concept of civil society was expeditiously advanced as an integral component of democratic theory and seamlessly woven into the fabric of comparative politics.² Concurrently, social movements and non-governmental organisations across the globe have adeptly employed the concept as a tool to endorse and authenticate themselves vis-à-vis ignorant or repressive governments. Today, any credible survey³ or scholarly study that examines the state of democracy in a given part of the world or globally would often, if not invariably, include an assessment of the state of civil society (see, e.g., Lührmann et al., 2019; Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Lührmann et al., 2017). Such scholarly or expert audits deploy either explicitly or implicitly a perspective that juxtaposes the state of civil society within those regimes against the democratic benchmarks of civil society. These comparisons are instrumental in gauging the extent to which a political regime in a particular country aligns with or diverges from democratic norms concerning civil society. Hence, they deploy descriptive inference-making⁴ imbued with thick normativity as their analytical strategy to make sense of the cases at hand. (for most explicit examples, see Alagappa, 2004; Bernhard, 2020; Glasius et al., 2004; Hagemann et al., 2008; Jacobsson & Korolczuk, 2017; May & Milton, 2005). Metaphorically speaking, these comparisons hold specific country cases up to the reflective mirror of democratic ideals of civil society.

Such normativity that underpins the studies on civil society is not coincidental but reflective of the historical legacy of the concept (see, e.g., Adam, 2019; Adloff, 2005; G. Baker,

² For most prominent examples, see Arato and Cohen (2022); Cohen and Arato (1992); Dahrendorf (1997); Elazar (1998); Green (1993); Hirst (1994, 1997); James and Green (1998); Keane (1998); P. G. Lewis (1992); Putnam et al. (1993); Putnam (2000); Schechter (1999); Skocpol (1997); Swift (1999); Young (2000) .

³ One prominent example of such indices is the Varieties of Democracy or, as it is often known, the V-Dem Project, available at: www.v-dem.net. Another such audit specifically focusing on civil society and produced by civil society actors worldwide is CIVICUS, available at: www.civicus.org.

⁴ The differentiation between descriptive and causal inference-making, often referred to in the present study, is borrowed from G. King et al. (1994).

2003; Cohen & Arato, 1992; Seligman, 1992) and the conceptualisation efforts in the years following the revival of the concept in Eastern Europe, which explicitly and persistently suggested a strong normative programme (see, e.g., Barber, 1995; Dahrendorf, 1997; Foley & Edwards, 1996; Shils, 1991; Walzer, 1991), though cautions about the underpinning normativity were made then, too (see, e.g., van Wyk, 1994; G. White, 1994).

Even in cases where the scholarship explicitly and unambiguously acknowledges the problem of thick normativity and rejects it in favour of *positive* research, they do not go far beyond descriptive and comparative lenses (see, e.g. Cavatorta, 2013; Cavatorta & Durac, 2011). In consequence, any quick review of the relevant empirical literature would suggest that irrespective of the degree of normativity infused, the vast majority of the empirical literature on civil society within authoritarian regimes, except for a few (see, e.g., Huang, 2018; T. Q. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020), deploys descriptive inference-making.

One must give due consideration to the fact that the studies deploying the descriptive or comparative *mirroring* strategy do a significant job of elucidating the phenomena of civil society within authoritarian regimes. For the most part, they successfully reveal the obstructions encountered by civil society within authoritarian regimes and shed light on the autocracies' tactics against civil society. Hence, it can hardly be contested that the emerging literature is highly beneficial for both normative judgment and practical-political ends—*praxeology*. However, they accomplish only half the task of understanding the phenomenon of civil society within authoritarian contexts.

Descriptive inference-making, whether infused with thick normativity or not, and the ubiquitous conceptualisation efforts short of developing into a full-fledged theory can by no means be taken as sufficient analytical strategies for understanding the phenomenon of civil society within authoritarian regimes. The *mirroring* strategy goes on with an implicit assumption that beyond the divergence or convergence points compared to the democratic benchmarks, nothing significant of civil society within authoritarian regimes deserves investigation. Nevertheless, it would *not* be erroneous to conceive that there may be phenomena peculiar to civil society within authoritarian regimes which cannot be exposed through the *mirroring* strategy. Moreover, it is needless to say that mere conceptualisation efforts, which are

consequently applied to make sense of the cases at hand, can by no means do the explanatory job of theories but only indirectly contribute to theory generation at best.⁵

Despite this evident limitation of the extant literature, the scholarship still, after more than three decades since its use by Polish intellectuals in the 1980s, has to adequately acknowledge the need for *positive theorising*⁶ on civil society within authoritarian regimes to explain the phenomena in its own terms rather than compare against ideals or merely make descriptive inferences. The failure to see this conspicuous gap in the literature can be explained by the still prominent scholarly inclination to operate with the premises of normative theorising on civil society under the downright preaching of political theory. As elucidated briefly in Section 1.2 below and more so in the literature review part of this research, the legacy left off the concept of civil society in the late twentieth century might have also played a crucial role in cementing a certain normative agenda on civil society. Consequently, the scholarly interest in explaining the matters of relationships concerning civil society in authoritarian contexts remains, hence, under-appreciated despite the calls made in the past upon the scholarly community to move beyond normativity in their theorising and mere conceptualising efforts (see, e.g., Kopecký & Mudde, 2003). Given the state of the art in the literature, one could only expect that the *positive* explanatory frameworks of civil society within authoritarian regimes are yet to go a long way to shape.

Nevertheless, in the last two decades, a new strand of empirical literature on civil society within authoritarian regimes has emerged, which attempts to go beyond mapping the deviant points of the authoritarian regime from the democratic benchmarks concerning civil society. Numerous case studies explore strategies deployed by civil society and authoritarian regimes and try to account for them. Yet, these studies produce specific and substantive conceptual insights

⁵ For certain assertions to count as a theory, there must be proposed “conjectures about how the events are causally related” (Toshkov 2016, pp. 37-42), while conceptualisation is about providing definitions to concepts and showing how they are linked (Toshkov 2016, pp. 83-94) .

⁶ In line with the positivist philosophy in social science (see, e.g., Kincaid (2007)), *positive theorising* is understood in this study as theorising that is not merely descriptive or comparative but explains relationships between (observable) social phenomena and is amenable to empirical testing (see, e.g., Toshkov (2016, p. 25)). Such an understanding is also in line with the definition offered by Robert K. Merton (1967): “*logically interconnected sets of propositions from which ‘empirical uniformities’ can be derived and empirically tested*”. Nevertheless, the understanding of theorising is not uniform and varies widely in the literature (for most recent discussions on theorising see, e.g., Cornelissen et al. (2021); Hammond (2018)). Although very inclusive understandings of theorising do also exist (for more on this, see, e.g., Abend (2008)) and can be seen as exclusively inductive or deductive (see, e.g., Swedberg (2014)), for its purpose, the present study operates with the narrow definition provided above.

rather than general and formal theoretical inferences⁷. Moreover, they are not deeply embedded in theoretical grounds, and the results often remain short of offering anything that may eventually come close to forming a theory. Thereupon, one can hardly talk about any considerable pile-up of theoretical knowledge paving the way to a formal theory. Nonetheless, this empirical literature provides strong grounds upon which building explanatory frameworks can be built.

Along with what is said above, one must also acknowledge that no *positive* theory—a theory that aims at exploring causal linkages rather than describing and prescribing—can be strictly stripped of normative guidance, given their intrinsic linkage (Toshkov, 2016, pp. 23–28). Therefore, the positive theory of civil society, which this research aims to contribute, need not be understood as free from any normative guidance. Such a positive theory still needs to be guided by the democratic theory of civil society. Hence, positive theorising can still indirectly help improve democratic indicators by explaining how causality concerning civil society within authoritarian regimes works.

The present study aims to make a case for positive theorising on civil society by exposing the problem through a literature review and then offering one such contribution towards bridging the stated gap. Without replicating the above-described *mirroring* approach or descriptive inference-making, this research provides one account of positive theorising that can eventually contribute to the theoretical build-up. To do so, first, a selected set of normative accounts of civil society—*liberal*, *republican* and *in-between*—are reviewed for the judgmental lenses they offer for authoritarian contexts. Consequently, through bibliometric and in-depth qualitative analyses, the empirical literature on civil society within authoritarian regimes is reviewed, delivering four perspectives: *conflictual perspective*, *co-operative adjustment*, *co-optative joinder* and *symbiosis perspective*. These perspectives are discussed through their examples in the literature, exposing how they, taken together, show the evolution of the literature, in general, and the efforts to trespass the judgmental lenses the normative accounts preach to empirical studies, in particular. These efforts, although still primarily descriptive in their inference-making, reveal that the literature has moved from the singularity of the view that sees the relationship between civil society and the authoritarian state exclusively in conflictual terms—where the impact of normative accounts is the strongest and sets the tone for the following perspectives—to the views that embrace the permissibility of cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian state, recognise the authoritarian state’s efforts of co-optation, and eventually reach the point to see the

⁷ For the differentiation between substantive and formal theory, see, e.g., Glaser & Strauss (1999).

relationship between civil society and the authoritarian state as a *symbiotic* one. Simultaneously, the understanding of the independence of civil society actors has transitioned from the stark delineation of civil society organisations' structural independence to a sophisticated conception of autonomy, marked by a significant pivot from a macro to a micro focus. Yet, this evolution should not be mistaken for substituting one viewpoint for another but rather as enriching the discourse, where a plethora of scholarly perspectives has progressively entered into an exchange throughout the two decades from 2000 to 2020. Besides, the *thick* normativity prevalent in the *conflictual* perspective shrinks significantly through the evolving perspectives to reach its minimum point in the *symbiosis* perspective.

More specifically, the discussion of the identified perspectives showcases how the *conflictual* perspective aligns with the judgemental lenses of the liberal theory in treating the relationship between civil society and authoritarian state in a constant struggle, while the *cooperative adjustment* perspective with an underpinning republican tone highlights the permissibility of cooperation between them for the common good yet to be contradicted by the *co-optative joinder* perspective that still carries a strong liberal element in itself. It was demonstrated that the *symbiosis* perspective eventually pushes beyond these boundaries while deeply indebted to their contributions.

In the third stage, the identified case studies on civil society in Turkey and Russia are reviewed to synthesise their findings, serving two specific objectives. Above all, the discussion of the literature on these two countries' cases provides a background for the empirical analyses to follow. The results of the empirical analyses are consequently validated against this background knowledge. Secondly, through these cases, the *symbiosis* perspective, which this study aims to contribute, is further substantiated. The nuanced tableau of civil society within authoritarian regimes that emerges from these discussions provides numerous avenues for future research, while the present study addresses only a tiny portion of them: the questions of *autonomy*—a central question in the relevant literature—and its relationship to the question of *formality/informality*.

Having identified the *symbiosis* perspective as the one which provides a better ground for *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes and the questions of particular importance—*autonomy* and *formality/informality*, the discussions move on to establishing the theoretical framework. After a brief review of the available theoretical accounts and providing short justifications or explanations for the choice of theory, the proposed theoretical framework is constructed on the analytical facet of the *civil sphere* theory developed by Alexander C. Jeffrey

(2006) and the insights borrowed from the organisation theory of the mid-20th century, in particular, the neo-classical account of it and the writings of Philip Selznick on organisational sociology (Selznick, 1943, 1948, 1949, 1952, 1957, 1969). More concretely, the theoretical framework translates the macro-focused *civil sphere* theory into the organisation level. However, to do so, a multi-level perspective on the macro-micro linkage offered by Kemeny (1976) is appropriated to bridge the gap between the former theory's macro-focus on the *sphere* and the latter theory's micro-focus on the *organisation*. The translation of the *civil sphere* theory (in aspects related to civil associations) into the organisation level addresses three significant elements: i) the interplay between the *ideal* and *real* or the realisation of the *ideal* while simultaneously being subject to compromise under the pressures of the necessities of reality, ii) the boundary relationships between the civil sphere and other spheres, and finally, iii) the question of the independence of the civil sphere. This task was possible through the deployment of the conceptual baggage on formal and informal organisations, formal and informal institutionalisation, and autonomy as found in the organisation theory, particularly in the neo-classical account of it, as stated earlier.

One general implication of the present work is that it establishes the formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations as a phenomenon that can both realise and compromise the ideals or claims of civil society associations. This double-edged function of formal institutionalisation becomes possible thanks to its different elements or aspects, namely *formal commitment*, *rationalisation*, *professionalisation*, *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy*, which are proposed and then empirically validated to have heterogeneous consequences for civil society organisations. Moreover, the understanding of *autonomy* defended in this research, partly drawing on the notion of autonomy found in the *symbiosis* perspective and partly borrowing insights from the organisation studies, goes beyond the structural independence view and establishes itself as the availability of multiple diverse ties and strategic balancing among them, above all, the transnational ties (*transnationalisation*) and those to the authoritarian state (*co-optation*). Moreover, two dimensions on which such autonomy exists—financial and institutional—were distinguished thanks to the review of the Russian and Turkish cases. Nevertheless, this study does not assert that there are other dimensions beyond them.

More specifically, the proposed theoretical framework explores the diffused effect of *formal institutionalisation* on the *autonomy* of civil society organisations under authoritarian rule. The hypotheses are presented on the effects of the five identified aspects of formal institutionalisation on the autonomy of civil society in *financial* and *institutional* dimensions,

eventually referred to as *financial autonomy* and *institutional autonomy*. These effects are further suspected to depend on the authoritarian quality of the regimes at hand, resulting in differences between Russian and Turkish cases.

Consequently, the proposed theoretical framework is tested quantitatively in two countries: a hardliner autocracy, Russia, and a moderate autocracy, Turkey. The data on both cases are merged to test the proposed hypotheses, while the dummy coded variable is introduced to account for the interaction of the effect of the authoritarian regime quality, allowing for comparisons across the two country cases. The political weight of these countries was considered in the case selection process. Both countries are powerful regional actors that shape authoritarian tendencies and practices in their respective regions—post-Soviet Eurasia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Therefore, studying civil society in these two countries renders significant potential for shedding light on region-wide patterns in Eurasia and MENA.

An original survey tool was designed to measure the constructs of the proposed theoretical framework. Consequently, a structured survey was conducted with Russian and Turkish civil society organisations, identified on probabilistic bases, in the 19 June 2021—19 January 2022 period.

Overall, the results support the idea that the *formal institutionalisation* of civil society organisations has a diffused effect on the *autonomy* of civil society organisations—the degree or state of counterbalance between their *transnationalization* and *co-optation by the state* and that this relationship is moderated by the authoritarian intensity of the political regime in which these civil society organisations find themselves. The specific findings showcase the effect of *rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* on the financial autonomy of civil society organisations, while *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* determine their institutional autonomy. These effects are diverse, some being positive, while others negative, confirming the principal argument of the present study about the diffused effect of formal institutionalisation on the autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes. Such a diffused effect is also in line with the underpinning premise of the *civil sphere* theory, which posits that civil society ideals are compromised in the process of realisation.

The following parts of this introductory chapter provide a wider prologue to the identified research gap, research objectives, theoretical lenses, and significant concepts, as well as the ontological and epistemological grounds on which this study stands and the novelties of the methodological design. Finally, the current chapter closes with a brief recap of the main findings and the layout of the following sections.

1.2. Position: Defying locus classicus on the way to positive theorising

The previous section briefly discussed the broader research gap that the current research aims to address—the lack of *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes in particular. It was noted that exposing the limits facing civil society within authoritarian regimes and the state of civil society-authoritarian state relations by way of comparison to democratic benchmarks or making sense of the case at hand through conceptual lenses (descriptive inference-making) has inherent shortcomings in explaining civil society phenomena within authoritarian regimes. However, the problems of the civil society literature reach beyond the issue of analytical strategy, even though these problems are intrinsically linked to the problem of analytical strategy. Figure 1 below illustrates these problems as three nested frameworks. The specific research gap that this research addresses directly is embedded in a larger lacuna in the literature, which itself, in turn, is the product of a much broader problem in the literature of civil society. This research speaks to each of these gaps to varying extents and relevance but directly to the smallest framework at the core. The first—broadest framework relates to the influence of the normative theory of civil society cemented in the liberal, republican or liberal-republican accounts over empirical studies in political science. Besides the question of analytical strategy, these accounts of civil society link the functions of civil society to the state of democracy or the quality of political regime, though to varying extents. This becomes more visible when they are considered in the context of authoritarian regimes. Since both traditions build on the institutions of rights, which is an integral element of democracy, in the authoritarian contexts, both traditions, particularly the liberal accounts, imply a perpetual conflictual view of the civil society-authoritarian state relationships or recognise no chance for genuine civil society.

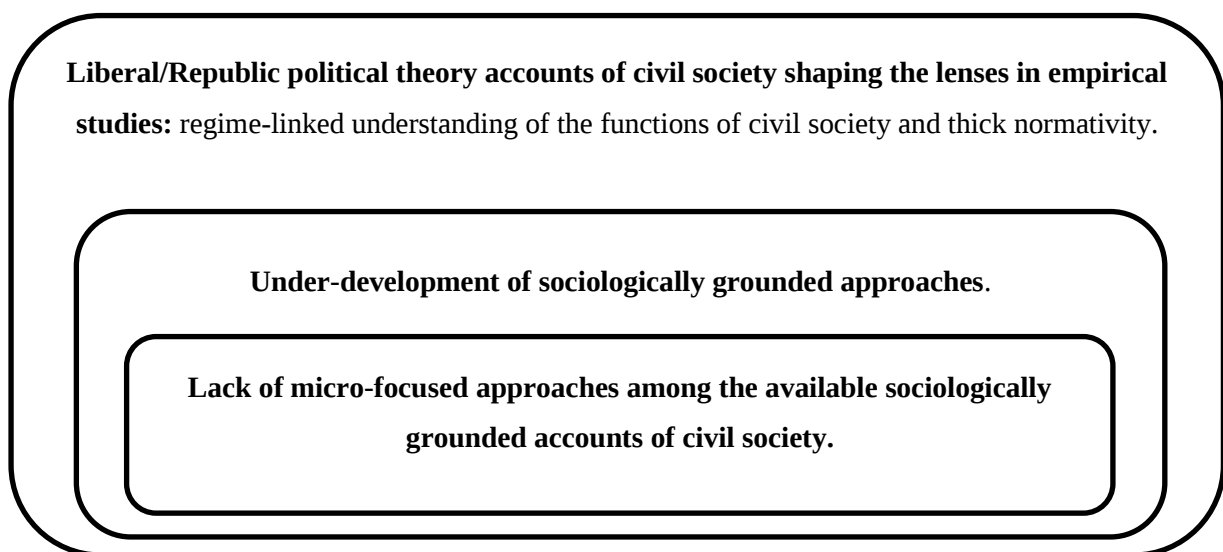


Figure 1 Three nested frameworks describing the state of the literature on civil society

Notably, the liberal view of civil society offers a zero-sum perspective on civil society-authoritarian state relations (Bernhard (2020) differentiates four functions of civil society within the liberal theory). A blunt picture of civil society in the liberal tradition recounts organised societal and transnational groups that rise to monitor and scrutinise the violations of human rights and freedoms and the functioning of democratic institutions, organise the defence of society in general or particularly vulnerable groups against authoritarian regimes, and resist undemocratic decisions or decisions detrimental to humanity. In other words, building exclusively on the conflictual aspects, it suggests that a genuinely civil society within authoritarian regimes, if it may ever exist, fights for democratisation and is, therefore, in a constant clash with the authoritarian government, enduring perpetual damage. It is imbued with a teleological belief in the utmost victory of civil society over the authoritarian government in this clash. Regime change or democratisation is seen as a matter of time.

Even though the republican views differ significantly from the liberal views of civil society in general, the judgmental lenses the former implies for civil society within the authoritarian government do not depart far from those the latter offers. The republican views recognise a slight chance for cooperation between the two, yet they see such cooperation as risking the *civility* of civil society. Nevertheless, as C. Taylor rightly suggested already in 1995, the choice lies not anymore between the liberal and republican accounts but between the former and the in-between position. In what they imply for the authoritarian context, the in-between accounts suffer either in the liberal or republican way, if not both.

Such views of civil society can also explain the *transition paradigm* of the 1990s (see, e.g., Carothers, 2002), which saw the former Socialist countries on the way to democracy sooner or later (see, e.g., Linz & Stepan, 1996). The transition paradigm offered two primary premises for civil society within authoritarian regimes. First, it treated the authoritarian state as equally and unequivocally disinterested in cooperating with civil society, a presumption already challenged starting from the early 2000s by the studies deploying the concept of *co-optation*—governmental efforts to incorporate civil society actors in its governance networks (Alqatabry & Butcher, 2020; Astapova et al., 2022; Dongshu Liu, 2023; Holdo, 2019; Reuter & Robertson, 2015; Salmenniemi, 2007; Skokova et al., 2018). Second, it attributed all good to civil society, which was soon confronted by the assertions about “uncivil” society.

Besides linking the functions of civil society to the state of democracy, the second specific problem with the implications of the normative accounts for the empirical literature concerns *thick* normativity. *Thick* normativity in the literature often results in an approach in

which not all civil society associations or actions outside the state and market spheres and private life qualify as civil or constitutive elements of civil society. Particularly, those who fail to pose a direct challenge to the political regime necessarily as strong as the liberal and republican views would expect from them cannot pass the test of *true* civil society and be treated fairly or unfairly as “uncivil” (see, e.g., Avritzer, 2004; Cavatorta, 2006; D’Alisa et al., 2013; Hudáková, 2021; Kotkin & Gross, 2009; Lorch, 2017b, 2021; May & Milton, 2005; Rahman, 2002; Ruzza, 2009; Wischermann et al., 2018), though such a normative conception is not very meaningful empirically (Kopecký & Mudde, 2003). However, as already mentioned before, numerous studies of the last two decades have made serious attempts to overcome the limits of this *conflictual* approach to civil society within authoritarian regimes (see, e.g., Aasland et al., 2016; Aasland et al., 2020; Gleiss & Saether, 2017; Moritz, 2020; Spires, 2011b; J. C. Teets, 2013, 2014, 2015), despite the strong normative programmes of civil society still being advocated (see, e.g., Gosewinkel & Rucht, 2004; Gosewinkel et al., 2004; Rucht, 2005, 2011)⁸.

The implications of the normative theorising for the empirical literature on the subject are exposed in two stages in this study. Section 2 reviews selected normative accounts in both liberal and republic traditions, as well as those in-between, for the judgemental lenses they offer for the authoritarian context. In turn, Section 3 reviews the empirical literature on the subject, distinguishing specific perspectives emerging in empirical science studies (*conflictual*, *cooperative*, *co-optative* and *symbiotic*). Consequently, the results are counter-posed to expose how far the latter can push beyond the dictates of the former.

The middle framework in Figure 1 above highlights the under-development of sociologically grounded approaches to civil society in general and concerning authoritarian contexts in particular, which can be explained at least partially by the expansive influence of normative theorising on the subject. The sociological accounts of civil society in the available literature are limited to the *arena* approach (Aasland et al., 2016; Aasland et al., 2020; Anheier & Toepler, 2019; Beckman, 1993; Heinrich, 2005), the *field* approach (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; Klein & Lee, 2019), the *sector* approach (Anheier & Ben-Ner, 2003; Brandsen et al., 2005; Evers & Laville, 2004; Lohmann, 1992; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Salamon et al., 1999-; van Til, 1988) which is revived in recent studies (see, e.g., Valentinov, 2009; van Til, 2009; Virtanen, 2015), the *sphere* approach (Alexander, 2006), the *network* approach (Coe, 2015; Doerfel & Taylor, 2004; Fulda et al., 2012; Kourtikakis & Turkina, 2015; Sommerfeldt & Kent, 2015; P. J.

⁸ For sure, there are still others who seek to pluralise the normative agenda underpinning the idea of civil society see, e.g., Wischermann (2010).

Taylor, 2004; Tysiachniouk et al., 2018a) and potentially, the *social system* approach to civil society, which is based on the *systems of social action* theory (Parsons, 1951, 1960, p. 20; Parsons et al., 1962, pp. 190–234). These sociologically grounded or *positive* frameworks provide only general contours for theorising on civil society and little to no insight into authoritarian contexts. A shared characteristic among these accounts is their macro perspective, accompanied by a notable absence of translation into micro-level analysis.

Among these alternatives, the *sphere* approach developed by Alexander (2006) is relatively advanced with its comprehensive accounting for the relations of the civil sphere with the state and market. However, the *civil sphere* theory also suffers from strong normativity. Although in the original work, the author highlights both the analytical and normative potentials of the theory and the possibility of detaching them, the subsequent utilisation of the theory in the literature deploys primarily the normative conceptualisation of the *civil sphere* or its analytical conceptualisation combined with what it offers as the *civil code* (Alexander, Lund, & Voyer, 2019; Alexander, Palmer, et al., 2019; Alexander, Stack, & Khosrokhavar, 2019; Alexander & Tognato, 2018; Tognato et al., 2020). The introductory part of the theoretical framework section of this research provides a concise comparison of these sociologically grounded approaches to civil society and highlights their relative limitations.

The third—the smallest—framework Figure 1 highlights the lack of micro-focused theoretical lenses among the available sociologically grounded approaches to civil society⁹. Those studies that deploy a micro-focus at the organisation level are primarily found in developmental studies and aim to find ways to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian aid or developmental cooperation. This strand of literature¹⁰, however, is too detached from political science studies on the subject and rarely deals with the political aspects of civil society within authoritarian regimes and civil society-authoritarian state relations. Moreover, their approaches are overly embedded in program-specific or firm management contexts and exclusively target generating insights for practice, accumulating little relevant theoretical knowledge.

⁹ This can partially be explained with subsumption of the organisation level under institutionalism which began in the late 1970s and 1980s alongside the emergence of what is commonly known as *new institutionalism*.

¹⁰ This literature can be found in the pages of journals such as the *Journal of Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *Journal of Development Studies*.

One source of micro-focused theoretical frameworks that can offer valuable lenses for studying civil society within authoritarian regimes is the organisation theory. However, there is no organisation theory-grounded investigation into the subject, save for Arvidson and Linde (2021) and Xiao (2018), even though a few studies in the civil society literature acknowledge explicitly the salience of investigating civil society associations as organisations and their exchanges with other actors in broader society (see, e.g., Bakker et al., 2013). Still, a few other studies refer to *NGOization* or *professionalisation* in recent years (see, e.g., Arda & Banerjee, 2019; Chahim & Prakash, 2014; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Guenther, 2011; Klimczuk, 2015; S. Lang, 2013; Mitchell & Schmitz, 2014; Shegenovna, 2014; Shrestha & Adhikari, 2011; Smith & Jenkins, 2011; Suarez, 2011; Zihnioğlu, 2019a, 2019b) but as pejorative terms understood as processes or qualities that distract civil society from or compromise what is supposed to be its original goal or characteristics.

Three primary reasons can be put forward for the missing links between the organisation theory and civil society literature. First, as already elucidated above, the concept of civil society has developed on the normative ground and continued being used as a tool of descriptive inference-making, often, if not always, with heavy normative weight, which may have delayed the progression of sociologically grounded approaches or generally positive theorising on the subject. A more specific reason can be found in the diverging periods in which the two strands of literature developed. When the concept of civil society was revived in the 1980s, the organisation theory literature had already been declining, leaving its place to macro-focused, broader institutionalist accounts with the emergence of *new institutionalism* or evolving into firm and management theories within business studies (see, e.g., Durepos et al., 2021; Godfrey et al., 2016; Liu & Tang, 2023; Starbuck, 2005). Therefore, historically, there has not been much chance for these two strands of literature to intersect, and hence, the potential of the organisation theory to enrich political science studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes has mainly remained largely unexploited.

The third reason can be found in the growingly disproportioned preoccupation of scholarship of the last decade with the study of informal or semi-formal civil society groups and networks (see, e.g., Bródy, 2023; Carlsen et al., 2023; Carlsen et al., 2021; Chan & Chan, 2017; Kārklīna, 2014), particularly those under authoritarian rule (see, e.g., Urinboyev & Eraliev, 2022; Vu, 2017). In this context of growing unreasonable bias in favour of semi- or informal civil society organisations, *professionalisation* and *NGOisation* have gained a pejorative value. The growing scholarly interest in informal or semi-formal civil society can, to a certain degree, be

attributed to the rediscovery of such groups. However, it also indicates a loss of credence in formal civil society organisations among scholarly circles and possibly in wider audiences regarding their role in democratic processes.

In the above-cited studies, three significant pillars can be identified that underpin the current bias in favour of semi-formal or informal civil society groups or community-based organisations compared to formal civil society organisations, which operate under a formal cloak. The first pillar builds on the argument that formality not only impairs but also compromises civil society groups. The second pillar builds on the assumption that many early-stage civil society initiatives avoid formalisation purposefully or lack the capacity or opportunity to become established as a formal entity. Third and perhaps more importantly, the crackdown on civil society by authoritarian governments around the world in the last decade or more has pushed civil society outside the formal domain.

Although this research does not intend to assess each of these arguments individually, it offers a counter-argument to the prevalent approaches, which are sceptical or ignorant of the formal organisational qualities of civil society organisations and treat them as homogenous. In this sense, this research takes the courage to swim against the current mainstreaming focus on semi-formal or informal organisations or networks in the literature by turning to formal organisational qualities of civil society organisations and their impact on civil society-authoritarian state relations. The present research demonstrates that formal institutionalisation is not necessarily detrimental to civil society associations. Instead, it has a complex diffused effect. Moreover, it challenges the implicit position in the second and third arguments that overly downplay the chances for formal institutionalisation of civil society associations within authoritarian regimes.

1.3. Research aim and objectives: A case for positive theorising

The present study has set several objectives before. Above all, as the introductory words articulated, it aims to contribute to the *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes as the overarching objective. By *positive* theorising here is understood the crafting of theoretical models that explain civil society dynamics in authoritarian contexts on their own merit, eschewing the prevalent analytical strategy, what is referred to as the “mirroring” approach above and which juxtaposes empirical realities against normative ideals to ascertain discrepancies or alignments. On the way towards this objective, the first step was exhaustive scrutiny of the extant literature to establish in which particular ways it suffers from insufficient

positive theorising on the subject. Hence, the literature review culminated in an extensive work that underpins the proposed theoretical framework and merits recognition as a substantive scholarly contribution in its own right.

As an auxiliary objective arising from reviewing the extant literature, the research aspires to add to the *symbiosis* perspective identified in the literature. More specifically, the study herein aims to lay the groundwork for exploring the organisational dynamics of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes and the influence of such dynamics on their transnational linkages and interactions with governmental structures to discern the consequent effects on their financial and institutional autonomy.

The stated specific objective can be further divided into two sub-sets. On the one hand, the research at hand introduces the organisational dynamics within civil society associations as a relevant consideration worthy of exploration. In this, it pursues, as said earlier, a unique path by thickly drawing on the insights from the organisation theory and organisation studies, in general. The very novel part of this study examines different aspects or elements of formal institutionalisation as factors that may matter. Beyond the mere differentiation of formal and informal civil associations or groups, the literature remains silent about the internal world of civil associations. The current study offers a view that links the internal dynamics of individual civil society organisations with their external environment, or in other words, it aims to bridge the inner and outer worlds of civil society organisations.

On the other hand, the specific objective addresses the question of autonomy. Shifting from the notion of *independence* to the notion of *autonomy* has two major grounds. First, this is demanded by the focus on civil associations as organisations. The scholarly discourse about the ‘independence’ of civil society organisations has a strong normative weight and, therefore, can and often do fail analytically. The notion of independence cannot account for the complex interdependencies characteristic of organisations, be they civil or business associations. Consequently, it is more analytically precise to discuss the *autonomy* of civil society organisations rather than their *independence*. The latter indicates structural autonomy at a higher level. The inputs that civil associations as organisations receive from their environment, the way these inputs transform them internally, and the outputs they deliver in return, even though these need not necessarily be understood in material terms, require us to account for this perpetual exchange. The notion of *independence*, hence, overlooks these nuanced transactions between civil society organisations and their environment and the resultant (inter-)dependencies that define their operation. Moreover, from the organisational perspective, particularly in the open-

systems approaches (see, e.g., Maurer, 1971), one cannot talk about the *independence* of organisations but only their *autonomy*, as it allows for such (inter-)dependencies. In the notion of *autonomy*, what matters is the management of these dependencies in a way that would maintain the organisation's authority to guide it in the direction it aspires. *Autonomy*, therefore, emerges as an analytically more accurate term that can capture the essence of civil society organisations' capacity for self-directed action within the boundaries of these inevitable exchanges.

Moreover, in this conceptualisation, *autonomy* emerges as the acknowledgement of the operation of civil society organisations under a spectrum of influence and counter-influence in authoritarian contexts—the logic of boundary relationships that is also characteristic of the *civil sphere* theory. Last but not least, focusing on the autonomy of civil associations as organisations can establish an intermediate level between the agency-based and structure-based approaches, leaving the question of agency at the individual level and the question of structural independence at a more societal level. Civil associations as organisations can be positioned as autonomous realities, subject to both the structural dictates from the top and the agency of their members from below. So, the dynamism that underpins the understanding of autonomy challenges the rigidity of structure- and agency-based approaches, implicitly calling for a more fluid sense of power and governance.

Taking a more holistic view, this study identifies distinct strata of analysis, commonly referred to as the layers of social phenomena and determines the precise area of its intended contribution. In doing so, a multi-level micro-macro linkage was appropriated by Kemeny (1976). In such a multi-level framework, the lowest level is the *individual action*, while the next level is the *joint actions of individuals*—also where the organisational level sits. What Alexander identifies as *communicative* and *regulative institutions* of the civil sphere correspond to the third level on the ladder—the *institutional terrain*. Such institutional terrains, in turn, produce the civil sphere, while the societal level is at the top. Every level is assumed to possess more than the sum of its constituting elements. Establishing such a ladder serves primarily the objective of translating the macro-level *civil sphere* theory to the organisation level or, in other words, giving the macro-level theory a chance to guide the micro-level account to be proposed, as this study aims to offer what the articulations at the sphere level in the *civil sphere* theory may suggest at the level of civil society organisations. Thereby, such a multi-level micro-macro linkage also helps to position the analytical level of the theoretical models proposed more accurately. Civil associations in the civil sphere are only parts of the communicative institutions, along with

political parties and media in the *civil sphere* theory. Therefore, the current study does not address the *institutional terrain* level but the one below it—the organisation level. Hence, the results of this study should not be seen as sufficient alone for making conclusions at the *institutional terrain* level binding the respective country cases but only contributing to any future research on that level at best.

However, like any other research, the present study suffers from several shortcomings. Besides the nuanced shortcomings concerning the methodology elaborated in Section 6, the study is underpinned by several significant inadequacies. Above all, although the current study offers several hypotheses on the effects of formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations on their financial and institutional autonomy, no definitive explanations are defended for the hypothesised effects or at least not very strongly. However, some potential explanations are provided. The primary reason for the lack of strong or substantiated defence in favour of specific causality mechanisms is related to the state of literature in this regard. The proposed effects build on the arguments deductively drawn from the organisation theory, as there is no directly relevant strand of the literature of civil society to embed them all in. Hence, the theoretical framework refrains from pinning down a narrow argument about the causality mechanism in the postulated hypotheses or strictly advocating one. Though the potential explanations offered can be sufficient for early theorising purposes. Hence, by hypothesising and empirically testing the effects, this research offers the first but significant step towards developing the organisational approach to civil society. Consequently, it remains a task of future research to address the individual relationships to adjudicate among the competing potential explanations or qualitatively justify the ones proposed in this study.

The current study potentially suffers from at least three more shortcomings. The overall literature baskets benefitting this study include a selection of normative accounts of civil society, sociologically grounded macro theories of civil society, organisation theory, and literature on civil society within authoritarian regimes. It is the fourth group of literature in which this study aspires to position itself, while the other three groups are utilised for this goal. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework does not seek to integrate the literature of authoritarian regimes *per se* for two significant reasons. First, even though the current study examines civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes, it does not aim to contribute to the literature on authoritarianism *per se*. The case studies on civil society in authoritarian contexts scrutinised in this work already involve the related aspects of authoritarianism—the strategies deployed by these regimes

towards civil society. Hence, there appears to be no particular need to integrate the proposed theoretical framework with the authoritarianism literature as such.

Secondly, in the considerations swinging between parsimony and complexity, the current study prefers the former and avoids further complexity that may arise with the integration of further regime-related conceptual insights into the theoretical framework. However, future research can enrich the proposed conceptualisation by borrowing more insights from the literature on authoritarianism.

Thirdly, the limited number of country cases taken does not allow the global validation of the hypotheses or broader generalisation, hence serving only the purpose of theory generation. Otherwise, the study would require a nested research design, which, in turn, would demand a minimum of 30 country cases as the conventional threshold holds. Given the difficulty of conducting such a large-scale research project, future research can delve into continuous replication and refinement through other country cases and, consequently, in meta-analyses, which, when combined, can help validate the proposed theoretical framework globally.

Notwithstanding the stated shortcomings, the results of the empirical analysis—the model strength, the strength of individual variables, and the overall range of the hypotheses supported—prove that the proposed theoretical framework is capable of standing the empirical test and, hence, deserves to be taken as a reliable starting point for future research.

1.4. Diffuse effect of formal institutionalisation on the autonomy of CSOs

To achieve the set objectives, the present study delivers a theoretical framework that builds on two strands of theories of totally separate tracks. The first of these theories is the *civil sphere theory* that emerged with the 2006 book of Jeffrey C. Alexander; the other is the neo-classical organisation theory of the mid-20th century, particularly the writings of Philip Selznick. The macro analytical framework offered by the former is translated into the organisation level through the latter. However, by no means can such a work account for the whole of the *civil sphere theory*. Only with respect to civil associations, the propositions of the civil sphere theory are converted to the organisation level, and it was done only from the angles offered by the organisation theory, thereby leaving out a more extensive range of opportunities for interpreting what the articulations of the *civil sphere theory* may suggest at the lower levels of abstraction.

The choice of theory has not been a random process. A series of imperatives of theorising has guided the selection of theory, apart from the understanding of *positive theorising*—the primary goal of this study. Among the available alternatives of macro theories, the *civil sphere* theory was chosen for its comprehensive accounting of the relationships between civil society on the one hand and the state on the other. Since the literature provides little or almost no knowledge of the direction in which this research aims to carve out a pathway, building on the theoretical ground that is relatively more mature than others could presumably provide a safer ground for subsequent theorising. Once the macro-theory was identified, choosing a micro-theory requires a less strenuous effort. The theory with the best correspondence with the already selected macro-theory—the neo-classic organisation theory was identified. More specific considerations arising out of the comparison of available alternatives are discussed in Section 5.2, further justifying the choice of theory.

The emerging theoretical framework proposes at the general level the effect of formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes on their financial and institutional autonomy. Five different aspects or elements of formal institutionalisation are identified based on the extant literature: *formal commitment*, *rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation*, *professionalisation* and *hierarchy*. Each aspect is understood as both a developmental process and a quality held by an organisation at a given time. *Formal commitment* is understood as the establishment of formal regulations and contractual relationships within the organisation. *Formal commitment* also relates to the relationship between the organisation and its environment as the established formal regulations and contractual relationships are embedded within the broader regulations in society—the law, hence translating the civil force, in Alexander’s terms, into the organisation level. *Rationalisation* is understood as the establishment of measures aimed at ensuring efficiency and effectiveness within the organisation, while *professionalisation* refers to the differentiation of expertise functions within the organisation. In turn, *bureaucratisation* is understood here in the sense it is deployed in the organisation theory of the 1930s-70s as the share of the non-managerial staff, or if to put it in terms of those years, the *line staff*. Lastly, *hierarchy* is understood as the differentiation of authority or subordination levels within the organisation. *Formal institutionalisation*, hence, is a type of organisation that codifies regulation and structures behaviour within a group, which is also externally justified through a legal form.

While the conceptualisation of *formal institutionalisation* and its elements build on the organisation theory, the conceptualisation of *autonomy* draws both on the organisation studies

and the *symbiosis* perspective, where its embeddedness within a net of ties receives a particular emphasis. Hence, this study defines *autonomy* as the management of multiple ties of (inter-) dependencies in a strategic way that would balance against one another, winning space for the organisation to maintain a self-directed action. For its purpose, this study narrows such a strategic balancing act to transnational ties and state affiliations on two dimensions: financial and institutional. The deployment of these conceptual categories from the organisation theory, thus, provides a specific lens for understanding the inner world of civil society organisation.

The proposed effect of formal institutionalisation on the financial and institutional autonomy of civil associations within authoritarian regimes builds on a general argument that its consequences are double-edged. On the one hand, formal institutionalisation is suggested to counter informal institutionalisation, which engenders deviation from the formally established mission and norms and, hence, the financial and institutional autonomy of civil society organisations. On the other hand, formal institutionalisation compromises civil society ideals, which include, above all, solidarity within the organisation by bringing in the practices and norms characteristic of the other spheres and, hence, the influence of these spheres through them. As said earlier, different aspects of it can facilitate or obscure the financial or institutional autonomy of civil society organisations both directly and indirectly. As a consequence, the effect of formal institutionalisation on the autonomy of civil society organisations is diffused—both compromising and protecting. While some of these effects can be universal, that is, possibly applying beyond authoritarian contexts, others are specific to authoritarian contexts.

More specifically, *rationalisation* and *bureaucratisation* are hypothesised to negatively determine *financial autonomy*, as they would narrow the chances for the organisation to actively balance between the financial linkages to the state and transnational actors. Yet, the consolidation of decision-making authority within the organisation—the stratification of hierarchy can facilitate such an act of balancing and, therefore, have a positive effect on the financial autonomy of civil society organisations. All three effects are considered in (Model 1).

Meanwhile, *institutional autonomy* is proposed to be determined by *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* (Model 2). Accordingly, *formal commitment* enhances the integrity and legitimacy (both internally and externally) of civil society organisations, making them more resistant to external pressures, including state influence, as well as personal influences of members. In turn, *professionalisation*, by fostering divergent departmental motivations and complex management structures, is suggested to hinder institutional autonomy, diluting

organisational unity and agility and, thereby, making it challenging for leadership to strategically navigate between transnational and state ties.

Besides these direct effects, two of the aspects of formal institutionalisation, namely *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy*, are proposed to positively determine *formal commitment* (Model 3) and, hence, indirectly, the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations. Unlike the earlier models, this model's application may expand beyond both civil society context and authoritarian regimes, as it is reasonable to expect that the growth of *bureaucracy*—that is, the non-managerial staff—and *hierarchy*—that is, the levels of authority—would naturally require the establishment or strengthening of formal commitment in order to prevent the rise of detrimental consequences such as increased organisation complexity, reduced inflexibility, more room for informal patterns and hence, challenges in external relationships.

When taken together, these propositions suggest that formal institutionalisation is neither unequivocally beneficial nor detrimental to the autonomy of civil society organisations in authoritarian contexts. While the deepening or strengthening of certain facets of it may contribute to the strengthening of autonomy of civil society organisations, the others may weaken it. However, the interdependence among these different aspects suggests a more complex picture, as Model 3 suggests above.

1.5. Beneath the theory: Ontological and epistemological grounds

Any research endeavour relies on certain ontological and epistemological positions, which are no less important to both appreciating and critically approaching its methodological design and findings. A comprehensive reading of research results would, thus, require weighing them in light of not only its methodology but also its ontological and epistemological positions. These statements are particularly true when the research brings together insights from different theories and theoretical traditions. In such cases, what might be seen as superficially consistent could build on diverging ontological positions. This research is no exception in this regard. The two theoretical strands on which this research draws are embedded in two different ontologies. Therefore, overlooking their ontological bases would only create a sense of superficiality. In order to avoid such short-sightedness, at least partially, the following paragraphs discuss briefly the ontological bases of the *civil sphere* theory and the neoclassical organisation theory, which can be seen as diverging, and then propose a way of bridging them. Consequently, the paradigmatic bases of the research are clarified.

The *civil sphere* theory builds on what is referred to as *cultural sociology*. The very term was introduced by Jeffrey C. Alexander to the English language literature, who is known as a leading proponent of *cultural sociology*—an additional reason for clarifying the ontological bases of this research since a significant part of the theoretical framework stands on his *civil sphere* theory. The *civil sphere* theory is not a deviant in his scholarly track record and is well-embedded in his cultural sociology. In the simplest terms, cultural sociology sees almost all or most social phenomena as the product of culture. This means every action is implanted in a breadth of *affect*— an experience of feeling and meaning (Alexander, 2003, pp. 13–22). In contrast, the sociology of culture treats cultural phenomena as the product of social processes. In other words, for the sociology of culture, social processes come prior to culture.

The difference between the two views is fundamental as it concerns the causal linkage between culture and social processes. The importance of this difference, in this case, relates, in the simplest terms, to whether a civil society organisation as a social phenomenon is the product of culture or is the “creator” of culture. More concretely, this difference is critical to whether a civil society organisation can develop an internal culture that is independent, to a certain extent, from its external environment or not at all; whether a civil society organisation replicates political culture in society or can diverge from it; and more profoundly, whether formal institutionalisation matter as a causal factor at all or not.

More generally, this difference means whether the explanatory logic provided in this research is *institutionalist* or *ideational* if to deploy Craig Parson’s classification (2007)¹¹. An institutionalist logic would suggest that people follow the organisational rules not because they have a firm belief in them but because they deploy rational calculations to navigate themselves through institutional barriers and opportunities. In contrast, the ideational logic of explanation would suggest that people follow the rules, and thus, the institutions exist because people believe in the appropriateness or rightfulness of their actions. Again, in our case, the question at stake, in its modest form, is whether the *formal institutionalisation* of a civil society organisation matters because of the belief of its members in it or because they chose to navigate through it. If it is the former, then it is the beliefs of individual members that determine the outcome. Yet, if it is the latter, then it is *institutions*, not individual members, that determine the outcome.

¹¹ The purpose in citing Craig Parsons’ classification is to pin down in which understanding of ideational or institutional explanation is referred to here, as the literature frequently confuses ideational with institutional.

Although the question at stake has critical significance for this research, responding to such a question convincingly is by no means within the limits of this research. However, avoiding responding to a question of diverging ontologies at all would equally be wrong. Two shortcut solutions are brought to the problem.

First, although Alexander is known for his “strong programme” for cultural sociology, his *civil sphere* theory is not that firmly embedded in cultural sociology, at least when his theory is taken as an analytical framework stripped of its normative premises. On the one hand, he argues that the *culture* of civil society, expressed as a set of binary codes (“civil code”), specifies the characteristics of civil society actors, the relationship between them, and their institutions ‘in a patterned and coherent way’ (Alexander, 2003, pp. 121–122). However, on the other hand, he accepts that when cultural *ideals* are translated into practice—that is, realised through the institutions of civil society, these *ideals* are compromised. In other words, the realisation of the binary code is conditioned by the institutions of civil society or by, the way he puts it, “the social structures of reality”. At the very least, Alexander recognises the moderating role of institutions. More than that, this way of establishing the interplay between the culture (ideal) and institutions (real) can be read as the mutual reconstruction between culture and institutions, thus taking a step back from a strong culture-first approach.

The second point in the *civil sphere* theory, in which Alexander takes a further step back from a strong culture-first approach found in his cultural sociology, concerns the locus of the *ideals*. On the one hand, he establishes the ideals of the civil sphere as imagined binary inscriptions. On the other hand, he recognises the institutionalisation of these imagined binary inscriptions, or *the civil code*, as reflected in the constitutional or legal structures at the top, which, in turn, shape institutions down below. In doing so, he recognises the role of institutions and, in a sense, contradicts his differentiation of the ideals as imagined and civil society institutions as structures compromising them. In other words, he recognises the role of formal institutions as the translators of the cultural *ideals* of civil society. At a later point in his 2006 book, Alexander also recognises the path-dependency of institutions when he shows in the discussions of cases how cultural changes do not immediately lead to changes in formal institutions. These points help establish or move the civil sphere theory from what would be classified as the ideational explanation to the rational-institutionalist explanation in Parsons (2007).

On the organisational sociology side, the neoclassical organisation theory recognises a similar interplay between the *formal* what is a written *ideal* and the *informal* reality that

compromises the former. However, the organisational *formal-ideal* cannot be fully equated to the *ideals* of the *civil sphere*. In addition to the civil ideals, which it borrows from the legal civil codes as a result of downward translation from the top constitutional or legal structures, the organisational *formal-ideal* includes formal elements such as *hierarchy*, *rationalisation*, and *bureaucratisation* that represent the aspects of civil sphere institutions or social structure of reality, in Alexander's words, which compromise the *civil ideals*. As argued later in the theoretical framework, the civil ideal elements, which find their reflection in *formal institutionalisation*, facilitate *transnationalisation*—the strive of civil society organisations to reach beyond the national boundaries, while the compromising elements of it enable *co-optation by the state*—integration with the state-controlled structures. Thus, it is the inclusion of both *civil ideals* and compromising elements under *formal institutionalisation* that allows us to establish *formal institutionalisation* as a moderating factor on both *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* and, thus, as a determinant of the organisational autonomy as understood here.

Hence, the seemingly diverging ontologies of the two theories converge, at least to a certain extent, on the ground of interplay between the *ideal* and the *real*, both manifesting themselves in *formal institutionalisation*. Such a reconstruction of the ideal-real interplay within the framework of institutions allows us to deploy an institutionalist perspective in this research. Since the mechanism of compromise is not an ideational appropriation but a rational process, as one can find out through the examples discussed in Alexander's 2006 book, this helps further specify the perspective here as a *rational institutionalist* one. A rational institutionalist perspective holds that *institutions*, which people rationally choose to navigate through, introduce constraints on actions and, thus, determine the political outcome.

With such an institutionalist ontology, this research employs an epistemological position which assumes that institutions understood as formal and informal patterns of behaviour make themselves immediately available to observation and that there is no difference between what appears to the researcher and the assumed reality. Thereupon, the observation of the formal inscriptions, behavioural patterns, and institutional ties are found relevant and sufficient to access *reality*.

1.6. The Art of empirical investigation

The proposed theoretical framework is tested through quantitative analysis (multiple linear regression). The country cases were selected with clarified assumptions: Russia as a more authoritarian regime or hardliner autocracy and Turkey as a less authoritarian regime or moderate

autocracy. Consequently, a unique measurement instrument was developed to collect data on the identified five aspects of *formal institutionalisation* as well as *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* on two dimensions—financial and institutional. *Financial* and *institutional autonomy* is measured by a synthetic variable generated through a specific formula reflecting the balance between *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* on the financial and institutional linkage dimensions.

Original data was gathered through an anonymous online survey with civil society organisations in the selected country cases. The survey was conducted from 19 July 2021 to 19 January 2022. A set of organisations identified on objective bases were invited to partake in the survey. However, given the lack of reliable and complete databases for sampling, different strategies, yet with the same principles, were followed in both country cases to identify them. The survey covered civil society organisations (meeting the definition deployed in the *civil sphere*) of corresponding legal forms in the four regions in both countries where the four largest cities are found (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Bursa in Turkey and Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Novosibirsk and Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg) in Russia). Data analyses included 78 completed Turkish cases and 34 completed Russian cases, which were combined for a more reliable statistical analysis.

In total, three models were constructed, as discussed earlier. The first model tested *financial autonomy* as the function of *rationality*, *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy*, while the second model weighed the effects of *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* on the *institutional model*. Lastly, the third model deployed the *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* to account for *formal commitment*. All the models were tested in multiple linear regression, running in two steps. In the first step, only the above-mentioned independent variables were included in the statistical analysis, while the second step included the regime variable—measured by a dummy variable coded “1” for the more authoritarian case in this study—Russia and “0” for the less authoritarian case here—Turkey and its interaction terms with each of the other independent variables. Including the authoritarian regime quality and its interaction terms exposed how similar or different the models hold for the two country cases. Eventually, the results were compared to illustrate the difference between Russia and Turkey.

1.7. A brief outlook of major findings, theoretical implications & future research

The study makes several significant contributions to the existing body of literature. On the one hand, it provides a comprehensive assessment of the state of the art in the literature by exposing the infiltration of the normative lenses in empirical studies and the efforts to break away from them. Specifically, identifying four perspectives of civil society within authoritarian regimes provides a conceptual framework that can enhance the organisation and coherence of future research in this field. Moreover, the study firmly establishes the latest of the perspectives identified in the literature—the *symbiosis* perspective. On the one hand, the study proposes a new pathway for future research by shifting the focus from normative judgments to explanatory analysis, and hence, championing positive theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes. To do so, it offers one case by advancing the organisational theory of civil society within such regimes, incorporating a micro-sociological perspective—an aspect often overlooked in existing scholarship. More concretely, the study moves beyond the structural independence approach dominant in the literature and advocates instead for an organisational autonomy perspective that provides a more nuanced and tangible understanding of civil society under authoritarian rule.

In turn, empirical analysis demonstrates that the autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes can be explained as the function of different direct or indirect elements of formal institutionalisation. The results evidence that formal institutionalisation can have a diffused effect on the financial and institutional autonomy of civil society organisations operating in authoritarian contexts and that this effect is also conditioned by how authoritarian the regime is. The results, hence, challenge the relatively fixed view in the literature that treats formal institutionalisation as an inhibiting factor for civil society organisations, pejoratively referring to “NGOization” and “professionalisation”. Overall, the study underscores that it is not merely the mobilisation or association of civil society per se but also the way they are organised that matters significantly for their autonomy and, eventually, the impact they can engender.

Although the results gained from the empirical analysis and their comparison across the Russian and Turkish cases are sufficient to advocate the theoretical framework, the hypotheses need to be put in a larger number of country cases to reach broader validation. Future research needs, hence, to replicate the proposed theoretical framework in whole or in parts in different or in a large number of country cases. Notably, future research may test the proposed theoretical account through comparative designs between hardliner autocracies and moderate autocracies.

Besides, qualitative studies can shed light on the causality mechanisms which are not empirically established but only assumed in this study.

1.8. The layout of the thesis: What follows next?

The present research unfolds step-by-step in six sections, in addition to the current introductory part and the conclusion part. It begins from a very broad perspective and gradually narrows it down through Sections 2 to 4, eventually presenting the theoretical framework, methodology, and results through Sections 5 to 7 and closing with conclusions in Section 8. In doing so, it aims first to provide a smooth introduction to the long research trajectory and second to embed the current research within a broader context in the literature, within which the intended contribution of the current research can be better seen.

Section 2 starts with a brief view into the early theorising on civil society followed by the discussions of three groups of prevailing views of civil society in political theory, namely liberal, republican and in-between accounts in the example of several works by prominent authors which are part of the attempts to integrate the concept of civil society in the democratic theory. Overall, it serves to provide background to the rest of the research. More specifically, the purpose is to unearth the judgmental lenses these accounts of the democratic theory of civil society may offer potentially for studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes. To compare against these judgemental lenses, Section 3 turns to the literature of empirical studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes. This section starts with some bibliometric analysis, continues with the identification of four perspectives—*conflictual perspective*, *cooperative adjustment*, *co-optative joinder*, and *symbiosis perspective*—arising from the literature at hand, and closes with the discussions that juxtapose the judgmental lenses offered by the selected political theory accounts for civil society within authoritarian regimes against the four perspectives arising from empirical studies and thus, shows how the latter managed to push beyond the limits of the former, and what kind of remedies for the lack of *positive theorising* can be offered.

Following, Section 4 takes a specific look at the case studies on civil society in Russia and Turkey—two country cases in which the proposed theoretical framework was tested. These discussions serve two significant goals. First, they substantiate the *symbiosis perspective*, which this study aspires to contribute to, identifying the most pressing issues of civil society within authoritarian regimes. In doing so, the discussions often draw comparisons between the contexts

in Russia and Turkey, eventually yielding a comparative view on several key aspects. Secondly, the discussions of the selected cases provide a background to empirical analysis.

Section 5 begins with the centrality of the questions of autonomy and formal institutionalisation to the study of civil society within authoritarian regimes, largely building on the prior discussions in the literature review sections, then continues with the justification for or explanation of the choice of theory, and eventually moves to the presentation of the *civil sphere* theory—the macro analytical framework deployed in this study. In the second step, to establish the grounds for translating the premises of the *civil sphere* theory into the organisation level, a multi-level approach to the micro-macro linkage is presented, incorporating different elements of the *civil sphere* theory along these levels. Following, the discussions move on to *formal organisation* in the organisation theory and its implications for civil society organisations, focusing on the interplay between the ideal and real or realising and compromising as found in the *civil sphere* theory. Finally, the discussions switch back to the concept of *autonomy*, constructed with insights borrowed, again, from the organisation theory. Yet, this time, they are not necessarily limited to the neoclassical school in the organisation theory. The discussions on *autonomy* also include the conceptual linkage to *co-optation by the state* and *transnationalisation*. The section closes eventually by establishing the diffused effect of formal institutionalisation on financial and institutional autonomy, pinned down in seven hypotheses and a general expectation about the difference to emerge between the more authoritarian case and the less authoritarian case in the study.

Section 6 presents the overall methodology of empirical analysis, the selection of country cases, the identification of the unit of study, the operationalisation of concepts, the measurement instrument and the statistical modelling to prepare for the test of the theoretical framework offered in Section 5. Once the methodology is set down, Section 7 demonstrates the results of the analyses and their discussions. Section 8 engages in a lengthy discussion weaving together insights from the review of the normative theory accounts to the identification of four perspectives and the results of the synthesis of case studies on Russia and Turkey, with implications for theory, limitations to the study and directions for future research. Concluding remarks offered at the end evaluate, in broad strokes, the way the relevant literature may benefit from the present study and further advance its contributions.

2. Civil Society in Normative Theorising: What Lenses for the Authoritarian Context?

Offering *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes requires *first* identifying what kind of judgemental lenses the extant normative theorising offers on the subject for the empirical literature, a purpose this section aims to fulfil. The importance of unveiling these lenses lies in that (i) grand normative theorising on civil society is the original and natural home for the concept of civil society like many other key concepts utilised in political science studies, (ii) again, like many other concepts (for instance, *democracy*), the concept of civil society has made its way into political science studies with its normative tenor—the adjudicatory or judgemental lenses it has gained in normative theorising, (iii) these lenses can unavoidably impose some limitations on the understanding of civil society within authoritarian regimes, resonating in empirical studies. These limitations were briefly touched upon in the introductory part but will be explicated throughout the current chapter. To reiterate, the adjudicatory lenses subtly passing into empirical studies on civil society determine who qualifies as true civil society or *civil*, what counts as the functions of civil society within authoritarian regimes, and thus, ultimately, what particular aspects of civil society within authoritarian regimes or the civil society-authoritarian government relationships deserve to be investigated.

The scholarly works selected for this purpose are part of the attempts emerging with the revival of the concept to integrate it into the democratic theory. The range of accounts discussed can by no means be taken as comprising an exhaustive list. Similarly, the interpretations of selected works do not cover all of their detailed nuances and do not particularly represent any consensus in the literature on their reading. Rather, as already stated, the purpose is to focus on the crucial premises of these accounts and draw out their axiological implications for studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes.

Nonetheless, prior to delving into this, a succinct exposition of the historical backdrop against which the concept of civil society resurged is essential, given that normative theorising on the matter may be intrinsically intertwined with this context. Hence, the first part of this section presents a brief review of the broader global and Eastern European context that nurtured the revival of the concept of civil society. Besides, some early ideas of civil society in this period are briefly elaborated. The second part of the section analyses the three groups of prevailing normative accounts of civil society, namely liberal, republican and in-between accounts.

2.1. The revival of the concept of civil society: Early ideas

The revived interest in the concept of civil society in the late twentieth century can be attributed both to social movements and intellectual programmes offered in the same period. In the 1970s and 1980s, both social movements and intellectuals saw it as a remedy to diverse concerns faced at different corners of the world. From Eastern Europe to Latin America and established democracies of the West, the contexts in which the idea of civil society was revived were as different as the concerns to which it was thought to offer a remedy. A quick look at certain global tendencies of the second half of the twentieth century could perhaps better explain the broad adoption of the concept. Above all, the decade of the 1960s saw the decolonisation of many African nations, which encouraged the emergence of development and aid-oriented non-governmental organisations as facilitators of state-to-state aid (Tvedt, 1994). The mid-1960s also saw the rise of the *New Left* or *Second Left* in Europe (for more on this, see, e.g., Laraña et al., 1994; A. Scott, 1990). These developments were accompanied by growing discussions on the role of the *third sector* in the West (van Til, 1988), the waves of anti-dictatorial social movements in Latin America (Escobar & Alvarez, 1992) and popular movements elsewhere in the world (Andresen & van der Steen, 2016). On the right side of the spectrum, discontent with the “Big State” of several decades was also heard in West Germany and elsewhere in Europe (G. Baker, 2003).

In addition to the political context, one particular development in Western intellectual thought, no doubt, might have prepared the intellectual context for the integration of the concept of civil society within the democratic theory at later periods. The 1970s witnessed the emergence of the concept of *deliberative democracy* under the influence of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. The former’s political liberalism and the latter’s communication theory both turn the attention to the question of *publicity* and *public scrutiny* as a guarantee of maximum societal participation in the democratic processes (Bächtiger et al., 2018; Chambers, 2018).

Nevertheless, it was mainly within the Eastern European context, specifically with the *Solidarity* movement in Poland of the 1970s and 1980s, that the concept of civil society resurged. Studying the works of Polish intellectuals who took a role in introducing the concept and promoting it, such as Leszek Kolakowski, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron, Baker suggests that although it appeared episodically before, it was in the 1980-1982 period, the concept was popularised in Poland and was immediately brought into public debates in the West by Arato with his piece of analysis for the left-wing journal *Telos* published in 1981 (G. Baker, 2003, pp. 13–15), followed by Stepan (1985), Keane (1988a, 1988b), Bell (1989), C. Taylor (1990),

Shils (1991), Walzer (1991), Cohen and Arato (1992), P. G. Lewis (1992) and Seligman (1992) and others.

The adoption of the concept in the West is explained by the capacity it assumingly provided for the “synthesis of private and public ‘good’ and of individual and social desiderata” (Seligman, 1992, p. ix). However, what was meant in the then Eastern European discourse was not as clear as what attracted the Western scholars to this concept. By revoking the term, Eastern European intellectuals were referring to the Western democracies as a model they aspired to build for themselves, seeing *civil society* as a quality that already existed in Western democracies as a result of their centuries-long experiences and independent of the state (C. Taylor, 1990).

The original account of civil society in the discourse of Eastern European intellectuals in the 1980s had roots in the radical democratic theory. According to Baker, from Poland to Hungary and Czechoslovakia, two major themes underpinned the concept: *evolutionism* and *society-first*, though to varying extents in different countries (G. Baker, 2003, pp. 15–49). However, the Eastern European discourse on civil society remained largely silent about liberal democracy and market economy. Approximately around the same period, Latin America (LA) went through experiences that consequently fed into the revival of the idea of civil society (Escobar & Alvarez, 1992). Studying the landscape of social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1970s and 1980s, Calderon et al. (1992) argue that the concept of “new social movements” did nothing but highlight the novelty of the diversity of actors and themes compared to previous movements, and hence, led to the entry of the concept of civil society into discourse also in this part of the region, as it provided a more comprehensive framework for these emerging movements. Contrarily, G. Baker (2003, pp. 72–73) suggests that the opposite can be true—the deployment of the concept of civil society might have provided the lenses to see the diversity of actors and themes. Regardless of whether the relationship between the practice and idea of civil society worked in this or that direction or even it was a mutually feeding process, the Latin American context further supported the wide utilisation of the concept of civil society, yet, in this context, with a pronounced accentuation on the diversity inherent within civil society.

This coincided with the growing scholarly interest in the *third sector*—non-profit and voluntary organisations in the US and Europe starting from the 1970s (Butschi & Cattacin, 1993; Lohmann, 1992; van Til, 1988). Writing in 1977, Novak saw “those institutions standing between the individual in his private life and the large institutions of public life” as “alternative mechanisms” that can address what he refers to as “the welfare state’s dilemma” (Berger et al.,

1996, p. 158). According to the author, the dilemma was the growing demand for more welfare on the one hand and the piling scepticism towards the big state on the other hand. The solution was within the neighbourhood, family, church and voluntary associations that can mediate between megastructures, at the top of which comes the state, and at the bottom, private lives. These institutions were seen as capable of bringing stability to private life and transferring meaning and value to megastructures (Berger et al., 1996, p. 159). As this last sentence suggests, the author did not see the importance of these institutions only in relieving the burdens of private lives and shaping the large structures of society, the state, and the market. More importantly, the author believed that this mediation needs to be “institutionalised” to overcome the cynicism that threatens democracy (Berger et al., 1996, p. 160). By adding this democratic element, Novak invited the scholarly audience to look beyond the *third-sector* approach, which was then the dominant view on institutions outside the state, market, and family. One major difference that one can observe in the articulation of the ideas of *third-sector* or *civil society* between Novak and those that emerged in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the late 1970s and 1980s is that in the former, the associational sphere is instrumentalised to improve the processes and outcomes of political institutions. In the latter, it is a purpose in itself.

The Eastern European discourse on civil society also resonated in Western Europe. Echoing the Eastern European intellectuals, French intellectuals of the left developed their civil society discourse as a response to the totalitarian aspects rooted in France’s state-centric political culture and the invasive nature of capitalist totalitarianism. They defended not a mid-way between state socialism and neoliberalism but a qualitatively new way of promoting an idea that emphasised the emergence of social service providers outside the state (Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. 37–38). In West Germany, both neoconservatives and new social movements challenged the welfare state, critiquing its inefficiency and normative aspects. Neoconservatives questioned state authority due to its involvement in non-political societal areas, advocating for a depoliticised civil society aligned with the market and a reintegration under conservative, re-traditionalised values. Contrarily, inspired by France’s *Second Left*, another movement aimed to revive civil society in opposition to both the state and the market. Both groups saw state economic intervention as a clash between democratic legitimacy and an undemocratic economic system. While neo-corporatism was the solution for the former, the latter group leaned towards radical democracy (Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. 43–48).

As this brief discussion above demonstrates, the revival of the concept of civil society was a mutually feeding process in which, on the one hand, intellectuals adopted and appropriated

the concept for political ends, and on the other hand, others deployed the concept to make sense of social developments in the West and elsewhere. Unavoidably, such a legacy earned strong normativity for the concept, eventually compelling scholars to revisit and rejuvenate philosophical discourses from the early twentieth century, the nineteenth century, and even preceding periods.

Consequently, different emphases on the concept emerged, not all necessarily contradictory. While the Eastern European intellectual saw it as a remedy for the tyranny of the communist state, in Latin America, it gained an additional dimension—a framework for the representation of different social groups unsatisfied with their economic and political positions in society. In Western Europe, civil society was seen by many on both the right and left spectrum as a counterbalance to the interference of the states in the welfare and market, while in the example from the US, civil society, seen through the lenses of the *third-sector*, was a remedy to the democratic deficit arising from the domination of state and market institutions and had an emphasis on active citizenship. Yet, all these discourses turned around a single issue—bridging the gap between private and individual, on the one hand, and public and social, on the other, as rightly pointed out by the then scholars. The diversity in understanding *civil society* and the unclarity arising from it, however, did not last long, as by the mid-1990s, the integration of the concept into the democratic theory had already been mostly accomplished, resulting in a narrow normative programme which G. Baker (2003) referred to as the “liberal democratic taming of civil society”.

2.2. Liberal, republican and in-between accounts of civil society

Analysing the historical roots of the liberal and republication traditions of civil society—the liberal traced to Locke and the republican to Montesquieu, Taylor argues, in the mid-1990s, that the choice seems to lie between the former and the one balanced between these two, showing how the republican argument loses as a stand-alone programme, while he, himself, gives priority to the balanced view vis-à-vis the liberal view (C. Taylor, 1995). The radical democratic account of civil society, which does not link the functions of civil society to the change of political regime, or at least not directly, and instead focuses on changes at the root—society, had long lost its attractiveness by this time. Similarly, the neo-conservative views which equated civil society with the market had already lost their attractiveness. Hence, the following paragraphs elaborate on the liberal, republican and in-between views on civil society in the example of a few works. The liberal view is considered in the works of Cohen and Arato (1992) and Green (1993); the

discussions on the republican view draw on a number of authors (Putnam (2000), Putnam et al. (1993), Barber (1995), Walzer (1991, 1995), Young (2000)), while the in-between accounts are considered in the examples of the works produced by Thomas (1997) and Jensen (2011).

The presentation of each account is balanced between giving their major premises on the one hand and focusing on those particular aspects that would reveal their judgmental perspective for civil society within authoritarian regimes on the other. The discussion of each account closes with a few notes on their judgemental lenses for empirical studies, and the section's concluding paragraph only summarises them briefly.

Cohen and Arato's seminal work is an indispensable early contribution to the scholarly dialogue. Rooted in Habermas' conceptual framework, which bifurcates the *lifeworld* and the political and economic subsystems, Cohen and Arato advance not simply a theory of civil society but a theory of *modern* civil society. This modernity is encapsulated in its capacity for *rationalisation*¹²—a judicious evaluation of traditional values and norms that underpin societal solidarity. Thus, Cohen and Arato envision civil society as inherently *progressive*, with its continual rational refinement of societal values and norms serving as the key driver. Hence, this progressive civil society aims to shape the political society through its continual engagement in the public sphere (Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. x–xi).

In Cohen and Arato's analysis, two additional attributes of civil society are notably discernible. Firstly, civil society transcends mere separation from the state and market. Its defining characteristics lie in its organisation and institutionalisation, which distinctly set it apart from other structures within the *lifeworld* (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. xi). Secondly, the principal mechanism through which civil society achieves self-integration is *social integration*. This is manifested in the consensus forged through communication, upheld by norms within the *lifeworld*. In contrast, the state consolidates its integration through the exercise of *power*, while the market achieves its integration via *monetary means*. Nonetheless, ascribing social integration through (rationalised) communication to civil society does not exclude the possibility for the other two integration mechanisms—*power* and *money*—to enter the civil sphere. It is through the modernisation—that is, rationalisation—of civil society institutions that *power* and *money* enter civil society as integrating mechanisms, too. The expansion of *power* and *money* as integration mechanisms towards the civil sphere carries both 'positive' and 'negative' aspects.

¹² This concept of *rationalization* used in the context above should not be conflated with the concept of *rationalisation* in the organisation theory deployed at a later stage of this study.

On the one hand, the strengthening of autonomy and rationalisation of civil society serve to establish civil society's primacy over the state and market. On the other hand, modernisation enables the penetration of civil society by the state and market, which leads to the formal institutionalisation and emergence of pseudo-pluralist and corporatist forms of interest representation and aggregation. However, the expansion of *power* and *money* as integration mechanisms towards the civil sphere does not erase social integration through (rationalised) communication. Put this way, Cohen and Arato's civil society is in a continuous state of *colonisation*—if to borrow Habermas's terminology—by the state and market, which compromises *solidarity* within the civil sphere defined as “the ability of individuals to respond to and identify with one another on the basis of mutuality and reciprocity”.

Cohen and Arato's conceptualisation of a modern and progressive civil society, while insightful, is not without its limitations. These shortcomings are not solely tied to the ongoing compromises faced by civil society due to the *colonisation* by the other sphere via the media of *power* and *money*. Rather, the way the social integration is constructed suffers in self-sufficiency. A fundamental aspect of social integration in their framework is solidarity, predicated on mutual and reciprocal exchanges that are not driven by individual advantage calculation—a process that is inherently non-rational and non-self-maximising. Consequently, unlike power and money, civil society's means of social integration do not possess an autopoietic nature. This absence renders civil society vulnerable, lacking in self-sufficiency and defence against incursions by the state and market.

To counter these frailties, Cohen and Arato propose two solutions. Firstly, paradoxically, they argue that the expansion of power and money might, in fact, augment civil society's autonomy and robustness. Secondly, they advocate for the establishment of rights as the foundational pillar of civil society, safeguarding solidarity from external influences. These institutions of civil society inherently rely on the rights to association and communication. However, this emphasis on the fragility of solidarity and the crucial role of rights for its preservation implies that civil society's endurance necessitates a degree of self-restraint by the state.

Nevertheless, by anchoring the protection of civil society in the institution of rights, Cohen and Arato inherently tie the fate of civil society to the nature of the political regime. This presupposes that for a *modern* or *progressive* civil society to function optimally, the institution of rights must be established, indicative of a democratic ethos that curtails state interference. This is a long way of saying that for a modern civil society to exist or ever be possible, there

must be a certain democratic quality that limits the state's interventions. More worryingly, such a framework suggests that only democratic societies can sustain a *modern* or *progressive* civil society—one bound together by a rational approach to traditional norms and values and the norms facilitating such rationalisation. In essence, Cohen and Arato propose not just a theory of civil society but that of *modern* and *progressive* civil society that may exist only in democracies.

However, not all liberal views of civil society build on a progressive understanding of its functions. Writing in 1993, Green offers a liberal (or libertarian) programme building on the tradition of “communal liberalism” based on the British experience of a “friendly society”. In this programme, the author attacks the welfare state, particularly the state's presence in the social security provision, yet recognises disadvantages created by the market to which civil society emerges as a remedy. Accordingly, the welfare state has resulted in the suppression of market incentives and those institutions that are important for the exercise of individual freedoms in good faith based on mutuality. In this view, civil society's role is subjugated to the market, compensating for damaging outcomes for society and building individuals' character towards shared ideals.

The solidarity on which civil society rests in Green's account is born out of respect for the law. The differentiation of law from what the author refers to as political programming—takes away the *progressive* element and reduces law almost exclusively to protecting civil liberties and dealing with crime. In this account, if one of the columns on which civil society rests is the institution of liberties, the other is family, where the individual's character is shaped.

This view is anti-state in that it promotes a small state and places the locus of democracy within civil society institutions, primarily aid and social security networks - a terrain where local democracy is practised. So, basing the social protection on civil society institutions is not democratic only because it, as argued, frees people from the abstract goals of the state but also because democracy is exercised not within the political sphere but in civil society by which power concentration either in the state or the market is avoided. In this sense, it is also an anti-politics programme. In its emphasis on local democracy and its anti-static and anti-politics elements, Green's account is similar to the radical democratic account of the Polish intellectuals.

Nonetheless, Green's civil society is not a fundamentally revisionist programme aiming to eradicate all traditional institutions. Rather, it builds on the Judeo-Christi morality that requires every person to pay their contributions to maintain mutual regard and consideration for others. In this sense, it is a traditionalist programme in which individual conscience is inherently good and is the major driver (Green, 1993). Green must have been aware of at least one particular

weakness of his programme in explaining the motivation of individuals within such a civil society that he saw a need to move his account onto a certain morality dimension. Green's view, therefore, can be said to combine some elements from radical democratic and neoconservative programmes.

The second ground on which Green attempts to address the question of individual motivation is the institutional design of civil society. Accordingly, sustaining individuals' commitment to mutuality and reciprocity-based civil society demands complex institutional designs. However, no particular template of institutional design is offered as an ideal. The trial-error method is seen as the main type of inclination in society; thus, institutional design emerges as a major determinant of the quality of civil society. In other words, civil society is imagined as functioning in a perpetual struggle against imperfections that require liberties. However, the welfare state or, in general, the concentration of power within any societal sphere limits, it is argued, such liberties.

Although their concerns and responses are relatively different, both programmes suffer in two similar ways: *first*, the lack of motivation of individuals who pursue their visions of a good life to engage in solidary actions, and *second*, how civil society may shield itself against the destructive influence of the state and market. The answers offered have some common ground, too. Both accounts rely on the institution of rights. In addition, Cohen and Arato highlight the empowering side of power and money mechanisms within civil society and the (liberal) norms facilitating rationalisation towards traditional norms and values, while Green refers to a certain morality underpinning mutuality and reciprocity. These answers have several implications for the authoritarian context.

First, the emphasis on the institution of rights suggests that (truly) civil society may have no chance to emerge in an authoritarian regime where the institutions of rights do not exist at all. Even if it does emerge, to some extent, such civil society cannot resist the colonisation by the other spheres. Hence, the institution of rights is a necessary precondition for civil society. Such a view, hence, treats civil society as an upspring or side-product of democracy and sees it impossible to imagine such a civil society in the absence of democracy. Again, even if it is imaginable to some extent, then establishing the institution of rights becomes an imperative function of civil society. Such an imperative, in turn, requires citizens to abandon their retreat from public life, which perhaps sits well with Cohen and Arato's account but not Green's programme, and prepare for and engage in a struggle with the authoritarian state to establish its own necessary precondition. Whether norms underpinning rationalisations and solidarity,

understood as mutuality and reciprocity, can resist the authoritarian context remains an open question. Yet, the rationalisation orientation of civil society suggests nothing but a perpetual clash with the authoritarian state, as *rationalisation* cannot avoid challenging the very nature of the political regime. Finally, in the absence or malfunctioning of the rights of institutions, solidarity building on mutuality and reciprocity can only be degraded into more primordial elements. Finally, the anti-state elements of the liberal views—limiting the state's role or moving politics from the political sphere to the civil sphere—establish civil society as nothing but a competitor against the authoritarian state over authority and role within society.

Unlike the liberal views, the republican views turn to the state for two reasons: to address the question of lack of motivation and offer a remedy for the conflict within civil society. The liberal accounts avoid handling both questions, in particular the latter. The republican accounts discussed below build on the state's role in cultivating civic virtue in civil society. However, in doing so, the republican views also embed civil society within democratic theory.

For the republican views, the service of civil society for democracy is not (only) in that civil society counterbalances the state or precludes the consolidation of power within the state sphere but (also) in that civil society incubates civic virtue. Following the republican (largely Tocqueillian) tradition, Putnam attempts to empirically demonstrate in his two empirical studies on grassroots organisations in Italy (Putnam et al., 1993) and the United States (Putnam, 2000) that “active participation in public affairs” is part of good citizenship in a civic community, and argues that horizontally structured civil associations contribute to the effectiveness and stability of the democratic government. Accordingly, in civil society, citizens develop civic virtue, and it is social capital and the trust nurtured within civil society that helps overcome the Hobbesian dilemmas of collective action. Around the same period, Barber follows a similar path by arguing about the salience of civil society for “nourishing engaged citizens” and thus, bringing more democratic participation (Barber, 1995). However, the republican concept of civil society underlines not only liberties but also the responsibility of citizens before the state and other citizens. In this vein, Barber contends that the exercise of liberties within civil society comes with the obligations of social responsibility and citizenship to restrict the government (Barber, 1995).

The other entry point for the state in the republican accounts of civil society is captured by the term “the paradox of civil society” offered by Walzer (1991). Stressing the conflict within civil society and its impact on the quality of democracy, Walzer argues that democratic politics is the function of *civility* learned in civil society. To accomplish this goal, civil society, in which

capabilities are equally and widely spread, needs to be sustained by the democratic state—an argument that makes civil society exclusively a possibility for democracies. Building on similar grounds, Foley and Edwards (1996) further develop the *political variable* argument by asserting that civil society may fall into disruption and violence without political associations and political mechanisms of conflict resolution and that undemocratic governments or unresponsive institutions may generate uncivil society. Again, the latter view from Folley and Edwards presents the *civil* society as the one that is typical of democracies, while the chances for it to arise within authoritarian regimes are almost fully absent. At best, Folley and Edward’s point of view can imagine the *civil* society within an authoritarian regime—in the absence of the democratic state to provide a political mechanism of conflict resolution—as one torn apart by internal conflicts.

The republican views of civil society concern themselves not only with the question of democracy but also with the question of (in)justice, for which civil society arguably possesses inherent limitations. In his *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000), Iris Young asserts that although civil society can be successful in promoting self-determination, it can barely handle the issues of structural injustice, which he sees as a mission the states can only carry out. The major reason for Young is that civil society lacks coordination and authority to repair/prevent injustices delivered by the market—the point where the republican tradition departs particularly far from the liberal tradition. He charges that rather than addressing structural injustices, civil society may even distract citizens from utilising advantages to improve their lives by causing too much fragmentation and incapacity. Following other scholars, such as Hirst (1994) and Cohen and Rogers (1992, 1993), he offers *associative democracy* in which the state funds civil associations.

Hence, even though the republican accounts may see civil society within authoritarian regimes as fragmented, in conflict, and even “uncivil,” with its emphasis on civic virtue, citizenship responsibilities, and the necessity of coordination with the state in matters of injustice, some cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian state may seem permissible.

Acknowledging the merits of both republican and liberal traditions, Thomas (1997) attempts to bridge political (or non-doctrinal) liberalism and one strand of republicanism (Machiavellian) in the context of civil society. In this account, active citizenship is established as not part of a comprehensive doctrine of the good that one can find in the republican tradition but as an “option value”. It means citizens are required only to commit to rational dialogue and equal respect, which are the moral basis of procedural neutrality and shared by all parties with

different comprehensive doctrines of the good. This account, in other words, borrows the rational dialogue, for which equal respect for all citizens is a prerequisite, from the tradition followed by Cohen and Arato, Habermas and Rawls and converges it with the “guardian” role of the state in the republican tradition. In simple terms, in this view, what the state needs to cultivate through facilitating civil society is not any comprehensive doctrine but the principle of rational dialogue. However, this may not be as naïve as it sounds. The principle of rational dialogue is a liberal norm in itself, and its integration into the comprehensive doctrines of civil society groups may require substantial reconstruction on the side of civil society groups whose comprehensive doctrines do not envisage rational dialogue. Hence, this in-between account offers nothing but fragmentation and collapse of civil society within authoritarian regimes when the state safeguarding the “rational dialogue” is absent.

More recently, Jensen (2011) offered what he refers to as ‘*the Grand Conversation Model*’ in which he pursues a path opened by Thomas (1997), another in-between account in the literature. In the *Grand Conversation Model*, civil society consists of all people who pursue their own conceptions of the good life in groups. These groups are engaged in a grand conversation to elucidate the nature of the good life. However, as humble actors who recognise the limitations of their experiences and, therefore, see a necessity to engage with others in order to clarify or modify their own visions, none of them wants to throw away the liberal democratic political regime. Hence, by bringing in the argument about humbleness, which can also be seen as another criterion of *civility*, the author shoots for handling the question of lack of motivation on the side of civil society groups to stick to the commitment to the rational dialogue held by equal respect to all citizens. Even if this view may succeed in convincing the audience regarding the commitment to the rational dialogue (though this is not so direct as some questions show below), it abandons the republican concern for the conflict within civil society. The balance is further tilted towards the liberal tradition when it is argued that the ultimate end of civil society is not only to sustain the liberal democratic regime but to live out their own visions. Thus, Jensen assumes that the *civil* society is one that adopts the principle of rational dialogue.

However, as Jensen himself recognises, the commitment to the grand conversation may be part of the comprehensive doctrines of some groups but not others. The issue that needs more specific attention here concerns the question of on which grounds those groups whose comprehensive doctrine may not feature the exercise of liberal democratic political culture may come to accept the commitment to the grand conversation. At this point, Jensen avoids providing a purely instrumental explanation and tries to follow a mid-way by arguing that such groups

recognise that their comprehensive doctrines lack universal assent and that they could be mistaken in their views (the argument about humbleness). This is perhaps the most vulnerable part of his theory. Instrumentally thinking, the acceptance by such groups of the minimum norms of neutrality may depend on their influence within society. If there are no prospects for them to impose their vision on the whole of society anytime soon, then they would find it pragmatic to commit themselves to the norms of neutrality in order to be still able to pursue their vision. However, this would be possible only when society is so fragmented that no such majority emerges that can roll back the norm of neutrality and establish tyranny, as in the words of Tocqueville and Mill.

For the authoritarian context, this in-between account, which tilts more towards the liberal end, has numerous but one major implication. The above-discussed problem of the lack of motivation on the side of all actors to embrace rational dialogue would only worsen when it is further disturbed by the authoritarian state. Hence, one can imagine only some civil society actors engaging in a struggle to get the underpinning norms of such rational dialogue to be established and not interfered with by the authoritarian state—the problem of the abuse of the institution of rights by the authoritarian state in the liberal view. In contrast, others, whose doctrines of the good life may sit well with the authoritarian state, would not be interested in such engagements, fragmenting the civil sphere from within. In short, for authoritarian regimes, the *Grand Conversation*, as an in-between account, would offer both fragmentation and conflict within and perpetual clash with the state.

To conclude, the judgmental lenses these accounts offer for understanding civil society within authoritarian regimes can be formulated with some injustices to the rich nuances as the following. The liberal view almost fully rejects the possibility of civil society to exist within authoritarian regimes where the institutions of rights malfunction or are absent at all. At best, they implicitly treat civil societies within authoritarian regimes as *civil society in-formation*, whose major function is to build the institution of rights against the authoritarian regime. To this goal, the major task of civil society is i) to prepare individuals within civil society for such a struggle by training them, ii) to mobilise them to protect rights, and iii) to detect, reprimand and rebuke the abuse of rights by the state or because of the failure of the state to protect them. Thus, the liberal accounts reduce the civil society-government relations to a zero-sum game. No cooperation between civil society and the state seems possible in this view. Paradoxically, the retreat from public life specific to the liberal accounts disappears in this picture. Hence, even the liberal accounts, which have no progressive element and merely seek to carve out an opportunity

for civil society groups to pursue their visions of a good life without state intervention, lose their “anti-politics” or “anti-state” positions. In simple terms, at least temporarily (until the institution of rights is established), civil society orients its actions towards the state and targets the decisions of the authoritarian government.

The judgmental lenses that republican accounts of civil society may suggest for civil society within authoritarian regimes, however, are not as definitive as those of the liberal accounts. On the one hand, as we saw above in the arguments of Foley and Edwards, the role of the state as the political facilitator of the conflicts within civil society may doom to fail—to generate an uncivil society. Thus, in a form different from the liberal account but in a similar vein, the republican accounts of civil society see less chance for *civil* society to exist within authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, the republican accounts of civil society see, even if far and risky (for civil society to lose its *civil* character), some chances for cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian government in areas that fall within the common vision of the good life. From a republican point of view, one may recognise the need for civil society and the authoritarian government to advance common goals, such as improving socio-economic conditions, together.

The judgmental lenses these accounts offer for studies on civil society under an authoritarian rule are significant in several ways. They inform, above all, who qualifies as true civil society or *civil*. Moreover, they suggest what counts as the functions of civil society within authoritarian regimes. Ultimately, they indicate what particular aspects of civil society within authoritarian regimes or the civil society-authoritarian government relationships deserve to be investigated. The next chapter explores the perspectives arising in empirical studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes and, consequently, gauges how far the judgemental lenses offered by liberal, republican and in-between accounts sway an influence over the literature or to what extent the empirical literature could push beyond these judgemental lenses. Combined, the current and following sections serve two purposes. As already said at the beginning of this section, embedding the proposed theoretical framework better in the existing literature, which, in turn, would help carve out a space for the purpose of the current study—to offer *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes.

3. Civil Society-Authoritarian State Relationship: Varying Perspectives

In seeking to unveil the impact of normative theorising on the empirical literature, the previous section addressed part of this task by revealing the normative lenses embedded within selected accounts from the liberal and republican traditions, as well as those that bridge the two. This section dissects the perspectives evident in empirical studies of civil society within authoritarian regimes and consequently, it critically evaluates the extent to which these perspectives reflect or transcend the normative frameworks. Ultimately, this chapter lays the groundwork for an argument in favour of positive theorising within the literature.

Towards the stated goal, the following subsection delivers a series of bibliometric analyses, which help discern four broad perspectives in the literature. Consequently, these perspectives are further elaborated through in-depth qualitative analyses. While each perspective maintains its significance in academic discourse, their collective genealogy sketches an evolutionary trajectory of the scholarly landscape, progressing from singular or less nuanced perspectives to multifaceted and intricate ones. These perspectives are not immediately discernible to civil society scholars, as only a minority of these studies overtly elucidate the conceptual lenses or foundational assumptions upon which they build. However, not every study is explicit about its conceptual viewpoint; only a select few demonstrate a conscientious effort or perceive the necessity to disclose it explicitly to the reader, one primary shortcoming of the analysis to follow below.

3.1. Brief overview of the literature via bibliometric analyses

The corpus of empirical research focusing on civil society within authoritarian regimes has primarily evolved since the late 1990s and early 2000s. The stage it has now reached presents a far richer tableau, emphasising the multifaceted roles played by civil society (C. E. Herrold, 2016; Lynn Dobbs & Schraeder, 2018; Schulz, 2015; Seeberg, 2015), the diversity of strategies they deploy vis-à-vis the authoritarian state (Coe, 2015; Hu & Zhu, 2021; G. K. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Spires, 2011b; J. Teets & Almen, 2018; Tysiachniouk et al., 2018b), the control strategies and repression tactics pursued by the state (Astapova et al., 2022; Buyse, 2018; DeMattee, 2023; Dongshu Liu, 2023; Holdo, 2019; Huang, 2018; Lorch & Bunk, 2017; Reuter & Robertson, 2015; Salmenniemi, 2007; Skokova et al., 2018), as well as the cases of cooperation between the two (Froissart, 2014; C. Hsu, 2010; Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The list of issues discussed in the literature can further be extended to the question of external linkage of

civil society actors (Bromley et al., 2020; Dupuy et al., 2016; Hellmeier, 2020; Kourtikakis & Turkina, 2015; Moser & Skripchenko, 2018; Pallas & Sidel, 2020; Petrova, 2014; Sidel, 2019; Swedlund, 2017; Zihnioğlu, 2019d), internal fragmentations both within civil society (D'Alisa et al., 2013; Falkenhain, 2020; Freizer, 2004; Hahn-Fuhr & Worschech, 2014; Popplewell, 2018) and the state (Y. Kang, 2019; Li, 2020; Mertha, 2009; Spires, 2011b; Wu & Chan, 2012), civil society's participation in the distribution of resources (Alqatabry & Butcher, 2020; Bernhard et al., 2017; Bernhard & Jung, 2017; Muok & Kingiri, 2015; Pelke, 2020; Taka & Northey, 2020), the organising form, organisation and institutionalisation of civil society (Aliyev, 2015a; Bródy, 2023; Harris & Milofsky, 2019; Kärkliņa, 2014; Richter & Hatch, 2013; Sommerfeldt & Kent, 2015; Urinboyev & Eraliev, 2022), the role of leadership within civil society organisations (Bilgin et al., 2017; Hildebrandt, 2013; Tai, 2015; J. Teets & Almen, 2018), and civil society-active citizen(ship) linkages and participation (Aliyev, 2014; Blomberg & Szöcsik, 2014; Bøås, 2012; Chartock, 2013; Froissart, 2014; Pierce, 2004; Yalçın-Riollet, 2019).

The range of themes explored is owed to the rich conceptualisation efforts over the past two decades, which yielded an expansive inventory of concepts, even though they often remained short of offering a strictly causal explanation but were used to make sense of the cases at hand. Despite the broad spectrum of themes, the extensive conceptual lexicon, and the variety of country cases spanning all continents, especially when historical instances are considered, stand-alone literature reviews remain notably scarce (see, e.g., Egholm et al., 2020; Gleiss & Saether, 2017; D. Lewis, 2013; J. Ma, 2023; Toepler, Zimmer, et al., 2020). The lack of sufficient and comprehensive literature reviews leaves the knowledge accumulation process on the subject deprived of systematic reflections on this process.

Even though arbitrary reviews, like the one offered above, may disclose the range of themes, the diversity of concepts and the variety of cases, they fail to inform the reader about the perspectives and approaches prevailing and the directions in which the literature is moving, a task that requires a more systematic approach. Hence, the literature review of this thesis aims to contribute to the bridging of the stated gap by offering a more or less systematic review of the literature on civil society within authoritarian regimes. However, this endeavour is restrained in several ways.

First, the bibliometric review presented below is limited to journal articles published in English¹³. Moreover, the method of analysis is kept limited, given the scope of this study. Eventually, this review aims to investigate the general perspectives arising specifically on the civil society-authoritarian state relationship and the autonomy of civil society in this context.

To this goal, three sets of analyses are deployed for the literature review in the current section. First, the overall citation counts and the citation linkages within the collected literature were checked to find out the most cited and, hence, most impactful literature sources within the set and determine if any apparent clustering within the literature exists. Eventually, the top 10 most cited articles are qualitatively reviewed for their major arguments. This helped to identify the prevailing general tendency in the literature. Secondly, a meta-thematical analysis based on the existing keywords in the collected sources was conducted. Third, the collected literature set is reviewed qualitatively in-depth—through what is here referred to as “*analytical close reading*”, facilitated by the earlier two methods.

To start with, Figure 2 below illustrates the journal articles on civil society within authoritarian regimes analysed in this section, spread by their overall citation count (vertically) and date (horizontally) and differentiated by their size (the citation count of literature sources within the collected literature).¹⁴ The results provide no clearly discernible clustering within the literature but the most impactful articles. Nevertheless, to make sense of the general prevailing tendency in the literature, the top 10 most cited articles are reviewed qualitatively for a quick

¹³ Overall, 355 literature sources published in the 1990-2021 period have been included in the analysis in this chapter, of which 324 (including 217 journal articles) were directly relevant to the subject at hand. The journal articles have initially been collected through a set of criteria applied systematically (“civil society” AND “authoritarian” or “hybrid regime” searched in the titles and abstracts for the 1990-2021 period in the field of political science in Taylor & Francis, SAGE and JSTOR databases). However, after seeing the limitations of such a systematic approach, a broader search was conducted to identify the studies on civil society in the cases of authoritarian or hybrid regimes. Similarly, books have been identified through non-systematic but thorough iterative searches in diverse databases and the Justus-Liebig University of Giessen library. Consequently, all the collected journal articles have been checked individually to ensure that the term “civil society” is not merely mentioned in their titles or abstracts but is their major subject. The literature review has not been limited only to hardliner autocracies but also included those on hybrid regimes. The primary reason for the inclusion of hybrid regimes is the absence of a fixed classification of political regimes in the literature or consistent application of any such classification in the literature. Those regimes which are referred to as hardliner autocracy, as in the case of Russia, or a moderate autocracy, as in the case of Turkey, are identified as hybrid regimes elsewhere based on poor evidence or loose or accommodative criteria, if not casually.

¹⁴ The following cautions should have been made while reading this map. First, the overall citation count shows the impact of the literature accumulated over time, this impact may well go beyond the boundaries of the literature on the subject.

snapshot¹⁵. As pivotal studies, the top 10 articles have shaped the trajectory of the field, at least more than the others, and hence, they may contain foundational concepts that have informed subsequent research. Such a snapshot, unlike the arbitrary review offered above, can help identify the prevailing approaches and concepts in the literature.

Nine out of the list focus on either the case of Russia or the case of China, the only exception being Wiktorowicz's (2000) study on Lebanon, which discusses how the authoritarian regime encourages the growth of civil society organisations as a tool of control over the society. Yet, almost unanimously, all studies see civil society-authoritarian government relations as more complex than being exclusively conflictual, with the only exception being Flikke's (2016) study on the resurging hard hand of the Russian government over civil society in Putin's new term. Yet, the pictures these studies draw for China and Russia differ significantly. Studies on the Russian case highlight the government's dual strategy of *confrontation vs collaboration* (Daucé, 2014; Ljubownikow et al., 2013; Salamon et al., 2015), while concepts like *fragmented authoritarianism* by Mertha (2009), *consultative authoritarianism* by J. C. Teets (2013) and *contingent symbiosis* by Spires (2011b) are deployed to explain the case of China, which offers a less definitive relationship between civil society and the state.

When taken together, the snapshot review of the ten most cited articles in the collected literature suggests only a growingly complex view of civil society-authoritarian relations, diverging away from the traditional Western view, which sees civil society in an unexclusive and perpetual clash with the authoritarian state. Hence, this small analysis allows us to expose the general tendency in the literature, even though it might be blind to nuances within this tendency, which the following thematic analysis, based on the keywords of the articles (additional supplemented by the author of this study), is aimed to provide.

¹⁵ For the list, see Table 12 in Appendix I.

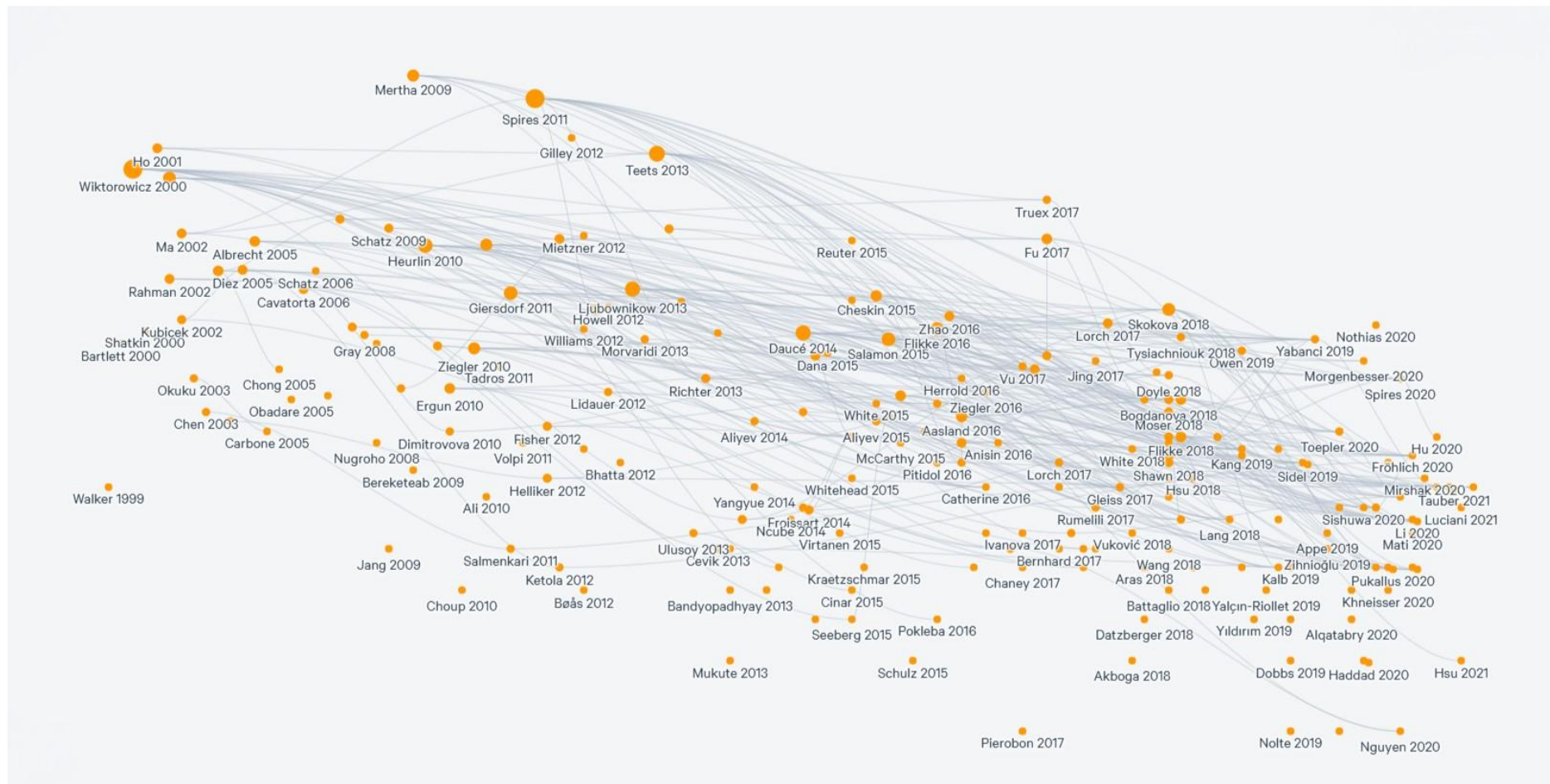


Figure 2 Bibliometric Analysis: Citation count (vertical) by date (horizontal).

The thematic review utilising keywords has also been undertaken to sketch, albeit in broad strokes, an overall portrait of the surveyed literature. All the literature sources included in the analysis have been inductively coded with new keywords in addition to the already existing original keywords. In doing so, the major concepts featured in the titles or inside the texts were used. Consequently, the list of keywords were reviewed and revised through merging or subsuming under new keywords. Lastly, in the running of network visualisation, given the sheer size of unique keywords featuring at least one literature source (487 in total), the analysis is limited to keywords shared by a minimum of seven literature sources (68 in total). For more clarity, the geographic identifications and general terms such as *civil society*, *civil society organisations*, *NGOs*, and *authoritarian* were eliminated. The resulting tableau, featured in Figure 3, provided five clusters and are referred to below by their major organising concepts.

The first of them—the *democratisation cluster* (in red in Figure 6) is formed primarily around keywords such as *democracy*, *democratisation*, *activism*, and *social movements*, which also includes other key nodes such as *democratic transition*, *external linkage*, and *democracy promotion*. This cluster of studies places civil society in a context of democratisation or democratic transition in which civic activism and social movements are the modes of politics. Such a contextualisation is further supplemented by *external linkage* or *democracy promotion* by external actors and, overall, offers a conflictual perspective on civil society within authoritarian regimes.

Close to the *democratisation cluster*, particularly to its *social movements* node, another—*political participation cluster* (in lilac) can be identified. It primarily consists of the nodes such as *participation*, *contestation*, *contentious politics*, as well as the *role of civil society*. The *political participation cluster* further narrows the focus on the role of civil society within authoritarian regimes—bringing in the questions of political participation as well as contestation and contentious politics. Hence, like the *democratisation cluster*, this one also locates civil society within authoritarian regimes in a conflictual context, and therefore, it is no accident that this cluster is closely linked to *social movements* in the *democratisation cluster*.

The third—*service provision cluster* (in green) is centred around three major nodes—*service provision*, *development*, and *welfare*—and several small nodes such as *voluntarism*, *international aid*, *legitimacy*, and *non-profit organisations*, reflecting more the *third-sector* approach. This cluster establishes a different authoritarian context for civil society in which the major topics are *service provision*, *development*, and *welfare*. This cluster, hence, offers a perspective in which civil society is placed in the service of public good, which also provides

(output) *legitimacy*, as the mapping indicates, for the authoritarian regime and is closely linked to international aid, too. It must have been no coincidence that it is in this cluster we find *non-profit organisations*—a term that is free from a normative load present in the concept of civil society. Volunteering and religious foundations are significant elements of civil society, in this perspective, too.

The fourth *governance-collaboration cluster* (in yellow) is widely dispersed but mostly centred around *governance* and *collaboration* but also involves keywords such as *networking*, *local government-civil society relations*, *informality*, and *political culture*. Similarly, the *governance-collaboration* cluster avoids conflictual aspects by heavily leaning towards collaboration between civil society and the authoritarian government, particularly at the local level and in specific policy areas (indicated by *government-civil society relations*, which is different from *state-civil society relations*.) The *governance-collaboration* cluster is also closely tied to the *service provision* cluster through the strings reaching almost all of the nodes in the latter. While *networking* found in this cluster indicates the established policy networks involving both civil society and government representatives, *informality*, *political culture*, and *authoritarian nature of NGOs/replicating political culture* highlight the shared norms or cultural affinity between civil society and the government within authoritarian regimes. Although both the *service provision* and *governance-collaboration* clusters place emphasis on non-conflictual aspects, they, as already can be seen from the discussions above, also have diverging elements. The former treats civil society as almost purely technocratic in service of public good, while the latter has more political-normative elements shared by both civil society and the authoritarian government, as they do share *governance*, too. In the former, civil society is the service provider or facilitator, while in the latter, civil society is the co-commissioner of such services. The final *state-civil society relations* cluster (in blue) is linked to other large nodes such as *co-optation*, *authoritarian regime*, *complex strategies by regimes*, and *symbiotic role*. Positioned between the *service provision* and *political participation* clusters, it has a close connection to both and the *collaboration* node, eventually suggesting a more complex picture.

As already stated, such a topic analysis provides only very general strokes of the picture. However, in the following parts it is enriched through “*analytical close reading*”—a deep reading technique that requires no further quantification, as often it is not easy to pin down the perspectives of authors on certain keywords or topics. Moreover, “*analytical close reading*” demands “*reading through*” so that perspectives that transcend or are not maintained by the literature-specific concepts are also given a chance to be explored.

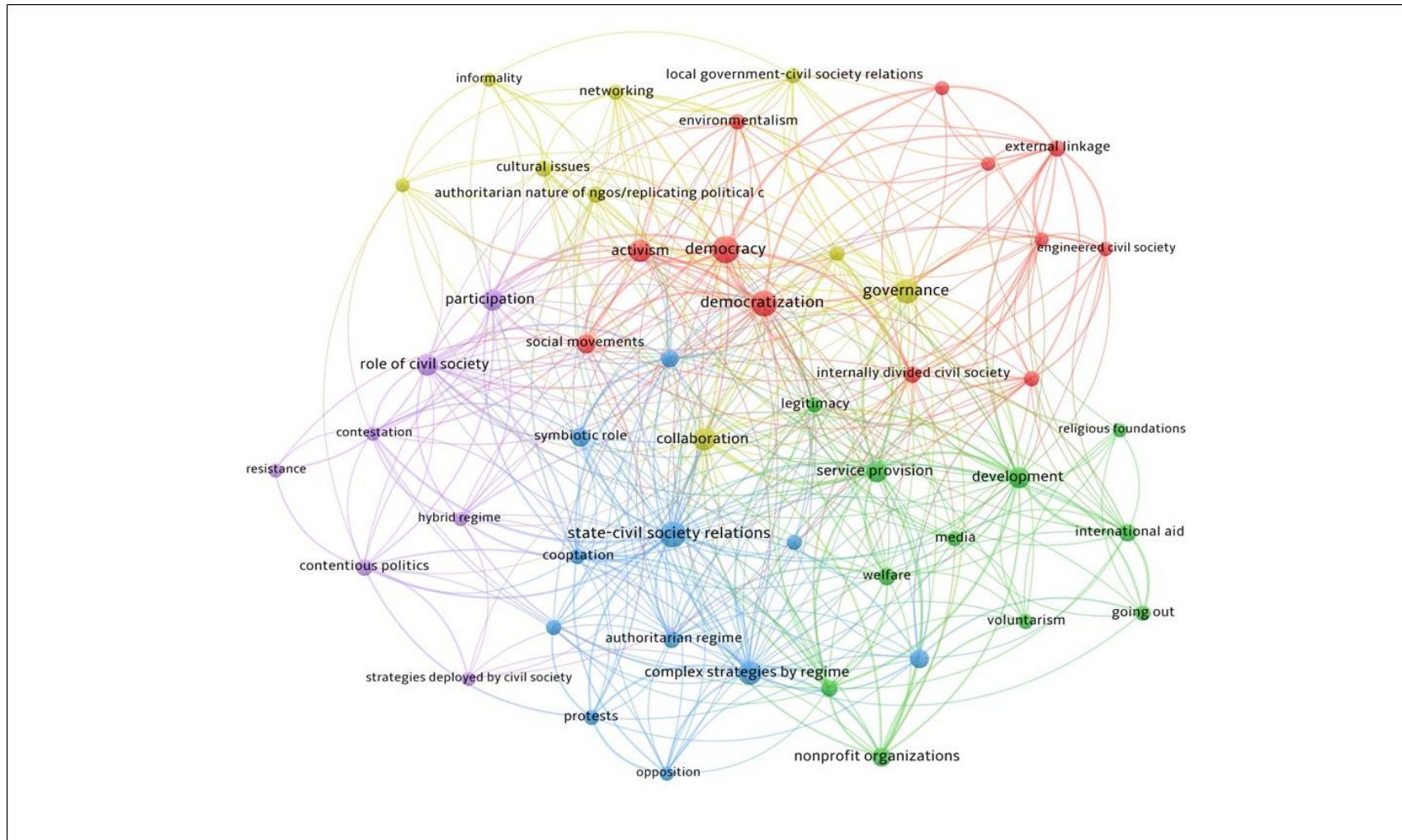


Figure 3 Bibliometric Analysis: Thematic Analysis.

3.2. Analytical close reading: Prevailing four perspectives

Following the identification of the thematic clusters in the literature through the bibliometric analysis, the collected literature was reviewed through analytical close *reading*. It is understood here as a qualitative method in literature review that involves a meticulous examination of the collected literature. It requires an in-depth analysis of the text through iterative reading to uncover the subtleties of perspectives that span across the literature and inform the academic discourse on the subject. *Close reading* is a method developed in the humanities (see, e.g., Culler, 2010; Lockett, 2010; McConn, 2018) and was adopted in social sciences recently (see, e.g., Gebremichael, 2022; MacDonald et al., 2023; Townsend et al., 2018). It builds on conceptual foundations comparable to *reflexive* thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2023; Clarke & Braun, 2017). In social science, *analytical close reading* can be analogous to the critical literature review (Saunders & Rojon, 2011; Snyder, 2019). However, the poorly structured nature of the critical literature review as a method has yielded very diverse applications, making it difficult to align this method with the critical literature review. Moreover, the intertextuality—viewing the literature as an academic discourse that intersects various studies—further sets it apart from the traditional critical literature review. Hence, here, this method attends not only to what the judgemental lenses inform the empirical research but also to the intertextuality that binds individual studies into a broader intellectual discourse. In applying such a method, attention is particularly paid to the reflection of the clusters identified in the thematic analysis above. Technically, it is carried out as in the thematic analysis: iterative reading accompanied by grouping, labelling, and note-taking. Even though such a technique requires extensive time investment, it pays well off in identifying underpinning perspectives that are often impossible to reduce into concepts or a standardised type of evidence. The interpretivist nature of the technique is seen as its strength, rather than its weakness, as it allows to inductively expose what can otherwise be not possible through modelled or deductive techniques.

Through such a qualitative review, four perspectives were identified in the literature: the *conflictual perspective*, *cooperative adjustment*, *co-optative joinder*, and the *symbiosis perspective*. As the very wording of these perspectives might suggest, a certain dialecticism is found to be in their evolution. Each of the identified perspectives in this process broadens the prior perspective. Confronted by a newer perspective, each perspective attempts to develop a response. Although it was not possible to pin this dialectical process down to scholars strictly so that it can be called a debate, there is a certain debate element inherent in them. It was also not

possible to strictly pin them into certain periods. However, their frequencies seemed to vary from the 1990s to today, showing a certain linearity in their evolution in the order presented above. Nevertheless, each of these perspectives maintains their relevance to varying degrees to the current day. Furthermore, these perspectives are not always applied in a pure form but are often mixed together. This becomes possible as frequently each of them beckons an exploration into diverse facets of the relationship between civil society and the authoritarian state.

What can be identified as the earliest or first relatively well-shaped perspective is the *conflictual perspective* that emphasises the conflictual relationship between the authoritarian state and civil society. From this perspective, the state and civil society are in constant struggle with each other, and civil society is attempting to gain its autonomy from the state, which aims to suppress and eliminate the former. Studies underpinned by these perspectives chose to focus on the contentious aspects of civil society and authoritarian relations, often at the cost of other aspects not fitting the conflictual perspective. The state's strategies and tools of repression, such as strict control over funding (Bromley et al., 2020; Pukallus et al., 2020), restrictive regulations (Chaney, 2018; Flikke, 2018; Stuvøy, 2020) and shrinking space (Anheier et al., 2019; Tepe & Rubin, 2019), the authoritarian learning in this process (Morgenbesser, 2020; Spires, 2020), as well as civil society actors' resistance and adaptation tactics (Ali, 2010; Bogdanova et al., 2018; Eslen-Ziya & Kazanoğlu, 2022; Nothias, 2020; Toepler & Fröhlich, 2020; Tysiachniouk et al., 2018a) are the primary focus in this perspective.

Those actors who do not fit this framework are often treated as *uncivil*, *ingenuine*, *not-quite-civil* (Luciani, 2021), or *authoritarian civil society* (Sombatpoonsiri, 2020) in this perspective. For instance, studying the emergence of NGOs in Vietnam, Gray (1999) argues that those organisations studied “do not...fit into any definition of civil society” as they do not show a sufficient degree of “independence from the state” and “opposition to state ideology”. Similarly, in the case of Nigeria in the late 1990s, Walker (1999) assesses the capacity of civil society organisations to contribute to the democratisation of the country by the extent of “threats” they can pose to the state or challenge the state in governance and democracy-related issues, under-appreciating community-based organisations in the northern parts of the country compared to relatively more organised civil society in the southern regions. Similarly, Henderson (2002) posits that NGOs funded by the West in Russia have fallen short of fostering collective action robust enough to pose a significant challenge to the government. In another example, Hudáková (2021) takes a similar reductionist view on civil society's role in Tunisia prior to the

Arab Spring, contending that they served as the “vehicles of regime resilience”. Last but not least, the prospect of cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian state, even in matters of service provision, is taken with considerable scepticism (Morvaridi, 2013). In a reverse manner, even little contentious issues or those that pose no direct challenge to the authoritarian regime, when seen from the conflictual perspective, are often overstretched or overemphasised to account for a “wide spectrum of activities that cannot be easily categorised as openly contentious” (Cheskin & March, 2015) or “covert resistance” (Mirshak, 2019, 2020). Even small community actors supporting community individuals through empowerment programmes are seen as challenging the authoritarian state (Fu, 2017).

However, a key characteristic of the conflictual viewpoint is that it positions civil society as the pivotal agent in the process of democratisation, asserting that without its involvement, democratic consolidation remains unattainable, even in the event of a regime transition, as demonstrated in the case of Zambia by Bartlett (2000). Such a view also often invites looking at the cooperation between civil society organisations and oppositional political parties and the extent of challenges they can pose to the authoritarian regime as D. White (2015) demonstrated in the case of the mass protests of 2012 in Russia and by Giersdorf and Croissant (2011) in the case of Malaysia. Particularly those studies that focus on external support to civil society within authoritarian regimes by democratic actors or actors representing the democratic camp in the world, as in Kobzová’s (2014) study on EU support to civil society in Eastern Partnership, tend to reduce their focus to the role of civil society in democratisation, neglecting to see civil society actors’ contribution that cannot be identified as directly in the service of the narrowly understood democracy path of their countries. Dimitrovova’s (2010) study on the Moroccan case portrays the largely EU-supported Moroccan civil society in a struggle with the Moroccan state in setting the boundaries of the political arena. Hence, when civil society’s function within authoritarian regimes is defined only in terms of democratisation, there remains no way other than depicting them as the challengers of the authoritarian government or seeing them as the main servants of democratisation as in the *longue durée* approach of Schulz (2015) to the role of civil society in the uprisings against authoritarianism in the Arab world. Such a reductionist view often tends to become critical of the effectiveness of external support, showing how it fails to deliver the intended goal of democratisation. This body of literature employs the terms *professionalisation* and *NGOization* with a negative undertone to highlight how organisational dynamics can undermine the role of civil society as a democratising force. (Markus Ketola, 2012; Zihnioğlu, 2019c, 2020).

The scholarly tendency to see the civil society-authoritarian government relations exclusively through contentious lenses, the examples of which are briefly touched upon above, reflects the “*democratisation*” and “*participation*” clusters identified in the thematic analysis above. The development of this perspective can be linked to the experience of Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1980s. This historical legacy offers a strong narrative of civil society in which masses mobilised and organised by voluntary citizen associations stood up against the repressive regimes, took to the streets, urged the ruling elites to step down, and, in the follow-up, worked closely with and watched over the new governments to install formal democratic and free-market institutions. In the case of those countries which went through democratisation in the 1980s and 1990s and established formal democratic and free-market institutions, civil society is seen as a system-changing force, whereas, in established democracies, its role is seen as strengthening the democratic system and acting as a watchdog against the intrusion of the state into the private and public realms (Bernhard, 2020). In the transition paradigm of the late 1980s and 1990s that saw all countries departing away from an authoritarian rule on a linear journey destined to end up with democracy, civil society’s role as agents of democratisation was further cemented (Carothers, 2002).

In contrast to the very reductionist view of the *conflictual* perspective, the *cooperative adjustment* perspective demonstrates the permissibility of cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian state, in which, to achieve certain common goals, both engage in cooperative relationships (J. Hsu, 2018). To re-emphasise, this perspective does not necessarily reject the contentious nature of the relationship between civil society and the authoritarian state. However, they also avoid conceptualising such cooperation as mere cases of co-optation or the government’s taming of civil society. Similarly, they avoid taking a bold step further to talk about the mutual dependence of civil society and the authoritarian state for their vital functions, what the *sybiosis* perspective makes.

The emergence of this perspective in the empirical literature on authoritarian regimes can be traced back to the late 1990s-early 2000s when the euphoria of the 1980s and 1990s around the idea of civil society started evaporating. As numerous studies demonstrate in the case of China, social service provision is one of the major areas in which the Chinese state engages civil society actors and even encourages the growth of such actors (K. R. Fisher et al., 2012; Hildebrandt, 2013; Salmenkari, 2011; Sun, 2017; J. C. Teets, 2014; Q. Wang & Kang, 2018). Generally, the Chinese government’s policy of instrumentalising non-governmental organisations is known as a much earlier development, the roots of which are traced back to the

late 1980s and early 1990s (Junzuo, 1994; Q. Ma, 2002). China is no exception in this regard. Similar cases of cooperation between civil society actors and the authoritarian state expanding wider areas of social policy have also been evidenced by Tarasenko (2018) and Toepler, Pape, and Benevolenski (2020) in the case of Russia and by Turhan and Bahçecik (2021) in the case of Turkey. In another context—the case of Kazakhstan, Ziegler (2010) notes that the combination of the authoritarian structures and the local political culture yields a type of civil society-government relations that honours cooperation over contestation.

When considered from a broader point of view, several developments in the wider literature might have facilitated the emergence of this perspective: the end of the transition paradigm (Carothers, 2002), the emerging studies on hybrid regimes (Balzer, 2003; Bogaards, 2009; Rocha Menocal et al., 2008; Wigell, 2008) and in general, the growing knowledge of the complexities of authoritarian regimes (Rodan, 2003; Rodan & Jayasuriya, 2009). In their turn, these developments could be conditioned by the fact that the share of political regimes falling in what Lührmann et al. refer to as the critical grey zone between democracy and autocracy has almost doubled since the early 1990s (2017). Furthermore, the recognition of the inherent limitations of civil society action to address the systemic questions of injustice and inequality without the engagement of the state as advocated, for example, by Young (2000), and the growth of empirical studies on different cases around the world since the 1990s might have made the cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian state permissible within scholarly thinking. The evolution of the *cooperative adjustment* perspective also owes much to the diminishing unchecked idealisation of civil society, where all virtuous, liberal democratic traits are attributed to it. Since the early 2000s, scholars have become more and more prone to challenge the unwavering association of civil society with democratic virtues (for early examples, see Chandhoke (2001), Berman (1997), Obadare (2005), Albrecht (2005)).

The recognition that authoritarian regimes do not only pursue persecution and repression of civil society but also can be interested in instrumentalising civil society actors towards the welfare goal already opened the path to the formation of another perspective that still builds on the conflictual perspective but deploys the concepts of *co-optation* or *incorporation* to explain non-contentious relations between civil society and the authoritarian state. The *co-optative joinder perspective* sees this cooperation as a strategy deployed by the latter to tame the former or as the outcome of such a strategy, while it is reluctantly preferred by civil society as a strategy of self-protection. In this perspective, the goal of the state is not only to suppress or eliminate

but also, or even more than that, to tame civil society. Thus, the state purposefully leaves civil society with two options: either face repression or bow to the dictates of the state (Salmenniemi, 2007; Skokova et al., 2018). The cooperation between the state and civil society, in the *co-optation* perspective, is more of a patron-client nature in which the goal is largely dictated by the former, in the case of China inviting conceptualisation such as a *neo-totalitarianism* (X. Kang, 2018).

Studies such as Astapova et al. (2022) in the case of Belarus, Skokova et al. (2018), Reuter and Robertson (2015), and Salmenniemi (2007) in the case of Russia, Albrecht (2005) in the case of Egypt, Doyle (2018) in the case of Turkey, Heurlin (2010) in East Asian cases, Giersdorf and Croissant (2011) in the case of Malaysia, Zhao et al. (2016) in the case of China, Mati (2020) in the cases of African hybrid regimes, as well as Foster (2001), Kim and Gandhi (2010) and D. Lewis (2013) from a general point of view demonstrate that the mode of “game” in the civil society-authoritarian state relations is restricted neither to conflictual nor to the cooperative aspects. They suggest that the authoritarian governments’ aims in engaging with civil society often reach beyond the interest in the mere fact of cooperation or the outcome of such cooperation. Establishing interdependence through cooperative relations allows the governments to create a framework of some soft control over them. In a way summarising all this, Hildebrandt (2013) assert that the co-optation of NGOs strengthens the authoritarian regime rather than weakening it.

Compared to the inventory of repression, co-optation is a much more complex tool that may require more advanced efforts from the authoritarian government. In a case study on the Egyptian government’s strategies of co-optation of civil society, C. Herrold and Atia (2016) identify informal strategies, in addition to formal strategies of co-optation, such as infiltration of civil society organisations by security agencies. An authoritarian co-optation strategy can be exercised through institutional frameworks and funding mechanisms and emerges for civil society actors as an option alternative to a much worse one—facing government repression, resulting in the limited autonomy of civil society actors and government interventions in their internal decision-making (Wischermann et al., 2018; Wischermann, Cuong, & Phuong, 2016; Wu & Chan, 2012). Although the co-opted civil society is often charged with being *a-political* (see, e.g., Yabanci, (2019)), the in-depth investigation carried out by Liverani (2008) shows that they may well play a salient political role by helping institutionalise the autocratic regime. Nevertheless, the political role of the co-opted civil society should not be understood as unequivocally favouring non-democratic patterns. Reviewing the literature on Chinese civil

society, Gleiss and Saether (2017) suggest that what is often depicted as non-political activities of Chinese civil society are political, even though they are non-sensitive.

Compared to the earlier perspectives, the *symbiosis* perspective is relatively new in the literature and is closely related to the usage of the concept of symbiosis. The very term *symbiotic* was first used in the context of civil society-authoritarian state relationships by Weller (2005), who suggested that "...authoritarian states that promote an explicitly corporatist model of state-society relations in which each social sector gets one representative organisation that is granted a monopoly in exchange for basic loyalty." (Weller, 2005, p. 7). Following, it was used by Landau (2008) in the case of Cambodia to describe the nature of the relationship between the United Nations Transitional Authority and civil society in the country. Consequently, it appeared in J. Clark's (2013) account of cooperation between *professional associations* and the state in Jordan, where the author acknowledges that the "puzzle lies in understanding that opposition groups and the state are often engaged in a more mutually interdependent relationship than most studies of state-society relations in the Arab world would imply." (J. Clark, 2013, p. 158). However, it was Spires's (2011b) account of the relations between the local informal grassroots organisations and the local Chinese government that elevated it to a higher conceptual level and, hence, served the formation of the concept. In this study, the symbiosis between civil society and the Chinese state emerges on the grounds of mutual compromises by the sides, where the former avoids making any direct democratic claims and survives as long as they relieve the local socio-economic burden lying on the shoulders of the latter, while the latter tolerates their informal existence and claim for credits for the work done.

Since its inception, the concept was featured in numerous studies, employing it to signify a state of affairs between civil society and the authoritarian state that extends beyond mere confrontation, cooperation, and co-optation, suggesting a more profound relationship that still requires elaboration. It was understood as the outcome of pragmatism on the side of civil society actors (Hudáková, 2021, p. 508), a strategic calculation of social entrepreneurs in authoritarian regimes (Tauber, 2021, p. 57), as an outcome of political and ideological proximity between the state and civil society actors which still recognises a chance for the latter "to exert autonomous influence on official actors" (Turhan & Bahçecik, 2021, p. 143), a state of affairs that the government achieve not through repression but supporting the growth of NGOs and co-opting the existing ones (Yabancı, 2019, p. 294) or emerges upon the micro-connections between civil society and the state established through contractual and collaborative relationships (Jing & Hu, 2017, p. 202). Such a symbiotic relationship was suggested to extend beyond the civil society-

authoritarian state relations and denotes the nature of boundary relationships between civil and political spheres (Cheskin & March, 2015, p. 268; D. White, 2015, 316–317, 321), an argument which sits well within the liberal paradigm too (Liverani, 2008, p. 102). The proposition that even in militarised regimes, there can be such a symbiotic relationship further denotes a systemic character (McCarthy, 2015, p. 723). Nevertheless, this perspective on the relationship between civil society and the authoritarian state does not regard the parties as equals in partnership; rather, it views the former as being dependent on the latter (C. Hsu, 2010, p. 273). Recently, it was applied more prominently to explain the Turkish AKP-ruled government and civil society actors in which civil society “...groups gain power in bargaining and agenda-setting, they also help the government consolidate its hegemonic ideas within society” (Taşkın & Çakın, 2022, p. 3). As this study demonstrates, more recently, the usage of the concept has expanded beyond localities as suggested by Spires (2011b) and understood by others (see, e.g., Moore & Moyo, 2018, p. 606). Hence, although Spire’s use of the adjective “contingent” may well apply to the manifestation of such symbiotic relationships at the local level, it may not offer a correct precision for symbiotic relationships at the national level, where a certain systemic force forging civil society-state relationships is assumed to be in play.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that the deployment of this perspective is limited to the usage of the concept of symbiosis, as many other studies imply a similar state of affairs between civil society and the authoritarian state without necessarily using this concept (see, e.g., Aasland et al., 2020; Chong, 2005; Falkenhain, 2020; C. L. Hsu, 2021; Hu & Zhu, 2021; J. C. Teets, 2013), which indicates the broader application of the perspective.

Drawing upon these scholarly works, the nascent viewpoint may be elegantly encapsulated as follows. From this perspective, both civil society and the state depend on each other for their vital functions under systemic demand. Both require each other and, on a rational basis, prefer to cooperate towards common goals. However, such a relationship is not free from conflict. Neither are they equal partners, as the power relationship between the sides is asymmetrical in favour of the state. Moreover, the boundaries between the state and civil society are blurred by civil society organisations, which act almost as an extension of the state, and those state agencies at the local level that closely align with their community-based civil society partners towards common goals. This perspective diverges from the *cooperative adjustment* perspective in its claim that the symbiotic relationship between civil society and the state transcends mere local-level collaboration and possesses a systematic nature. Its distinction from the *co-optative joinder* approach lies in its recognition of the authoritarian state’s authentic

interest in involving civil society in governance. In this perspective, co-optation is not merely a tool for state control or a defensive strategy for civil society actors. Instead, it is seen as a mechanism enabling mutual access to resources and reciprocal influence between the two entities.

The *symbiosis* perspective, as Figure 4 below illustrates, emerges as the latest and broadest of all the four perspectives in empirical studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes, the result indebted to the dialecticism inherent to the literature. As the latest stage of such a dialectical process, the *symbiosis* perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of civil society-authoritarian state relations than any of the earlier perspectives. Notwithstanding the *symbiosis* perspective being the latest and broadest, the other three perspectives still have strong currency in the literature and, hence, continue posing challenges to one another, the process suggesting nothing but further enrichment of state of the art in the literature. Nevertheless, whether all these perspectives will continue to keep their relevance in the literature to an equal extent is hard to adjudicate and remains beyond the scope of this study. However, the analysis of the top 10 most cited articles, identified through a bibliometric analysis, has shown that the general tendency one can draw from them is the growing complexity in understanding civil society within authoritarian regimes. Considering this, one can, though tentatively, expect the *symbiosis* perspective to gain further scholarly attention and be established as a distinct view with its own approaches, the goal to which this study also contributes.

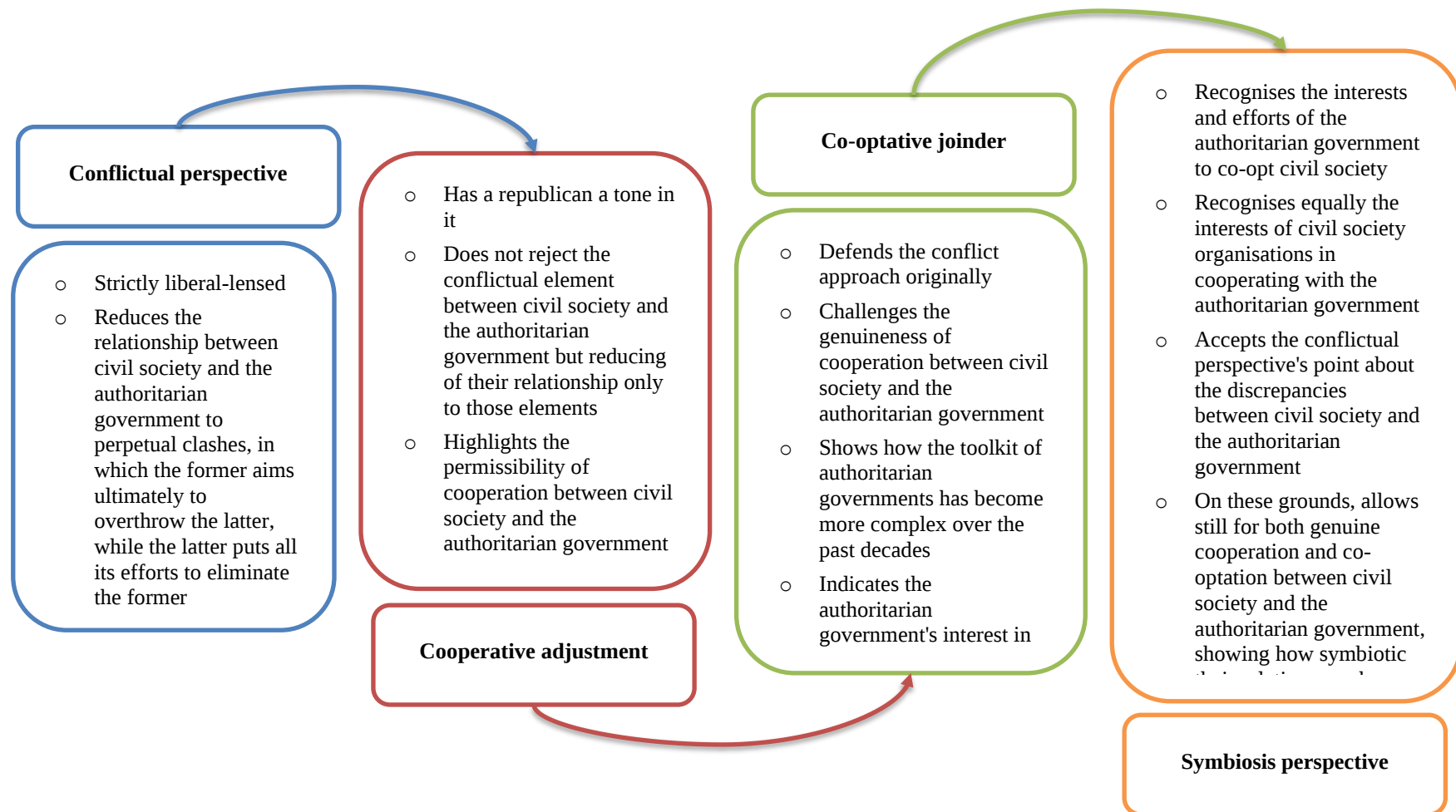


Figure 4 Four perspectives on civil society within authoritarian regimes.

3.3. Discussion: Where normative theorising meets empirics

The introductory part of this study has started the discussion with arguments about the limits of what was referred to here as the *mirroring* approach and descriptive inference-making in general as the analytical strategy widely deployed in the literature to study civil society within authoritarian contexts. It was suggested that such analytical strategies tend to compare in what way and to what extent the state of civil society affairs diverges or aligns with the democratic benchmarks set in the political theory accounts or use descriptive conceptualisation to make sense of the cases at hand and that nevertheless, they can invariably fail us in understanding the phenomenon of civil society within authoritarian regimes in several ways.

Above all, the resulting thick normativity is said to inform empirical research in several ways: *What is civil? Who counts as civil society? What should be the functions of civil society within authoritarian regimes? How should the relationships between civil society and the state be?* Hence, the answers offered by normative theorising influence the perspectives underpinning empirical research. The judgemental lenses deployed, as a result, may limit the way research is designed and prevent us from seeing the characteristics of civil society-authoritarian state relations beyond the set normative benchmarks. Moreover, even when not infused with thick normativity, descriptive inference-making—that is, making sense of the case at hand through conceptualisation, short of theorising—fails to offer explanatory accounts understood in a strict sense of causality.

This study set out to confront this situation in the literature: *first*, make a case for *positive theorising* on civil society within authoritarian regimes and second, offer one such account. For the former goal, Section 2 looked into the judgmental lenses the major normative accounts offer for civil society within authoritarian regimes. In turn, this section searched for the perspectives arising in the empirical literature. As the final part of this section, the following paragraphs juxtapose the judgmental lenses offered by the normative theorising against the perspective identified as underpinning the empirical literature to demonstrate how far the latter can depart from the limits set by the former.

To briefly revisit, the liberal perspective largely dismisses the prospect that civil society can thrive in authoritarian regimes where the mechanisms for upholding rights are either dysfunctional or entirely non-existent. At most, civil society under authoritarian rule is perceived as in-formation or nascent, whose primary role is to forge institutions of rights in opposition to

the authoritarian state. In this endeavour, the pivotal role of civil society encompasses three key tasks: firstly, to educate and prepare its members for this challenge; secondly, to rally them in defence of rights; and thirdly, to identify, condemn, and correct rights violations by the state or due to the state's failure to safeguard them. Consequently, liberal narratives simplify the dynamics between civil society and government into a strictly adversarial relationship. In this framework, any form of collaboration between civil society and the state appears invariably implausible.

Meanwhile, the judgmental perspective that republican accounts of civil society may imply for the empirical studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes is not as clear-cut as that of the liberal accounts. On one side of the equation, republican theories, with their emphasis on active citizenship and civic responsibilities, could pave the way for a modicum of collaboration between civil society and authoritarian regimes, particularly in areas aligned with a shared vision of societal well-being. When seen through a perhaps generously interpretive republican lens, there exists a rationale for civil society and authoritarian governments to jointly tackle objectives like enhancing socio-economic conditions. Conversely, Foley and Edwards contend that the state's role as the arbiter of societal conflicts could very well precipitate the unravelling of a truly *civil* society within authoritarian regimes. Thus, while differing in form from their liberal counterparts, republican perspectives also cast doubt on the viability of civil society within authoritarian settings. Nonetheless, within these republican frameworks, there lies a cautious and precarious potential for some collaborative endeavours between civil society and authoritarian governments. The judgmental lenses the in-between accounts offered tilt either in the liberal or republican direction, often suffering, as demonstrated, from the weaknesses of both traditions.

As recapped in the paragraphs above, one lens offers a contentious framework, positing that authentic civil society is perpetually at odds with authoritarian regimes in a quest to reclaim rights. The other suggests a more ambivalent potential for collaboration between civil society and authoritarian governments, but only in issues of societal concern. Within the republican viewpoint, even though there may be distant prospects for cooperation, the emphasis remains on the potential peril of uncivil society emerging due to the state's role as a mediator of conflicts. When the identified four perspectives are counterposed against these judgmental lenses arising, it becomes much more visible how far the empirical studies were influenced by, and still manage to push beyond, these lenses.

Firstly, in light of these discussions, it must not be peculiar that the conflictual perspective, reflecting the liberal accounts, emerged as the initial, dominant viewpoint. Nevertheless, the *cooperative adjustment* brings the underrated potential for civil society-authoritarian government cooperation, which is half-heartedly acknowledged in the republican view, to the fore. The *co-optative joinder* only aims to re-assert the *conflictual* perspective, disregards the possibility for genuine cooperation between civil society and the authoritarian government, and only implicitly recognises the complexity of authoritarian strategies for political control. The traces of Foley and Edward's contention that the authoritarian government's facilitator role would only yield an uncivil society can be clearly seen in the *co-optative joinder*. While all three earlier perspectives tend to reflect either a liberal or republican tone, it is only the *symbiosis* perspective that truly pushes beyond the limits that are inherited from the normative accounts by avoiding reducing the civil society-authoritarian relations to a single aspect or dimension, be it conflictual, cooperative or co-optative. Furthermore, by recognising the chances of contextual autonomy of civil society within authoritarian regimes, resulting from their strategic flexibility, the *symbiosis* perspective detaches from the largely structural approaches to the question of autonomy. As already discussed in the preceding section, the *symbiosis* perspective is the youngest among the identified four perspectives and emerged through a dialectical process of push and pull, in which the judgemental lenses of normative theorising are asserted, abandoned, and replenished to be re-rejected.

While the discussions pursued from the introductory part until this point served to expose the need for positive theorising on civil society, carve out a space for it and identify grounds on which it can arise, the following sections gradually lay the ground and then deliver one case for such a task. In doing so, it builds on the *symbiosis* perspective in the literature, which is further substantiated through the review of the cases of Russia and Turkey, synthesising the existing knowledge in the literature.

4. The Authoritarian State-Civil Society Relations in Russia and Turkey

The prior sections have served as a comprehensive backdrop, setting forth both the normative frameworks and empirical analyses concerning civil society within authoritarian regimes. Combined, they have identified the constraints imposed by normative theories on empirical studies while also highlighting how the latter group attempts to transcend these limitations. This groundwork was essential in delineating the scope and ambition of the present research, as well as in situating its particular and overarching contributions within existing scholarship. In turn, this section serves two goals. On the one hand, it provides a background to the cases of Russia and Turkey, on which the empirical analyses build. Such a background will consequently be used to verify the results of empirical analyses. On the other hand, it serves the substantiation of the *symbiosis* perspective by synthesising the existing knowledge on the cases.

As detailed in the methodology section, Russia is chosen as an exemplar of a hardliner autocratic regime, whereas Turkey embodies a moderate form of autocracy. This dual case study not only enables nuanced comparisons but also allows us to examine whether the posited hypotheses are more congruent with hardliner autocracies than with their moderate counterparts—a question integral to the study’s theoretical framework. Moreover, the insights drawn from the cases of Russia and Turkey—regional powers and trendsetters in Eurasia and MENA regions, respectively—can potentially shed light on the wider regional patterns.

4.1. The case of Russia

Both in scholarship and beyond, Russia is broadly regarded as a vanguard in authoritarianism, pioneering novel approaches to managing civil society and quelling dissent. This perception has spawned a voluminous body of research on the Russian case, which remains poised for a comprehensive review capable of synthesising them into a holistic understanding. Far from providing such an ambitious task, the present section, based on the extant literature, does delineate certain overarching characteristics of civil society in Russia and its interactions with the authoritarian regime and the Russian government’s strategy towards civil society and addresses the question of the autonomy of civil society in this context.

To start with the latter point, the Russian government is known for pushing civil society to make a hard choice between confrontation and co-optation. The Russian government is known to use different mechanisms to manufacture consentful or *friendly* actors in the civil sphere,

since the early 2000s, at the latest,. Salmenniemi (2007) identifies three such mechanisms, namely competitive funding, benefits in kind, and institutional forms of cooperation. On the other hand, the Russian government follows a severe repression policy towards civil society in the country. Thus, it leaves civil society organisations between two choices: confront or cooperate (Skokova et al., 2018). The dual strategy of the Russian government was most starkly visible in 2012 when the repressions following the 2011-2012 protests and the new restrictive regulations on NGOs were accompanied by large-scale positive support programmes for civil society organisations (Salamon et al., 2015). Such a double strategy obviously aims not to fully eliminate civil society but to bring it totally under strict control. Civil society's response to such a duality of government strategy towards them is not unequivocal. Facing this sharp choice pushes many socially-oriented organisations to collaborate with the government due to the nature of their work (Bogdanova et al., 2018), while a handful of others resist the government's co-optation strategy.

Such a carrot and stick strategy is, as argued, deployed by the Russian government with the aim of reducing the need for direct physical violence against activists, and it, thus, originates from the hybridity of a relatively democratic façade and authoritarian essence (Daucé, 2014). Hence, the co-optation efforts of the Russian government can be seen as its efforts to build its routine, institutionalised power over civil society in order to reduce its use of ad hoc coercive power (D. White, 2018). At a more general level, the Russian government's engagement with civil society, it is suggested, serves to legitimise the regime on two grounds. First, it helps build the government's image as democratic; second, usually, government-funded civil society projects promote the discourse favoured by the government (Fröhlich & Skokova, 2020).

Nonetheless, the intricacies of civil society politics in Russia are far more nuanced than the portrait above suggests. One major question within such a portrait concerns the autonomy of civil society and the room for manoeuvre it enjoys. When the fate of those who reject cooperation with the government may generally seem direct, that of those who choose to engage with the government requires closer examination. It is in this context that many investigations into the cases of the civil society-authoritarian regime cooperation in Russia challenge this dichotomy of confrontation vs co-optation by arguing that although there is a clear power asymmetry in the civil society-government cooperation, more symbiotic relationships are available, too. That is, civil society organisations agreeing to collaborate with the Russian government do not necessarily end up as completely ineffective actors with no agency or ability to influence the decision-making or become unquestionably and always submissive actors. According to Cheskin

and March (2015), dissent does not disappear within civil society organisations that turn to the second choice—cooperation with the government but becomes less overtly political. Moreover, it is also evidenced that the Russian government differentiates its policy towards NGOs in line with the types of action and service areas. Another factor that further complicates the picture above is that these policies are implemented by different government bodies, allowing the government to have considerable flexibility in their dealing with civil society (Salamon et al., 2015). Such variation does not need to be only at the national level. Given the enormous geographical dispersal of the country and the formal federal system, the duality of the government strategies towards civil society actors can vary at the sub-national level depending on the regional economic development needs, the openness of the local authorities and the strength of local civil society (Toepler, Pape, & Benevolenski, 2020).

The networks that the Russian government has established at the central, regional and local levels, where state and non-state actors interact, such as public councils, civic forums, and public chambers, constitute the major arenas for the interaction between the government and civil society organisations willing to engage in such an interaction. These platforms are found to have strong asymmetrical power relations, with the government being the major decision-maker on agenda, membership and opportunities to influence government decisions. In general, civil society actors' possibilities to influence decision-making through these networks are reported to be limited (Aasland et al., 2016). However, the chances or the lack of chances for influencing decisions are not equally allocated across all areas. In areas of less political sensitivity, such as child disability, civil society is capable of carrying out successful advocacy activities (Toepler & Fröhlich, 2020). Similar observations are also made regarding voluntary membership-based professional and business associations in Russia (Ivanova & Neumayr, 2017). More broadly, the Russian state is found to pursue not a single policy towards the whole spectrum of NGOs but different government agencies enacting different policies addressing specific segments of NGOs (Salamon et al., 2015). Such differentiation potentially allows the Russian civil society to exploit the opportunities arising from the fragmented nature of the government and its diversified policies towards civil society.

The dynamics of Russian governance networks are not solely characterised by constrained opportunities for civil society influence and lopsided power relations. Conflicts can indeed arise, and constituent organisations may adopt a critical posture, albeit usually confined to specific issues. Civil society entities generally steer clear of overtly antagonistic conduct. This

complexity is captured by Owen and Bindman (2019) under the concept of *limited pluralism*. Accepting or rejecting the limited pluralism offered by the state is found to shape NGOs' identities, with some being presented as "principled" while others as "pragmatists" (Stuvøy, 2020).

The state's limited yet discernible tolerance for internal discord and critique within these networks is predominantly, though not exclusively, motivated by its desire to enhance effectiveness and secure output legitimacy in social policy sectors through the inclusion of local civil society actors, with marginal outcomes for democratic representation (Aasland et al., 2020). An in-depth case study by Kropp and Schuhmann (2016) further approves that the state is not only interested in co-opting as a way of controlling civil society organisations but also in genuine cooperation with them to solve policy problems and compensate for the inefficiency of state institutions. Indirectly confirming this, Flikke (2018) sees two conflicting demands towards NGOs by the Russian state. On the one hand, the state requires capable organisations that can function as advisors and provide publication communication. On the other hand, these organisations are demanded to bow to the patronal imposition of the state. These two demands that Flikke finds conflicting may perhaps explain Krasnopolskaya and Meijs's (2019) finding that state support does insignificantly predict NGOs' innovativeness. Thus, in a sense, the government pursues a counter-productive policy towards the role of civil society actors in addressing the socio-economic problems of the country. In such a context, limited pluralism, in Owen and Bindman's words, appears to be a remedy to the damage resulting from imposing two contradictory demands on civil society and, thus, as a strategy to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its role in socio-economic development. Nevertheless, despite the role ascribed to civil society organisations in promoting welfare and the Russian government's encouragement of their development, the line between state and civil society remain distinctly drawn, setting it apart from the Chinese context, where such boundaries are more fluid (Richter & Hatch, 2013). In a broader context, the above-discussed conflicting demands of the Russian state from civil society relate to its unsettled patterns between state- and regime-building challenges, which Russia, unlike many others in the former Soviet space, has not been able to address sufficiently, as suggested (Robinson, 2008).

In the last two decades, the difference was particularly found between Medvedev's presidency and Putin's post-2012 rule. Medvedev's policies in the 2008-2012 period were rolled back by Putin in the following period. Prior to Putin's third term, Russian civil society had a high

level of activism reported not only in Moscow but also in remote regions of the country (Buxton & Konovalova, 2013). Yet, particularly with the introduction of the Law on Foreign Agents in Putin's new term, which followed the brutal crack on the large-scale protests of 2011-2012, the opportunities for NGOs to receive foreign funding as well as their general operational environment were severely circumscribed (Flikke, 2016). This had a fundamental impact on the Russian civil society, which prospered with Western funding despite all its unintended consequences (Henderson, 2002). The Kremlin's impetus for curtailing the activities of non-governmental organisations following the 2011-2012 protests is not accidental, as the intimate alliance between civil society groups and dissident political factions played a pivotal role in catalysing those demonstrations (D. White, 2015).

No less than the question of functioning is the question of the legitimacy of civil society organisations that the Law on Foreign Agents puts under suspicion by depicting them as *non-local* in origin or mission, leading to tremendous efforts by NGOs to re-adjust their audiences and mechanisms of resource generation to build new sources of legitimacy (Moser & Skripchenko, 2018). Despite the deep transformation of resource structures in the face of the laws adopted in 2012, at least some NGOs are found to be able to preserve their missions by and large (Tysiachniouk et al., 2018b), indicative of their flexibility and creative capacity vis-à-vis authoritarian measures.

Generally, the civil society-government relations in Russia are suggested to largely reproduce informal and paternalistic ruling and its *sistema*—a system of unwritten rules and informal relations or the so-called *Russian network state*¹⁶, in which civil society is constructed from top to below through control and funding (Kononenko, 2011, p. 89). The reproduction of the local political culture within the civil sphere was further evidenced by Ljubownikow et al. (2013), who point out the Soviet legacy norms and the peculiarities of the post-Soviet political transformations as underpinning the current dependence of Russian civil society on the state, reflected in the major regulation setting the legal framework for civil society organisations, adopted in 2006.¹⁷ In the realm of state funding for civil society organisations, one observes a nuanced blend: the vestiges of Soviet-era privileged resource allocation for certain NGOs coexist

¹⁶ More on this, see Ledeneva (2006) and Ledeneva (2013).

¹⁷ An extensive account of how the Soviet legacy has shaped the Russian civil society can be found in Uhlin (2006).

with competitive funding mechanisms influenced by neoliberal ideals, a juxtaposition that encapsulates the complexities of modern-day authoritarian Russia (Tarasenko, 2018).

One general, though salient, takeaway from the cursory examination of the Russian context for comparative analysis with the forthcoming Turkish case and observations from other global regions is that the dynamics between civil society and the government in authoritarian Russia are far more nuanced and complex than one might initially surmise. The rising complexity of the politics of civil society in Russia is, as discussed above, embedded in the dual strategy of—cooperating and co-opting civil society. The rationale behind such a strategy is shown to range from the goals of relieving the government’s welfare burden, and thus, generating output legitimacy, to the maintaining of the democratic façade of public participation, and towards that goal, reducing the need for the regime to engage in direct violence, by institutionalising its control over the civil sphere, as well as mobilising the actors in the civil sphere in support of the government’s discourse and agenda. The supportive side of such a dual strategy is found to be exercised through funding mechanisms and governance networks established across the country at different levels, within which civil society actors can still be dissentful in less politically sensitive issues or within the set boundaries. However, the diversified policy of the government towards specific segments of the civil sphere and the fragmented nature of the government resulting from its wider geographical expansion and formal federal system are suggested to allow for variations at different levels and within different sub-geographies. Coupled with local needs, the openness of the local authorities and the strength of local civil society actors, such variations are said to present (potential) opportunities to be exploited by civil society actors, particularly when they exercise a certain level of strategic flexibility and creativity. Yet, since 2012—starting with Putin’s third term—these opportunities have narrowed down, requiring structural transformations from civil society actors. Overall, the civil society-government relations in Russia were proposed to be embedded in the broader political and societal patterns, which reflect the combination of the Soviet legacy and the features of the post-Soviet political transformation—so-called network system—*sistema*. Nevertheless, after Russia launched its aggression towards Ukraine in February 2022, the situation of civil society in Russia might have further deteriorated with the regime’s tightening of ropes in its hands, as the media reports suggest. However, only very few studies on the subject have appeared since the beginning of the war (Iarskaia-Smirnova & Chiarvesio, 2024; Karas, 2024; Meyer Olimpieva, 2024; Ragozina, 2024), requiring more studies for a comprehensive assessment of the changing landscape of Russian civil society.

4.2. The case of Turkey

The preceding section reviewed the state of the art in the literature on civil society and authoritarian governance relations in Russia, serving dual objectives: *firstly*, to refine our understanding of the Russian case through a synthesis of existing scholarly contributions, and *secondly*, to distil overarching patterns that may hold comparative value—primarily with respect to Turkey, but also to diverse case studies from various geographies discussed in the succeeding section. The current section aspires to achieve analogous aims for the Turkish context.

Compared to Russia, Turkey's authoritarian consolidation path is younger. As said earlier, Turkey is considered a moderate autocracy in this study, the justification for which is based on a certain index and is discussed in the methodology chapter. It is partly for this reason and partly because of historical and cultural differences that the Turkish case provides a significantly, but not completely, different picture of civil society-authoritarian government relations.

Any quick survey of Turkish civil society over the past twenty years, either through official statistics or the available scholarly investigation, would suggest that the authoritarian consolidation in the country was accompanied by the steady growth of civil society organisations. These two conflictual trends may look puzzling at first sight. Yet, the phenomenon of the close linkage between the authoritarian consolidation path and the development of Turkish civil society is rather well explained. Sağlam (2020) and Zihnioğlu (2020) demonstrate, in fact, that a substantive connection exists between the two phenomena, transcending mere coincidental parallelism (which is scarcely within the realm of logical possibility) or the influence of an extraneous third factor as a common explanation for both tendencies. The direction of the causality in this relationship flows from the authoritarian consolidation to the growth of civil society organisations. Two types of linkage were found in this process. On the one hand, the authoritarian consolidation has served as a catalyst for an increase in pro-democracy activism in Turkey. As the ruling party implemented restrictive measures curtailing the state of democracy in the country, there emerged more desire for democratic freedoms that galvanised citizens, who previously took a passive role or retreated from the civil sphere, to take a more active role through civil society organisations. The EU support might have played a crucial role in this, too (Kapucu, 2015, p. 9). On the other hand, this increase is attributed to the ruling party's policies encouraging the development of new pro-government, non-governmental public associations and foundations that allied with the governmental discourse during the authoritarian consolidation process (Yabancı, 2019).

As a result of the two opposing trends—government backing for the expansion of organisations aligned with governmental or Islamist/conservative viewpoints, coupled with the emergence of a secular civil society as a response to authoritarian inclinations, a deep polarisation has emerged within Turkish civil society (Akboğa, 2014), which is also well reflected in the media’s reporting about civil society organisations (Akboğa & Arik, 2018, 2020). Nevertheless, relying on supportive civil society organisations or those who share similar ideologies has not been the only motivation of the ruling AKP party during this period. Output legitimacy, like in the case of Russia, was another major drive of the government. It is well evidenced that the government engages NGOs in making social policies and programmes as social innovation creators (Ark Yıldırım & Smyrl, 2019). Leveraging the philanthropic frameworks ingrained in Islamic traditions, Turkey’s AKP government strategically collaborates with Islamist foundations, known as "vakıflar," to manage social welfare needs (Morvaridi, 2013). These foundations were on the rise since the mid-1990s, contrasting with associations ("dernekler"), which are generally the chosen legal structure for secular, and particularly leftist, organisations (Kuzmanovic, 2012, p. 10). Thus, over the past two decades, this focused partnership with Islamist foundations has served a dual purpose for the Turkish government: first, it facilitated deeper connections with various societal strata, and second, it helped to offload some of the state’s responsibilities in the realm of social welfare.

However, unlike the case of Russia, it has not been possible to identify any strong evidence for any actively pursued dual strategy of *confrontation* vs. *co-optation* by the Turkish government towards civil society organisations. At least, the Turkish government does not follow such a dual strategy in its sharpness found in the Russian case, suggesting that the Turkish civil society has not faced any degree of restrictive measures coming close to their Russian counterparts. The Turkish case provides a softer approach - a strategy of *appropriation* and *containment* (Yabancı, 2019). Nonetheless, the lack of proof for such a dual strategy one can find in the Russian case does not guarantee that all civil society organisations are equally treated by the Turkish government, particularly when one considers the existing historical cleavages which the current state of polarisation builds upon. One study demonstrates that there is a discriminative approach towards independent women’s rights organisations, which are disregarded and replaced by government-established or engaged ones (Doyle, 2018). This is an indication of the rather ostracising strategy pursued by the Turkish government towards the “unfriendly” civil society organisations. Facing obstacles with access to the state, secular women’s organisations have alternated their networking and collaborating strategies, mostly

seeking an intermediary with the government agencies found among progressive MPs (Eslen-Ziya & Kazanoğlu, 2022). Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the detailed case study on the Turkish NGOs' anti-Ilisu Dam campaign, the question of access to decision-makers at the national level appears to be one of the major challenges of Turkish civil society (Atzl, 2014). The question of access arises not only before the rights-focused organisations but also before those who are engaged in humanitarian aid. However, the problem of access to the state for civil society organisations, though it may have been further strengthened during the AKP rule, is characteristic of strong state tradition in Turkey (Turhan & Bahçecik, 2021). The overpowering bureaucracy established in the 1920s and later leaves, it is argued, no room for personal or collective initiatives in Turkish society (Kapucu, 2015, p. 9). One major, but not the only, arena for civil society to influence decision-making at the sub-national level is *city councils*. Yalçın-Riollet (2019) showcases that despite the ubiquitous perception of civil councils being the result of the coercive imposition of international organisations or an initiative propelled by civil society, they are locally co-produced by civil society actors *and* the state. Moreover, in questions concerning social innovation, the mixed networks of state, civil society and business emerge as an arena of exchange for the stakeholders (Ark Yıldırım & Smyrl, 2019). Nevertheless, the situation might have changed in recent years. What once looked like arbitrary and unsystematic suppression has transitioned into a more deliberate and rigorous approach by the government. Particularly, in the period following the 2016 coup attempt, the AKP-ruled Turkish government was tougher than before on independent voices in Turkey, legalising many different forms of oppression, marking, perhaps, the beginning of a new era in Turkey (Pukallus et al., 2020).

By and large, the divide within the Turkish civil society, which, as suggested above, was deepened in the course of the authoritarian consolidation in the country, reflects the historical cleavages in Turkish society in general and in the political sphere, in particular. Turkish civil society is largely divided between secular ones who align themselves with the original ideas of Turkish republicanism and those who represent more minority and religious positions. Historically, the former was relatively more formalised and institutionalised, while the latter operated in informal or semi-formal cloaks (M. Ketola, 2013), though this might have been significantly altered in the last two decades under the AKP rule. In the debates on the headscarf ban, civil society organisations are found to be divided into at least three camps: Islamists, Kemalist secular, and non-Kemalist secular groups. The latter two groups supported the headscarf ban, while the former opposed it (Akboğa, 2014). Even in the field of environmental protection, an area outside the traditionally perceived hard politics, a deep divide is found

between religiously inclined organisations and secular organisations, the latter seen by the government as proxies for secular opposition (Özler & Obach, 2018). A similar divide was also observed in the attendance of NGOs at the Gezi Park protests—large-scale anti-government demonstrations started around an environmental cause in 2013 (David & Côte-Real Pinto, 2017). These historical cleavages also find their reflections in the geographical representation. According to Rumelili & Çakmaklı, 2017, highly politicised (Diyarbakir) and religious (Konya) cities accommodate more active civic life than those suggested by official statistics. Moreover, even within religious organisations, divisions exist across denominations, schools, or personality-based group lines. Party dominance is found to play a key role in determining civil society organisations' activities, size, and ability to involve citizens. Like in the 2011-2012 protests in Russia, Turkish civil society organisations were confirmed to have played an influential role in the Gezi protests of 2013 (Anisin, 2016).

Given the broad diversity *and* divisions within civil society, the question of *genuineness* or *authenticity* is the major theme that every civil society organisation claims, though on different grounds. While some may question the close linkage to the state and perceive it as a *disqualifying* characteristic for civil society organisations, others would question the failure to serve the state. Still, others would try to position themselves as more rightful to represent civil society than the others which, it is argued, function as a company under the guise of association or as a social club. Last but not least, strong affiliations with political parties can also be argued to result in losing the genuine civil society character (Kuzmanovic, 2012, p. 2).

These studies provide strong evidence that the divided nature of Turkish civil society allows the government to engage in reconstructing civil society rather than aiming at totally closing or eliminating the field, which can also be explained by the fact that Turkish civil society organisations, particularly religious ones, are also instrumentalised by the government in its foreign assistance programmes (Aras, 2017; Bilgin et al., 2017; Çevik et al., 2018; Mehmetcik & Pekel, 2020; Ozkan, 2017; Pamment & Wilkins, 2018; Turhan & Bahçecik, 2021).

However, interestingly, not all groups in the secular camp follow particularistic interests and distance themselves from the state's ideological discourse. The above-mentioned secular groups, which are critical of the Islamist AKP government, embrace the founding statist ideology of the Turkish Republic, which at times is at odds with liberal values. Similarly, religious pro-government groups may tactically defend liberal values in cases that would serve their interests (Çevik et al., 2018). Moreover, not all faith-based civil society organisations share a common ground. Whereas organisations rooted in the Sunni majority benefit from substantial government

backing, others find themselves without such advantageous standing in society (Ulusoy, 2013). Despite the enormous growth experienced in the past three decades, the current state of Turkish civil society still significantly resonates with its historical bifurcation traced back to the Republic's early period, being divided into camps of official secular and nationalist organisations and informal minority voices (Markus Ketola, 2013a).

One factor that distinguishes the Turkish case from others is the extensive EU support to civil society, which has not so far been curtailed by any regulatory measures like the Law on Foreign Agents found in the Russian case. Nevertheless, the effect of the EU support on Turkish civil society has arguably been ambivalent and affected by the adverse consequences, growing EU scepticism in Turkish society, and the mismatch of EU funding mechanisms with local demands (Ergun, 2010; İçduygu, 2011; Markus Ketola, 2012; Kubicek, 2011; Zihnioğlu, 2013; Zihnioğlu, 2019c). One particular finding in these studies is that contrary to the widely held opinion, EU support does not necessarily translate into the professionalisation of Turkish civil society organisations (Boşnak, 2016; Zihnioğlu, 2019c).

Moreover, despite the EU funding being crucial for advocacy groups, as local funding sources are severely underdeveloped (Markus Ketola, 2013b), it is less influential than the state support in areas of fundamental rights and freedoms, signifying the enduring and established influence of the state in the routine activities of Turkish civil society organisations. This observation also needs to be seen in light of discussions on the government's differentiated treatment of civil society actors seeking access to decision-making. Eventually, when combined, these observations regarding the effect of state funding and the differentiated access to decision-making may indicate the former flowing from the latter. Speaking clearly, the state's selective engagement with certain civil society actors could, thus, be linked to the allocation of state resources. The government may preferably engage with those who benefit from the government's financial support schemes, driving the overarching influence it wields in areas of fundamental rights and freedoms. Such a linkage between the source of funding and capacity to influence the decision-making may eventually reinforce the notion that government support is more pivotal than external funding in shaping the agenda and impact of Turkish civil society organisations. The question is particularly important when one considers the diverging gap between the agendas of government funding and EU funding, running the risk of undermining the reform agenda (Markus Ketola, 2012).

Comparative view of the Russian and Turkish cases

The comparative analysis of the available literature on civil society-authoritarian government relations in Russia and Turkey unveiled a range of notable divergences that, reciprocally, offered mutual insights. Table 1 below puts the discussions on the Russian and Turkish cases of civil society-authoritarian government relations into a comparative view. While sharing overarching similarities, these two cases also present significant differences. Both regimes aim not to eradicate civil society but to recalibrate it to align with governmental objectives. Yet, the nuances differ substantially. In both countries, regimes support the growth of government-affable civil society organisations or those amenable to partnering on the government's agenda. However, the roles envisioned for civil society diverge, save for a common focus on advancing social welfare. In Russia, the regime has established multi-tiered governance networks, signalling its intent to institutionalise control over civil society. In contrast, Turkey largely situates civil society participation within municipal city councils. Given that opposition can still secure wins in major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, this structure potentially offers a more robust platform for civil society voices in Turkey than in Russia, where similar opportunities are scant or absent at all. Moreover, the literature indicates significant polarisation within the civil sphere in both countries, but the fault lines differ. In Turkey, divisions stem primarily, but not only, from historical rifts between secularists and Islamists/conservatives, whereas in Russia, it revolves less around ideology and more around regime loyalty.

Above all, the Russian and Turkish cases, particularly the former, demonstrated that it is hardly possible to talk about clear-cut independence of civil society organisations from the state. Nevertheless, the discussions also pointed out that the dependence on and intimate relations with the state does not inescapably result in the ultimate erosion of the agency of civil society organisations. Even though within a limited scope and in limited forms, civil society organisations can still exercise a certain agency indicative of their autonomy from the state.

Government Strategy	Confrontation vs. Co-optation	Appropriation and Containment
Government Support	Support is based on loyalty to the regime and acceptance of the government-introduced limits on contestation.	Support is based on ideological (Islamist/conservative) common ground shared with the ruling party.
Functions being imposed by the state on civil society	i) Legitimation of the democratic façade; ii) Reducing (ad hoc) physical violence by institutionalising control over civil society; iii) Support to the social welfare.	i) Reaching into the deeper layers of society and building a stronger social basis; ii) Supporting social welfare; iii) Carrying out humanitarian aid as part of the foreign policy agenda.
Major arena for participation in decision-making	Local, regional and national governance networks that are strictly controlled by the government.	Networks and city councils run by municipalities; Ad hoc gatherings or individual contacts with the state institutions or officials in bureaucracy and parliament.
State of affairs within the civil sphere	Division along the confrontation vs. co-optation lines.	Deep polarisation along historical cleavages.

Table 1 Comparative view on the civil society-government relations in Russia and Turkey

5. Enigma of Autonomy: The Diffused Effect of Formal Institutionalisation

5.1. What do the identified perspectives imply for the question of autonomy?

While the review of the cases of Russia and Turkey, as well as their comparative view, provides multiple avenues for future research, this study picks on a major one—the question of the *autonomy* of civil society organisations, the enigma that needs to be deciphered. The question of autonomy is found in the discussion of both cases, but more profoundly in the case of Russia. To reiterated, the literature on the case suggests that by agreeing to collaborate with the Russian government, civil society organisations do not necessarily end up as completely ineffective actors with no agency or ability to influence the decision-making or become unquestionably and always submissive actors. According to Cheskin and March (2015), dissent does not disappear within Russian civil society organisations that turn to cooperate with the government but becomes less overtly political. Similarly, conflicts can indeed arise, and constituent organisations may adopt a critical posture in Russian governance networks, albeit usually confined to specific issues. Generally, civil society organisations steer clear of overtly antagonistic conduct within these networks —what is referred to as *limited pluralism* in the literature (Owen & Bindman, 2019). Similarly, the Turkish case suggested that the last two decades the rapid growth of Turkish civil society organisations is at least partly explained by the government's backing for the expansion of organisations aligned with governmental or Islamist/conservative viewpoints (Akboğa, 2014), inviting questions about the autonomy of these organisations (Yabanci, 2019).

Nevertheless, the question of autonomy does not bind only the Russian and Turkish cases. Indeed, the importance of the question is universal, applying to other cases of authoritarian regimes around the world. For instance, Vu (2019) identifies the question of autonomy as one of the three most salient questions in the case of one-party-ruled Vietnam, the other two being the question of informal ties and legitimacy. The question of autonomy is logically a prerequisite for the agency of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes. Hence, the scepticism often expressed about the political agency of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes (Gleiss & Saether, 2017; Hildebrandt, 2013; Y. Kang, 2019; Spires, 2020; J. Wang & Wang, 2018) intrinsically extends to the question of autonomy. When considered through the lens of political agency, the wider empirical literature provides no definitive answer. While a group of studies demonstrate how civil society actors align with the authoritarian government's non-democratic policies and practices (Lorch, 2017a; Pitidol, 2016; Wischermann et al., 2018)

or replicate authoritarian practices within their structures (Wischermann, Bunk, et al., 2016), others point out the cases where civil society actors exercise political agency towards democratic ends despite the authoritarian regimes (Giersdorf & Croissant, 2011; Lidauer, 2012; T. Q. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Tauber, 2021; Vu, 2017, 2019). The inconsistency of evidence makes a definitive judgement on the autonomy of civil society actors a challenging question. The emerging discrepancy is often treated as a matter of empirical variance for which alternative concepts such as *uncivil* (Avritzer, 2004; D'Alisa et al., 2013; Kotkin & Gross, 2009; Roggeband & Glasius, 2010; Ruzza, 2009), *not-quite-civil* (Luciani, 2021), or *authoritarian* civil society (Sombatpoonsiri, 2020) are generated as quick solutions. Such normatively heavy-weighting concepts may help to spotlight the ideological affinities between certain groups of civil societies and authoritarian governments, but they do not solve the question of autonomy. Rather, by using such concepts, these studies admit the normativity underpinning their perspectives. Nevertheless, the recognition of the empirical variance as the outcome of conceptual limitations is not fully absent in the literature (Gleiss & Saether, 2017). Hence, the solution to the problem lies not in the empirics but in the lenses deployed to address the question. To demonstrate this, the logical deduction method is applied to the four perspectives identified earlier to find out the theoretical light they may shed on the question of autonomy:

- **Conflictual Perspective:** From this perspective, the autonomy of civil society organisations is constantly under threat from the authoritarian state. Autonomy is seen in terms of the ability of civil society organisations to challenge and oppose the regime, with a focus on contentious actions and resistance to state control.
- **Cooperative Adjustment Perspective:** This viewpoint may acknowledge a form of autonomy where civil society organisations can work with the state on shared objectives, albeit within limits set by the authoritarian regime. Autonomy here is not absolute but can be found in civil society's capacity to engage in cooperative actions with the state while retaining some degree of independent functioning and agenda-setting.
- **Co-optative Joinder Perspective:** In this perspective, the autonomy of civil society organisations is significantly compromised. It suggests that while civil society may appear to operate independently, it is often doing so under the influence or direction of the state. The state co-opts these organisations, using them as tools for its agenda, thereby limiting their genuine autonomy.

- **Symbiosis Perspective:** This approach views the autonomy of civil society organisations as part of a complex, interdependent relationship with the state. Autonomy is not seen in terms of independence from the state but as a capacity to negotiate and navigate within the system. Civil society organisations and the state are mutually reliant, with each influencing the other. This perspective suggests a nuanced form of autonomy where civil society can exert influence and achieve objectives, albeit within a framework that is also beneficial to the state.

As shown above, the logical extensions of the four perspectives on the question of autonomy offer very diverse results. What seems proper autonomy from one perspective might not be sufficient for the other, if not wholly irrelevant. The differences can be attributed to the aspects these perspectives consider important, which in turn are normatively informed. For instance, if the question is put in the conflictual perspective, autonomy is understood in terms of its ability to challenge or simply by the extent to which such a challenge is realised.

By the same token, these perspectives may offer different theoretical insights into the preservation of autonomy when the logical deduction method is applied:

- **Conflictual Perspective:** In this perspective, the major factor influencing civil society's autonomy is the level of state repression and control, if not the inherent capacity of civil society actors to resist. The more repressive the regime, the more it threatens civil society's autonomy, leading to a greater emphasis on resistance and opposition as a means of maintaining independence.
- **Cooperative Adjustment Perspective:** Here, the key factor is the extent of shared objectives and interests between civil society and the state. The autonomy of civil society is influenced by its ability to find common ground with the state, allowing for cooperative but still somewhat independent action.
- **Co-optative Joinder Perspective:** The dominant factor is the state's strategy of co-optation. The degree to which the state successfully co-opts civil society organisations—through funding, regulatory control, or other means—directly impacts their autonomy, often leading to a reduction in independent action in favour of state-aligned activities.

- **Symbiosis Perspective:** The major influencing factor is the level of mutual dependence and negotiation between the state and civil society. Autonomy is shaped by the ability of civil society organisations to navigate this interdependent relationship, balancing their objectives with those of the state to achieve their goals.

As the second logical deduction demonstrates, these perspectives offer different positions on what may matter for the maintaining of the autonomy of civil society organisations. While the earlier perspectives reflect varying extents of the far-reaching influence of the judgmental lenses of normative theorising, the *symbiosis* perspective significantly detaches itself from them, offering a stronger analytical conceptualisation. Hence, to deliver the earlier made promise of *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes, this study takes the understanding of the autonomy of civil society organisations as found in the *symbiosis* perspective. As demonstrated above, in this perspective, autonomy is the capacity to negotiate and navigate within the system of interdependencies, and the ability to do so is the major prerequisite of its preservation.

While the ability to navigate interdependent relationships may depend on numerous factors, the literature suggests one major for this. As said earlier at the beginning of this section, informal ties were identified by Vu (2019) as one of the three salient questions of civil society within authoritarian regimes (the other two: autonomy and legitimacy). The Russian and Turkish cases have already provided some indications in this respect. Both the discussions on Russia and Turkey touched upon the role of informal ties and dependencies between civil society actors and the representatives of the state structures. In the case of Russia, this was said to be part of a network state or so-called *sistema*, thus having a wider pattern as the replication of the political culture in the country. In the Turkish case, the informal or semi-formal ties were discussed in the context of civil society actors' struggle to access decision-making. However, the available literature on other cases presents important insights in this regard. The intrinsic relationship between the question of autonomy, on the one hand, and the question of (in)formality becomes as much apparent in the case of China as perhaps nowhere else. The individualistic ties of Chinese NGO leaders are suggested to be a foundational element of civil society's autonomy in China (Spire, 2020; Tai, 2015). Y. Kang (2019) suggests that in order to deal with their dependency on the state agency, many NGOs seek to have multiple patron partners. However, such ties might have diverse consequences for civil society organisations. One piece of evidence suggests that the sequence of the ties established with the government, media, and international

actors might matter in terms of access to government resources (Tai, 2015). Moreover, having ties to multiple bureaucratic agencies that are diverging or conflicting renders potential consequences for civil society organisations (Li, 2020). The picture is further complicated by J. Teets and Almen (2018), who argue that personal connections make NGOs vulnerable to changes both in NGO leadership and bureaucracy. Accordingly, with Xi Jinping coming to power in 2012, a new anti-corruption campaign was launched, resulting in a lot of changes within the bureaucracy and breaking many previously established personal connections between the state and civil society.

Moreover, it has also been evidenced that leadership-based vital personalistic elements also condition the lack of effective governance structures within Chinese civil society organisations. This is further sustained by the neglect of many formal accountability requirements by civil society actors once they find a patron bureaucracy agency for their registration, as they are not strictly imposed on them by the patron agency (K. R. Fisher et al., 2012). Such a prevalence of informality is not accidental. It is fostered by the government's purposeful ambiguity regarding permissible action, which can only be solved through informal channels, thus creating a tool of control over civil society (Stern & Hassid, 2012).

In short, the case of China demonstrated that informal ties and informality, in general, can be double-edged, on the one hand, facilitating civil society's legitimacy and access to government resources and, on the other hand, risking their achievements. These results generally align with the observations made by Aliyev (2014, 2015a, 2015b) in the cases of South Caucasus countries, which demonstrate that the widespread use of informal networks, dependence on patron-client relationships with donors, and the tendency of individuals to leverage their roles in organisations for financial gain are prevalent practices among NGOs. Studying the case of Cambodia, Vuković and Babović (2018) refer to this phenomenon the "trap of neo-patrimonialism", empirically confirming that informality and individual ties between civil society organisations and bureaucrats may not always serve the better but also contribute to the erosion of social accountability mechanisms.

Building upon the aforementioned deliberations, this research advances to unravel the enigma of autonomy of civil society organisations as influenced by the degree of their (in)formality. In pursuing this inquiry, the study adopts the symbiosis perspective, conceptualising autonomy as the capacity to adeptly negotiate and manoeuvre within a network of interdependencies.

The preceding pages identified the linkage between the autonomy of civil society organisations, understood in the *symbiosis* perspective, as the capacity to adeptly negotiate and manoeuvre within a network of interdependencies, and their degree of (in)formality as the puzzle for this research. However, the existing literature does not provide any micro-focused approach to civil society organisations. To deliver such a ground, two different strands of literature are addressed below: the sociological macro theories of civil society and the organisation theory. Hence, the translation of a macro-theory civil society into a micro-level through the organisation theory emerges as a viable ground for the purpose. However, within the identified literature, there exists a variety of theoretical accounts requiring an informed, justified and explained choice from among them, as the following paragraphs provide.

First, the identified alternatives of the macro theory of civil society are briefly considered. Then, the reason for the choice being made in favour of the *civil sphere* theory is elaborated. Third, the selection of the neoclassical organisation theory is explained following a very brief review of alternative accounts considered in the organisation theory. Finally, since the selected two theory strands are of different abstraction levels, an interpretation of their linkage is provided with a short discussion on the micro-macro debate.

5.2. The choice of theory: *Civil sphere* and the neoclassical organisation theory

Justification for the choice of the macro theory

Four alternatives to the *civil sphere* were considered. The first one is Heinrich's (2005) *arena* approach. Studying different available global measurement instruments by which the concept of civil society is defined, Heinrich (2005) deploys an empirical-analytical approach. He describes civil society as "the arena in society between the state, market, and family where citizens advance their interests". The understanding of civil society as an *arena* is not new to the literature; it can be traced back to Gramsci's writing. The second alternative concept considered is the *strategic action field*. The *strategic action field* is understood as a meso order where 'actors who can be individuals or collectives act with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field, and the field's rules' (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Collective actors such as civil society organisations that act in the large political, economic, or social fields become strategic action fields themselves; thus, any large field can be reduced to the level of the individual. This suggests an understanding of civil society as a field that can sustain a hierarchical system of functions, the institutionalisation degree of which may vary accordingly. Drawing on previous works on meso-level social orders,

Klein and Lee further develop the field approach by proposing distinctive strategic modes—politics of influence, politics of occupation and politics of substitutions—through which actors in each domain affect actors in other domains (Klein & Lee, 2019, p. 64). Defined as a ‘set of diverse and intersecting projects pre-structured by the field’, Klein and Lee’s concept of civil society offers a more dynamic picture of its boundary relations with the state and economy.

The *social system* approach is another viable option, which is based on the *systems of social action* theory. To briefly introduce, the social system of action is one of three systems in which an action is embedded. It is made up of the actions of individuals. Individuals are integrated within society through the institutionalisation of roles, which vary in degree. So, in the social system approach, the unit of analysis and their constellations are structured. In this view, *collectivities* are social systems that are built on solidarity - that is, they have a collective goal (set by authority) and a shared goal among members—and are defined by their boundaries (Parsons, 1951; Parsons et al., 1962, pp. 190–234). Within this approach, civil society can be understood as a subsystem of society with certain interaction logics such as mutual agreements, communication, and solidarity. Abstract appreciation and solidarity appear as the central media of interaction. Thus, civil society becomes the fourth subsystem besides community, state, and economy. In this approach, organisations are considered systems featuring certain values in their goals, subject to the broader value systems in society. (Parsons, 1960, p. 20).

The fourth approach to civil society identified in the literature is the *sector* approach (Anheier & Ben-Ner, 2003; Brandsen et al., 2005; Evers & Laville, 2004; Lohmann, 1992; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Salamon et al., 1999-; van Til, 1988) which is revived in recent studies (see, e.g., Valentinov, 2009; van Til, 2009; Virtanen, 2015). Eliminated from the normative and functional assumptions prevalent in the previous concepts of civil society and, thus, being a more rigid concept, the *sector* approach limits its focus on non-profit, non-governmental organisations. However, it also provides an opportunity to distinguish subtypes—a possibility that is not fully possible in other approaches. Because of its emphasis on the organisation of associational life beyond family, state, and market, it is also called a *structural* approach. So, this approach does not necessarily highlight a normative role and does not see the outcome as necessarily or immediately contributing to democratisation. It merely emphasises the organisational aspects of associational life beyond the state and market.

While a comprehensive evaluation of all these alternatives cannot be offered within the scope of this study, each with its unique merits and shared principles, a brief commentary on

them is certainly warranted. To start with, by establishing civil society as an intermediary space between the state, market and family, the *arena* approach subjects it to the projection of interests originating from outside and, thus, over-emphasises the potential for conflicts by defining civil society exclusively with the advancement of interests. In other words, civil society becomes a function of the conflict among the state, market, and family. In contrast, the *field* approach overweighs the consensus among actors over the pre-structured institutional boundaries and offers a potentially hierarchical structure. The *strategic action field* approach suggested above emphasises dynamism rather than consensus by bringing the power struggle between incumbents and challengers to the front. In the power struggle, cooperation serves only instrumentally. The *field* approach, built on rationalist and materialist grounds borrowed from the organisation theory, fails to offer a distinct logic of action.

In the system approach, civil society is subordinated to the overall value system of the society along with other subsystems, which are the family, the state, and the economy; the output of one is input for the other and, thus, constantly, tending to establish equilibrium. The *third sector* empirical category in the structural approach allows for better empirical measurement; however, it also becomes too broad, covering all formal, voluntary, non-governmental, and nonprofit distributional organisations. Most of the time, it also fails to capture local grassroots organisations, despite some attempts to develop extensions towards them (see, e.g., van Til, 2009).

Compared to all these approaches, the *civil sphere* theory is chosen based on several grounds. First, it is more thoroughly developed than any other alternative. Second, it offers a distinct logic of action—solidarity—for civil society. It is not progress-centred, unlike Parson's *societal community*. In the *civil sphere* theory, the civil sphere is analytically independent and distinguishable from other spheres. In the civil sphere theory, civil society is not the function of other spheres. Moreover, the civil sphere theory suggests a more dynamic picture of boundaries between civil society and the state, capturing both conflicts and convergence. Fourth, it distinguishes between the *ideal* and *real* civil society, thus providing more opportunities for explaining the interplay between formality and informality. Distinguishing between the *ideal* and *real* allows us to see civil society units not only as associations but also as organisations.

For the organisational part, the extant literature on civil society does not suggest anything coming close to relevant. The effects of the formal organisation on the functions of civil society and donor-dependence as an augmenting factor were addressed with the terms of *NGOization* or

professionalisation in the recent literature (see, e.g., Arda & Banerjee, 2019; Chahim & Prakash, 2014; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Guenther, 2011; Klimczuk, 2015; S. Lang, 2013; Mitchell & Schmitz, 2014; Shegenovna, 2014; Shrestha & Adhikari, 2011; Smith & Jenkins, 2011; Suarez, 2011; Zihnioğlu, 2019a, 2019b). These studies provide significant insight into the phenomenon, highlighting diverse effects of *NGOization* or *professionalisation* of civil society in different contexts. Nevertheless, they are not embedded in a broader conceptual framework and, therefore, can hardly go beyond limited generalisations and remain disconnected from the wider literature on organisation studies. This curbs their power to explain the diverse effects of (in)formal organisation in civil society. The very use of terminology in the relevant literature can also be subject to criticism, as they remain largely blind to the organisation theory. Attempting to conceptualise the formal organisation of civil society while neglecting the organisation theory as a whole, which is the case in the literature, can hardly yield any extensive and constructive result.

On the contrary, there was some significant work to link the social movements literature with organisation studies in the last two or three decades (see, e.g., G. F. Davis et al., 2012; G. F. Davis et al., 2008; Weber & King, 2014). A series of papers in the special issue 5-6 of the *Journal of Organisation Studies* in volume 34 was dedicated to exploring linkages between social movements and organisation studies (Bakker et al., 2013; Djelic, 2013; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013; Guérard et al., 2013; Haug, 2013; Kraemer et al., 2013; Lee & Romano, 2013; Schneiberg, 2013; Sikavica & Pozner, 2013; Yaziji & Doh, 2013). Nevertheless, a micro-perspective of civil society associations as organisations remains underexplored in the literature.

Justification for the choice of micro theory

The organisation theory literature offers very fragmented and often unconnected perspectives and paradigms. It has emerged based on insights borrowed from diverse fields such as the scientific management movement, social psychology, sociology, political science and economy (March et al., 1958, p. 5). The development of the organisation theory can be roughly divided into three phases. The first phase is the formation phase from the mid-1930s to the late 1940s, during which a distinctive academic focus on organisations was shaped (March & Simon, 1958). Early scholars of the organisation theory include James D. Mooney and Alan C. Riley (1931), Robert King Merton (1940; 1936), Chester I. Barnard (1938), Everett Hughes (1936), Luther Gulick (1937), Elton Mayo (1933, 1945), Urwick and Brech (1945), Philip Selznick (1943, 1948, 1949, 1952). Scholars coming from the professional fields, such as engineers Taylor and Fayol, senior executive Barnard, and industrial psychologist Mayo, made significant

contributions to the development of the organisation theory (R. W. Scott, 2014, p. 21).

The second phase is the boom phase, which began in the early 1950s and ran until the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. In his introduction to the first of a two-volume collection of essays, Litterer (1969), summarising the record of the organisation studies, concludes by identifying three different schools that follow each other: traditional school or classical doctrines, neo-classical organisation theory and modern organisation theory.

The third phase in the development of the organisation theory began in the late 1960s and early 1970s¹⁸. In this phase, besides the micro-level perspective on organisations, which dominated the previous period, a macro-level perspective on organisations emerged. The development of the macro-level perspective on organisations can be attributed to the then emerging new institutionalism.¹⁹ Reviewing the literature of this period, McKinley and Mone (2005) identify three major micro-level and two major macro-level perspectives on organisations. The micro-level perspectives include the neo-contingency theory, resource dependence theory and transaction costs theory, while the population ecology theory and the neo-institutional theory provide macro-level analyses. The micro-perspective theories that emerged after the 1970s focus on narrow aspects of the relationship between an individual organisation and its environment, exclusively exploring the issue of growth and survival. Meanwhile, macro-perspective theories mould the organisation within institutions to such an extent that they eliminate almost entirely the possibility of considering the effects of the internally autonomous world.

¹⁸ The literature of this period review for this research include: Argyris (1956, 1957, 1959, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1965b, 1965c, 1966, 1964); Argyris and Harrison (1969); Ashby (1956); F. Baker (1973); R. J. S. Baker (1980); Bakke and Argyris (1954); Barnard (1952a, 1952b, 1964, 1969b, 1969a, 1970a, 1970b); Berliner (1957); Peter M. Blau (1963, 1969, 1974); Peter M. Blau and Meyer (1971); Peter M. Blau and Schoenherr (1971); Peter M. Blau and Scott (1962); Caplow (1953); Carzo and Yanouzas (1967); B. R. Clark (1956); Cyert and March (1963); Dale and Urwick (1960); Dill (1958); Etzioni (1961, 1964); Evan (1976); Fallers (1956); Goffman (1953); Gore (1966); Alvin W. Gouldner (1959); Alwin W. Gouldner (1969); Granick (1954, 1959); Grimshaw and Hennessey jr. (1960); Kahn (1964); Kahn and Boulding (1964); Kriesberg (1955); Joseph August Litterer (1969); March et al. (1958, 1958); March (1965); March and Simon (1976); Miller and Medalia (1955); Parsons (1960); Richman and Farmer (1975); Rubenstein and Haberstroh (1969); Sayles and Strauss (1966); Selznick (1952, 1957, 1966a, 1966b, 1969); Simon (1953, 1957); Stinchcombe (1959, 1965, 1967, 1970); Thompson (1967, 1969); Thompson and McEwen (1958); Urwick (1958, 1966); Urwick and Brech (1945); Woodward (1965).

¹⁹ It is still questioned if the organisation theory has proved itself (March, 2008).

Among the organisation theories of the 1930s-1960s period, the modern organisation theory, which deploys a system approach, subordinates the organisation to society's general hierarchy. In contrast, the classic doctrines of the organisation theory exclusively limit the organisation's inner world to its formal aspects. Given all these limitations, the neo-classical organisation theory emerges as the comparatively more viable lens that enables the study of the interplay between the informal and formal institutional structures of the organisation. More importantly, compared to the classic doctrines, which treat organisations as closed systems, and the theories on the opposite end, which mould the organisation within institutions, the neoclassical organisation theory takes a mid-way, recognising the internal autonomy of the organisations but subjecting it to the continuous compromising in the face of the changes within the external environment.

More concretely, the neoclassical organisation theory was chosen for the reason that it theorises i) the interplay between formality and informality within the organisation, ii) the relationship between the organisation and its environment, and iii) finally, formal co-optation in the inter-organisational relationship. Although the neoclassical organisation theory can be attributed to many scholars, in this research, the neo-classical organisation theory is specifically, but not exclusively, deployed from the sociological writings of Philip Selznick.

Explanation for the macro-micro linkage

While the organisation theory deployed here offers a micro-perspective, that is, it takes the organisation as a unit of analysis with its internal world and interactions with its environment, the *civil sphere* theory positions itself at a higher level of abstraction. The difference between theoretical levels poses certain challenges to integrating them into a single theoretical framework. The macro-micro distinction has been an issue of debate in sociology for a long time, and still, no firm consensus has been achieved in this respect.²⁰ Debates on the macro-micro

²⁰ Analysing the classical sociological theory through the works of Marx, Durkheim, Mead, Simmel and Freud, Alexander and Giesen identify five different positions to the macro-micro distinction (1987). Two out of these positions offer a micro-sociology built on a reductionist view – the premise that individuals create society through contingent acts of freedom. However, one of them is based on the rational and purposeful view of the individual, while the other is based on the interpretative view of the individual. The other two of these positions suggest a macro-sociology in which either socialised individuals do not create but reproduce society through translating the social environment into the micro realm or rational and purposeful individuals bow to the dictate of the social structure under force. Among these two camps, there is a third transition position in which socialised individuals re-create society as a collective force through the contingent acts of freedom, in the words of Alexander and Giesen Alexander et al. (1987, p. 14).

distinction or their relationships are well summarised by Kemeny (1976), Alexander et al. (1987), Ritzer (1990) and more recently by Pawlak and Rychard (2018). The roots of the macro-micro debate are found to be in the philosophical debates of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although the classics of sociologists did not directly use the macro-micro terminology, the individual-society distinction was the main issue of debate among them. These perspectives did not disappear in post-war sociology but were rather enriched and widened. The macro-micro distinction has become the main dividing line between the two camps of sociologists—defenders of the macro-sociology and those defending the micro-sociology in the post-war period for almost 50 years (Pawlak & Rychard, 2018, pp. 19–34).²¹ Nevertheless, mainly from the 1980s, attempts were made by both camps (macro-perspective defenders and micro-perspective defenders) to link the macro and micro perspectives.

More recently, these attempts have resulted in more diverse views, identifying not just macro, meso, and micro but also more layers between individual and societal levels.²² In line with the general tendency towards diversified, multi-level views of recent periods, this research deploys a six-level interpretation built on the originally five-level approach offered by Kemeny

²¹ Reviewing the diverse literature of this period, Kemeny (1976) identifies four perspectives on the macro-micro distinction, namely competitive, inclusive, exclusive and cumulative. While in the competitive perspectives, macro-sociologists and micro-sociologists were rejecting each other, the inclusive perspectives were attempting to develop an inclusive and universal framework within which all levels of analysis can fit together. Exclusivists were in favour of following separate tracks without attempting to establish the linkages between the two levels of perspectives. Cumulativists, in their turn, were developing the micro-based approaches with the gradation of complexity.

Alexander's work on linking macro and micro perspectives is built on the understanding that the action (micro) and the collective environment (macro) are mutually producing themselves. However, unlike Giddens, whose starting point is a mid-level social practice, Alexander starts its theory from a macro end (Alexander et al., 1987, pp. 42–45). Alternatively, some scholars such as Jerald Hage, Anselm Strauss, Jonathan H. Turner, Derek Layder also attempted to develop a link between the macro level and the micro level by establishing a middle level, not through some mediating mechanism or reduction/reification. The meso-level theories also include the field theory, which is mainly developed by Pierre Bourdieu, Neil Fligstein and Dough McAdam (Alexander et al., 1987, pp. 54–71). Within these attempts, according to their starting point, the micro-end perspective and the macro-end perspectives are identified. The micro-end perspective is based on the rational choice theory. The main figures are Mancur Olson, Michael Hechter, James Coleman, Raymond Boudon, Karin Knorr-Cetina and Randal Collins are the main figures of this group, while Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann and Jeffrey C. Alexander represent the macro-end perspective. Consequently, the dichotomous view of the micro-macro relationship developed into a dialectical view by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens and George Ritzer Pawlak and Rychard (2018, pp. 35–44).

²² For instance, in the work of R. W. Scott (2014), we see a more diversified view, which goes beyond macro-micro or macro-meso-micro levels and introduce a multiple level view.

(1976) to link the *civil sphere* theory and the neoclassical organisation theory in the following way.

The introduction of the theoretical framework, which builds on the civil sphere theory on the one hand and the neo-classical organisation theory on the other, facilitated by the above-mentioned micro-macro linkage, proceeds step-by-step in the following four sub-sections. The immediately following subsection introduces the *civil sphere* theory. Consequently, Section 5.4 translates the major premises of the *civil sphere* theory into a micro-level through the insights borrowed from the organisation theory. Section 5.5 provides the hypotheses to be tested consequently through quantitative methods.

5.3. The *civil sphere* theory

Jeffrey C. Alexander introduces the early elements of the *civil sphere* theory in his introduction to a book edited by him in 1998 titled *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalisation* and in his *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*, published in 2003. However, the *civil sphere* theory appears in full flesh in his 2006 book titled *The Civil Sphere*. Consequently, the *civil sphere* theory was put to empirical test through studies on Latin American (Alexander & Tognato, 2018), North European (Alexander, Lund, & Voyer, 2019) and East Asian (Alexander, Palmer, et al., 2019) cases and further improved in studies gathered under titles such as *Breaching the Civil Order: Radicalism and the Civil Sphere* (Alexander, Stack, & Khosrokhavar, 2019) and *The Courage for Civil Repair* (Tognato et al., 2020). Although each of these studies makes significant contributions to the understanding of the *civil sphere* theory by substantiating it in real cases, the original account has remained largely fixed. For this reason, the presentation of the *civil sphere* theory in the paragraphs below remains almost unexceptionally loyal to the original account of it introduced in the author's above-mentioned 2006 work.

To start with, Alexander suggests that we need to understand civil society as *analytically independent, empirically differentiated and morally more universalistic vis-a-vis the state, the market and other spheres* (Alexander, 2006, p. 31). In Alexander's view, the civil sphere is both an analytical and empirical category. Moreover, its major differentiating attribute from other spheres is its universalism—that is, solidarity that is broader than any other that can be found outside of it. Thus, in Alexander's view, the civil sphere is a solidary sphere—one possessing a certain kind of universalising community; however, such community needs to be culturally

defined and, to some degree, institutionally enforced. This is, the civil sphere is the product of long-standing cultural codes and institutional traditions. Such conceptualisation of civil society also corresponds to the demands often voiced by the Global South that reject the thick normativity built on Western conceptions but also highlight the need for an approach that does not build on formal characterisation (see, e.g., Bhatta, 2012).

Institutions of the civil sphere

Civil sphere institutions of two distinct types are identified based on their forms and functions in sustaining solidarity: *communicative institutions* and *regulative institutions*. Regulative institutions are law, office, party organisation, and ‘free and fair’ elections. These institutions not only provide the definitions of moral behaviour in concrete and specific ways but also adjust behaviours accordingly through sanctions and rewards. In contrast, the communicative institutions of civil society possess an inventory different from sanctions and rewards. It is through the communicative institutions that collective representations of social relationships are expressed and that structures of feeling are constructed.

Communicative institutions of civil society develop messages that translate the general codes into statements, decisions, and actions in concrete situations that promote inclusion or exclusion for this or that group. However, unlike regulative institutions, communicative institutions do not produce authoritative power but what, at best, can be conceptualised as an influence (Alexander, 2006, p. 70). Mass media organisations and civil associations constitute the major organisational part of communicative institutions of civil society (Alexander, 2006, pp. 75–85). Civil associations play a major role in establishing the claims of underrepresented groups in civil discourse. In so doing, they translate the general categories of civil discourse into specific events. Thus, their major defining characteristic is their communicative intent.

Although they may represent functional interests, they are inclined to make their appeals in universalising terms. Alexander’s civil sphere does not consist of only institutions. It is not merely a collectivity of organisational units. Rather, institutions operate inside of a cultural milieu and organisations decide or act within the categories provided by the host culture. Thus, the structure and activities of social organisations are oriented, though not determined, by the discourse of civil society (Alexander, 2006, p. 69). This discourse also has a subjective dimension—socially constructed consciousness and a set of understandings that create

“structures of feeling” that, in turn, transfuse into social life (Alexander, 2006, pp. 53–54).²³

As “structures of feeling”, in the *civil sphere*, solidarity is not a rational choice of individuals. It is not tied to abstract and contentless rationality. This is, it is not the rational calculation but the feeling of connectedness to ‘every member’ of the community that creates solidarity. Such a feeling transcends particularistic commitments and individual interests. Here, solidarity is not understood in a purely collective sense. It is through the discourse of civil society that social groups make their claims and through the institutions of civil society that they make their appeals. It is in this way that Alexander’s concept of civil society combines the particular with the universal.

However, Alexander differentiates such civil associations from those which are generally called ‘voluntary associations.’ In so doing, the path he follows in this sense is different from those followed by Tocqueville, Arendt, Durkheim and many others who saw all voluntary associations outside the state and the market as playing a significant role in democracy. Here, voluntary associations are understood as groups that are organised for the pursuit of common interests. Associations which do not aim to expand their solidarity outside their group, and hence, which are not outward-oriented, such as cooking societies, dog training clubs, and star-gazing groups, do not necessarily produce civil discourse. Thus, associating is not per se a necessary criterion for defining ‘civil.’ It is the communicative intent—claims put forward in universalising terms—that makes them civil. Thus, not every association outside the state and the market, in Alexander’s *civil sphere*, is counted as a civil association (Alexander, 2006, pp. 92–105).

Ideal vs. Real Civil Sphere

In such a dual construction of the civil sphere, the primary role of civil society institutions is to crystallise solidarity in specific terms by transforming the general codes of the civil discourse in concrete situations into decisions and actions. While doing so, they articulate specific claims for inclusion or exclusion. It is through their choices and activities that the ideals of civil society penetrate social life. It is through civil institutions that the civil sphere restructures other spheres, though not in their pure forms, and is restructured by them. In the process of

²³ The use of the concept of ‘structures of feeling’ - is once again an indicator of his emphasis on actual and real time social relations and collective consciousness. It is a concept put forward, although some ambiguously, by Raymond Williams to emphasise the actual and real time human cultural activity in contradiction to the treatment of culture as already finished products. For more on the topic, see Matthews (2001); Williams (1977); Williams and Williams (1992, 1966).

translation through institutions, the ideals of civil society are not only realised but also compromised (Alexander, 2006, p. 70).

Although the civil sphere offered by Alexander is analytically autonomous and empirically differentiated, it depends on inputs from other spheres, including the state, market, community, religion, and family—the spheres that Alexander identifies and characterises as *uncivil* or less civil than the civil sphere. For Alexander, it also constitutes a reason for studying solidarity in itself rather than as an offshoot of other structural processes such as urbanisation, modernisation, socialisation, bureaucratisation and secularisation (Alexander, 2006, p. 193). Simply put, the civil sphere is not a condition created by other spheres, though it depends on inputs from them. The more the civil sphere is independent of other spheres, the broader the solidarity it creates is. However, even in a situation that is closest to its idealistic way, universalism is not fully achieved. Rather, it is continuously compromised and continuously reduced in different ways as non-civil cultural and institutional exigencies permeate civil society. The reason for this is that at every single activity, civil society depends on inputs from other spheres. Without entering into an interchange with other spheres, the civil sphere cannot aim to achieve its goals. This is, the civil sphere exists in the *real*—the practical world of uncivil spheres. Therefore, primordial qualities such as language, race, national origins, religion, class, intelligence, sexuality, gender, and region can also be essentialised. One important implication of this conclusion is that civil society can perform functions that, in essence, go well beyond its ideal function that Alexander refers to as *civil repair* (Alexander, 2006, pp. 193–195). Each non-civil sphere produces its function-specific, historically produced inequalities or privileged accumulations. For instance, the free market creates the poor and rich. The family creates roles that discriminate among family members. All these are eventually translated into the civil sphere (Alexander, 2006, p. 204).

Yet, similarly, it cannot be fully eradicated, as it persistently constructs itself. Civil society does not only construct itself but also counter-penetrates other spheres depending on the context of the time, space, and function. It is through public opinion that civil society penetrates the institutional domains of social life. In so doing, it sets standards and creates images in other spheres. Nevertheless, the completion of the penetration of the civil sphere into other spheres is not possible. Thus, civil society, in Alexander's perspective, is not a complete project and can never be fully or perfectly accomplished. Every society is civil society to the degree that the civil sphere is independent of other spheres and to the breadth of the solidarity it can create. In so

saying, Alexander rejects a utopian view that sees possibilities for creating an entirely solidaristic, altruistic, and inclusive society.

Boundary relations between the civil sphere and other spheres

As the discussion above already suggested, the civil sphere can never achieve full autonomy from other spheres. Thus, it is always penetrated by other spheres and exists to varying degrees from one to another and at different times (Alexander, 2006, pp. 31–36). Although the civil sphere pulls its resources from other spheres, it does so according to its own normative and institutional logic (Alexander, 2006, pp. 53–54). Thus, the autonomy that civil society has from other spheres is relative.

Nevertheless, the boundary relationship between the civil sphere and other spheres is not limited to *destructive intrusion* by other spheres and *civil repair* by the civil sphere. The civil sphere and other spheres can also provide *facilitating input* (Alexander, 2006, p. 205). It means goods and social forms produced by other spheres can also contribute to the creation of solidarity in the civil sphere. The role of the market in the construction of the civil sphere cannot be overemphasised. The free market has historically encouraged independent, rational, and self-controlled behaviour. That was the rationale for the broad conception of civil society that included the market, too. In such a broad understanding, civil society was seen as counterbalancing the aristocratic and militaristic way of life through its civilising and calming remedy (Alexander, 2006, p. 206).

In his work, in particular, while discussing *civil repair*, Alexander frequently uses the concept of ‘colonisation’. Although the author provides no definition of it, in instances, it becomes evident that when the author talks about the colonisation of the civil sphere by other spheres or the other way around, he refers to two of those boundary relationships discussed above, namely *destruction intrusion* and *civil repair*. Thus, the civil sphere and other spheres which are inherently considered to be ‘uncivil’ are in constant and consistent mutual colonisation. The colonisation of other spheres by the civil sphere can be understood as the introduction of standards and the creation of images that create more in-depth and broader solidarity or less inequality within those spheres. Meanwhile, the colonisation of the civil sphere by other spheres can be understood as the translation of privileged accumulations or inequalities, which are products of historical processes within other spheres, into the civil sphere, which results in less solidarity among people. Such a mutually colonising situation implies a constant

tension between the civil sphere and other spheres, though it may also be balanced by *facilitating inputs*.

What does the civil sphere suggest for authoritarian contexts?

Alexander's civil sphere and civil society organisations as part of its communicative institutions can exist in authoritarian contexts. In this view, democracy is not a prerequisite for civil society. Civil society can exist in non-democratic societies, too, though in a less differentiated and distinct form. The author reminds the civil society of Eastern Europe of the late communist years when it existed semi-publicly and operated mostly informally (Alexander, 2006, p. 107). While civil society under authoritarian regimes is characterised as less differentiated and distinct from other spheres, it is more self-defining and distinctive in democracies. Accordingly, this differentiation becomes possible with the independence of communicative institutions from consequential control of the state power (Alexander, 2006, pp. 107–108). However, such independence from the state is not understood in the ultimate sense and, as already said above, can never be fully achieved.

In the original account of the *civil sphere* theory, there are a few hints on how civil society can win its power against the state and what may condition it: civil society organisations and the civil force of law. Civil society organisations gain particular importance within the *civil sphere* theory when authoritarian contexts are considered. When the author adopts at the beginning of the book that '*even in the quashed and confined civil spheres of authoritarian societies, communicative institutions can often project representations that have some communicative force*' (Alexander, 2006, p. 5), he relies on the force of communicative institutions in constructing a more independent civil sphere within authoritarian regimes, which is also well demonstrated in the case studies deploying the civil sphere theory in *The Civil Sphere in Latin America*, edited by Alexander and Tognato (2018).

Additionally, one can find emphasis on the civil force of law as a source of power for civil society when the role of contracts in establishing formal equality and their overtime institutionalisation as a benefit for the labour is discussed. The author emphasises the institutionalisation of formal contracts over time. He notes that if the formal contracts benefited the private market actors when they were established during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they later became a basis for workers to demand reforms (Alexander, 2006, p. 157), implicitly talking about the unexpected consequences flowing from formal institutionalisation.

In the discussion of race and civil repair in the case of the United States, the author suggests that “*when the access is blocked to legitimate procedures, to the means of communication and to the regulatory institutions that can integrate in more expansive and equitable ways,*” then “*force and violence became decisive*” (Alexander, 2006, pp. 266–267)—a job which the author assigns to social movements of extraordinary times rather than civil associations of ordinary times. It becomes clear from this passage and the discussions that follow it that the legitimate power of formal regulative institutions, above all that of law, and the communicative force of civil associations, media and other tools are the primary source for the civil sphere to expand and thus, democracy to cherish.

Through these few instances, it becomes possible to establish a limited account of civil society within authoritarian regimes in the *civil sphere*. To sum up, it becomes evident that the civil sphere may exist within authoritarian regimes, though in a more compromised and reduced form. In such a civil sphere, civil society organisations, which are defined as part of the communicative institutions within the *civil sphere* theory, play a prominent role in countering colonisation by the state and other spheres and winning back the autonomy of the civil sphere. Moreover, the civil force of law—a legitimate source of reference for civil society actions can serve the goals of civil society associations. These discussions on the civil sphere within authoritarian contexts, as well as those preceding them, possess an implicit assumption about the relateness of the autonomy of civil society, as already stated above.

Transnationalisation in the civil sphere theory

The civil sphere in the original account of the theory is space-bounded; this is, it is confined to national borders. National civil spheres are considered to be isolated from other civil spheres outside the national borders and, more importantly, from the transnational civil sphere. The influence of the transnational civil sphere over national civil spheres is not explored. In the real world, *civil repair* does not only emancipate from the space-bound civil sphere or civil sphere of a given space, but it is also transmitted from the global or transnational civil society through forums, networks, platforms, partnerships, and other possibilities. Thus, the colonising effect of the global/transnational civil sphere over the nationally bounded civil sphere is also in the play. Notably, the extent of the integration of the civil sphere into a transnational sphere can be crucial in deepening and widening the civil discourse of the given national civil sphere as well as in civil society associations’ relations with the state.

Although discussions on the global/international/transnational civil society (G. Baker, 2005; Chandler, 2004; Colas, 2005; Colás, 2001; Falk, 2005; Kaldor, 2005; Keane, 2003; Pupavac, 2005; Spini, 2011), transnational interactions (Keohane & Nye, 1972; Risse, 1995; Rosenau, 2006a, 2006b; Vertovec, 1999, 2001, 2009) and transnational spaces (Faist & Özveren, 2004; Jackson et al., 2004; Kaiser & Starie, 2005; Pries, 2001; Schütze, 2016) existed much before, the transnational civil sphere as understood in the original account of the *civil sphere* theory has only been developed lately in *Transnational Civil Sphere in East Asia* (Alexander, Palmer, et al., 2019). Until this time, the possibility of applying *civil repair* at a global scale was merely mentioned in another publication of the author (2012, p. 141). In *Transnational Civil Sphere in East Asia*, the concept of the civil sphere is employed to study the relations between Chinese, Japanese and Korean societies, which are divided by different binary codes of civil discourse. The transnational civil sphere is understood in this work as transcending anti-civil violence between these nations (2019, p. 258). One major finding that the conceptualisation of the transnational civil sphere provides is that civil society may seek to broaden their universalist drives towards the outside of national boundaries and reach those beyond. Hence, the *transnationalisation* of the side of civil society actors is not merely a question of broadening the geographic scope but also expanding solidarity to include others remaining outside the national borders, revealing most of the universalist inclination within the civil sphere. Whether the structure of feelings and transnational institutions should reach a certain threshold to give rise to a transnational sphere and in what way such transnational spheres could interchange with nationally bounded civil and other spheres are just some of the questions that still need to be conceptually and empirically explored. However, this study demonstrates how civil society actors can and do will to construct broader solidarity by pushing beyond national boundaries. Such outreach would feed broader solidarity into the nationally bounded civil spheres. Then, the *transnationalisation* of civil society organisations, within the framework of the *civil sphere* theory, can be understood as the creation of ties between civil society associations and their counterparts elsewhere or other transnational actors with whom they share the common grounds of solidarity.

Nevertheless, transnational ties between civil society actors should not be understood as representing the whole of the civil sphere, as Alexander's civil sphere includes other institutions such as law, political parties, and media, in addition to civil society organisations. Since the focus here is on civil society organisations, no discussions on these remaining aspects are required for the purpose of this study.

Implications for civil society associations as formal organisations

While not the primary concern of civil sphere theory, the organisational dimensions of civil society associations nonetheless hold a pertinent role within it, particularly in the discussions on the translation of ideals into the real. As the discussions above have already presented, in the civil sphere, it is through civil associations that the general and abstract categories of civil codes—that is, *ideals*—are translated into specific situations. However, civil associations are not exempt from formality; they often exist in the form of formal organisations. Therefore, one needs to investigate how civil associations as formal organisations both realise and compromise the civil sphere. Alexander’s emphasis on the ‘realistic approach’ indeed requires seeing the role of formal organisations in the realisation/compromising of the civil discourse. The importance of formal organisation for civil associations lies in that civil associations are often required to deploy formal organisational form in their day-to-day running, in contrast to or more than social movements.

The role of formal organisation can further be seen in the discussions on what is referred to as the civil force of law. The possibility of the transmission of the civil force of law from higher levels of regulative institutions to the lower levels also involves the organisational level. If civil discourse, as part of the law, gains certain power through formal institutionalisation as a regulative institution, its manifestation in formal organisational forms and rules follows naturally, as formal organisations are subject to the law. This under-appreciated aspect in the *civil sphere* theory received the deserved attention from Egholm in the case of the Danish philanthropy organisation, the Egmont Foundation (2019). In *The Nordic Civil Sphere*, edited by Alexander, Lund and Voye, Egholm demonstrates how, in a more than hundred-year period, the Egmont Foundation shaped the definitions of the common good and the “deserving poor” in Denmark.

Implications for the autonomy of civil society

One major implicit assumption underpinning the discussions above on the boundary relations between the civil sphere and other spheres concerns the question of autonomy. In a context in which civil society is constantly compromised and colonised by other spheres and the functioning of *civil repair* despite them suggests an understanding of autonomy that resonates well with the one found in the *symbiosis* perspective in the literature on civil society within authoritarianism. The autonomy of civil society in the *civil sphere* theory is, thus, relative and depends on the boundary exchanges between the civil sphere and other spheres. What is referred

to as *facilitating inputs* above similarly echoes the understanding of *symbiosis*—the dependence on each other for essential needs—between the state and civil society. Moreover, in the argument that civil society cannot make its claims without interchange with other spheres, one can also see an implicit emphasis on the strategic management of such exchanges, which further indicates the direction of autonomy understood in the *symbiosis* perspective. It is such an approach found within the civil sphere that recognises the possibility for civil society to exist also within authoritarian regimes—the question briefly examined below.

5.4. Translating the *civil sphere* theory into the organisation level

The section to follow below translates the *civil sphere* theory from the macro level into the micro level—the organisational level through the insights borrowed from the organisation theory. As the first task, the theoretical linkage is established between the macro and micro levels through a six-level interpretation built on the originally five-level approach offered by Kemeny (1976). Consequently, the discussions move on to how formal organisational design can moderate the translation of civil society *ideals* into *real ones*. It is within this context that the formal and informal organisations are differentiated and elaborated based on the organisation theory, in particular, the neo-classical school and the sociological writings of Philip Selznick. Eventually, the discussion on the interplay between formal and informal organisations evolves into transboundary relations between civil society and its environment, now put in the organisation theory terms. As part of the latter, the civil sphere's independence is converted into the *autonomy* of civil society organisations, the colonisation of the civil sphere by the state into the concept of *co-optation*. Last but not least, the co-optation of civil society organisations and their transnationalisation are considered in relation to the concept of autonomy. Overall, these discussions yield the translation of the civil sphere theory into the micro level. Yet, this interpretation is neither exhaustive nor the only way it can be done, but it is tailored specifically to the realm of civil society association within this analysis. Similarly, discussions on the concepts borrowed from the organisation theory are far from depleting the potential of the relevant literature.

From the macro perspective to the micro perspective

Linking the macro-perspective *civil sphere* theory with the micro perspective on the organisational level requires clearly setting the locus of civil society organisations in relation to other abstraction levels. As promised earlier, this was done based on Kemeny's approach, differentiating five levels between the individual and the societal level processes, each of which

emerges from the previous. However, the original approach was appropriated with the insertion of the fourth level, making it six levels in total. Up from the individual level, each level is considered to consist of the aggregate of the lower level. Emerging properties are understood in this study as the patterns of interaction that gain a certain enforceable nature over constituting units and form it through their actions. Therefore, each level up from the individual level cannot be reduced to the sum of the lower-level constituting elements.

The individual is both the basis and source of social life rather than as a passive medium through which social forces are expressed. As the second level of complexity, the organisation emerges as a ‘joint action’ of individuals. Joint action is understood as the interlinkage of different individual actions into the articulation of lines of action. However, it is not a simple summation of individual acts but possesses emergent properties. Thus, joint action—the organisation—possesses patterns of interaction that gain a certain enforceable nature over individuals and form it through their individual actions. Therefore, it cannot be reduced to individual actions. In turn, joint actions or organisations combine to produce another level of complexity, which is the large societal institutions of related joint actions. Every new joint action must fit into the joint action of yet other individuals within its institutional terrain—the fourth level. This institutional terrain cannot be similarly reduced to joint actions as it is more than their sum and possesses some higher level of emerging properties. Civil associations and the communicative institutions of civil society in Alexander correspond to the second level—the joint actions of individuals and the third level—institutional terrain, respectively, in this ladder. The regulative institutions of civil society in Alexander correspond to the institutional terrain, but of a separate type, in this ladder, too. The next level of complexity is the sphere that is constituted above different institutional terrains. Meanwhile, combined, the communicative

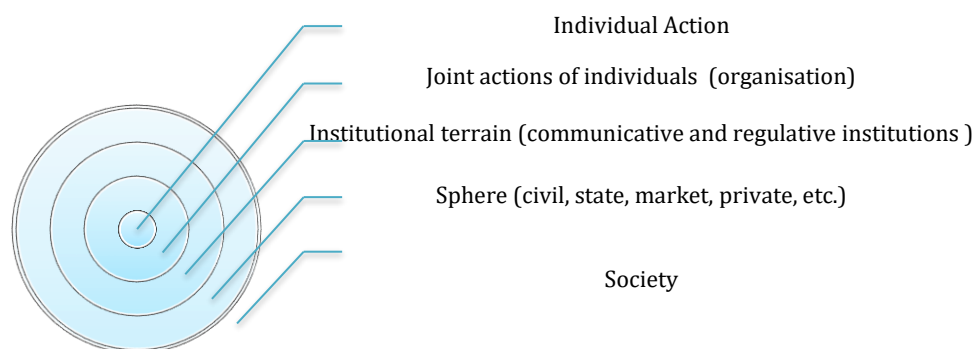


Figure 5 Civil Society multi-level approach to the macro-micro linkage.

institutions and the regulative institutions form the civil sphere - the fourth level. Finally, spheres combine to form society at the highest level.

The present research at hand aims to translate the premises of the *civil sphere* theory from the fourth–sphere level to the second–organisation level, with a promise to further conclude on the *institutional terrain* level. The unit of analysis in the empirical study is, thus, organisations. Consequently, when the results are summarised in light of the conclusions drawn from the synthesis of the literature, certain implications for the institutional terrain level are drawn. Nevertheless, these conclusions for the fourth level can by no means be taken as definitive or comprehensive, as any research on any of these levels requires different methodology designs.

Formal Organisation: What are the major implications for civil society ideals?

As the *civil sphere* theory articulates, the ideals of civil society are compromised under the necessities of reality, part of which is the unavoidability of the influence from the other spheres when translated into daily actions and events. Nevertheless, it remains obscured in what particular ways the translation of civil ideals becomes compromised/realised in the actions of civil society actors. In order to illuminate this black spot, the following paragraphs borrow insights from the organisation theory, in particular regarding the aspects of formal and informal organisations. Part of the reason for this was elaborated in the discussion of the symbiosis perspective in the literature and, in particular, the findings of case studies. The former has illustrated that in the evolution from the *conflictual* perspective to the *symbiosis* perspective, the approach has descended more and more from the macro level to the micro–organisational level. The latter exposed how informality is often treated as the facilitating input for civil society organisations in their relations with the state, though similarly, it received certain criticisms. Therefore, this research focuses on the realisation/compromising of civil society ideals at the organisational level. More specifically, the paragraphs below address the five different aspects of formal organisation²⁴ and look into how formal organisation can help both translate civil society ideals into reality and compromise them. The definitions provided for formal organisations almost uniformly underscore the coordination of action as its principal defining

²⁴ Organisation studies emerged on the basis of insights borrowed from diverse fields such as the scientific movement, social psychology, sociology, political science and economy (March & Simon, 1958). The early studies on organisations exclusively focused on the formal aspects of the organisation and explored how efficiently the organisation can achieve its objectives. Its roots are traced back to the works of Frederick Taylor, Harrington Emerson, and Henry Fayol (P. Michael Blau & Scott, 1962).

feature, as can be seen in the following classical examples: “*a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons*” (Barnard, 1938, p. 73), “*the orderly arrangement of group effort, to provide unity of action in the pursuit of a common purpose*” (Mooney & Reiley, 1931), “*a system in which men and capital are deliberately related for the accomplishment of some explicit purpose*” (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1967, p. 5), and “*primacy of orientation to the attainment of a specific goal*” (Parsons, 1960, p. 17). Blau and Scott point out similar elements—‘*specific ends*’, ‘*collective effort*’ and ‘*explicitly organised*’—as the key characteristics that define the formal organisation and distinguish it from other types of organisations that emerge in social interaction (1962, pp. 220–221). In his structure-function approach, Weiss proposes the organisation to consist of the following characteristics: individuals in offices, their functional activities—responsibility for the definite jobs assigned to them, an organisational goal, and *structure*—a stable system of coordinative relationships (Weiss, 1969, pp. 58–62).

These definitions, consequently, suggest that organising itself formally into an organisation is a strong demand, if not a necessity, before any joint action of individuals, which needs to be consistent, regular and long-term in its operation. Formal organisation-building can often result not only from the needs related to internal organisation but also from the pressuring demands of exchanges with the environment. Such a form of organisation provides a blueprint or a reference point for the actions of individuals by a stated goal, a set of functions and a coordination mechanism among them. Above all, building a formal organisation—that is, making a *formal commitment*—translates the ideals of civil society into a stated mission or goal and, thus, provides its civil forces at the organisation level. By formally establishing themselves, they also embed themselves within a wider set of state regulations. Such adherence not only legitimates guidelines benefiting the organization’s members but also guarantees their rights and representation, anchoring the organisation’s core mission. Similarly, formal commitment protects the organisations within society by regulating the relationship between the organisation and its environment. Nevertheless, such formal commitment also subjects the organisation to certain demands, for instance, bureaucratic reporting, that may compromise ideals in the case of civil society associations. These aspects that highlight the legal/normative embeddedness of the organisation within wider society are most pre-eminently discussed in Parson’s system approach (Parsons, 1960, pp. 36–37).

A more nuanced view of what formal organising means would better expose specifically what demands are upon civil society associations on the way of formally organising - *formal*

institutionalisation. In addition to the formal commitment, four different sub-elements of formal institutionalisation can be identified in the literature. These are *rationality* or *rationalisation*, *professionalisation* and *bureaucratisation*, and *hierarchy-building*. In other words, these are the four different processes or sub-processes that civil society associations in formal institutionalisation would go through. Although these processes concern internal capacity building, they do not happen in a vacuum; rather, they occur in exchange with the external environment—the point that most concerns the theoretical framework offered later below. Briefly reviewing each process would, thus, benefit our understanding of demands on civil society associations in formal institutionalisation.

Rationality or rationalisation. The problem of scarce resources produces two major concerns for organisations: efficiency and effectiveness, as suggested by Litterer (1963). Rationality is understood as the set of measurements to address both the questions of efficiency and effectiveness: simply put, it is how efficiently to use the available resources and how to achieve maximum output with minimum input. Thus, efficiency is understood as the allocation of resources to alternatives that produce the highest result (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1967, pp. 6–10). Argyris establishes effectiveness as the major orientation of the organisation. Accordingly, organisational effectiveness is achieved with i) increasing outputs with constant or decreasing inputs, or ii) constant outputs with decreasing inputs, while iii) all this is accomplished in a sustainable way (Argyris, 1964, p. 123). Similarly, Barnard identifies effectiveness and efficiency as the two major criteria for the continued existence of the organisation, by which the organisation maintains equilibrium both within and between itself and the environment (Barnard, 1938, pp. 82–83). Peter M. Blau and Scott (1962) define rational administration as a process that primarily entails a competent workforce rewarded measuredly in return for contribution, the goals of which are defined contractually (pp. 82-83). Thompson (1967) shows that even if the rationality of the organisation is always bounded, as suggested by Simon (1957), due to the indeterminate and uncertain nature of its environment, it still subjects itself to the criteria of rationality (Thompson, 1967, p. 10). Rationality is, thus, identified as one of the main characteristics that differentiate formal organisations from social or so-called organic organisations. While the former is based on beliefs and shared values, the latter is based on the need for efficiency (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1967, p. 140).

The major implications of rationalisation for civil society organisations can be, above all, the rigidity that the procedures of efficiency and effectiveness may bring to their financial

management and the flexibility with financing sources. Hence, strongly rationalised civil society organisations can be expected to possess little room for financial manoeuvre.

Professionalisation and *bureaucratisation* are another duality of institutional patterns that emerge within the organisation. Organisations tend to differentiate between the functions that require deep expertise in specific areas and those that do not, though a certain kind of training is also needed in the latter case. *Professionalisation* values the performance and qualities of individuals gained through long-term training and experience, and *bureaucratisation* is more administrative-oriented than *professionalisation* and characterised by a more hierarchic inclination and more direct control. (P. Michael Blau & Scott, 1962, pp. 60–63). Both are said to result from the division of jobs. So, the two concepts concern not only individual qualities but also, primarily, the differentiation of *functions* or *functional activities*—the responsibilities for definite jobs assigned to them (Weiss, 1969, pp. 58–62).

In light of the discussions above, it can be inferred that *professionalisation* and *bureaucratisation* offer two different potential consequences for civil society organisations. *Professionalisation* may inhibit the organisation's flexibility with external actors, as the growing number of *professionals* willing to act independently in the external environment to achieve their departmental goals may create difficulties for the leadership of civil society organisations in managing the organisation's external linkages.

Bureaucrats, unlike *professionals*, are not interested in the organisation's external relations. Hence, they would have no particular interest in influencing civil society organisations in this regard unless this concerns their financial stability. However, they are stability-oriented and, therefore, may create strong internal demand for the financial stability of the organisation, eventually not favouring changes that may distort their stability. Combined, their indifference, unlike *professionals*, to external relations and stability orientation may result in demands that do not discriminate between the financing sources. Last but not least, the growth of *bureaucrats* within the organisation, unlike *professionals*, could create a stronger demand for the deepening or expansion of *formal commitment*. Simply put, the large number of non-managerial staff would require the formalisation of commitments within the organisation to facilitate its smooth running.

Hierarchy. Once the division of jobs is set, there emerges a question of the authority, delegation and hierarchy, on which the existing literature contains extensive discussions. To be more precise, once the horizontal division of jobs is made, the vertical division of jobs becomes

unavoidable. This is because the horizontal division of jobs creates a need for coordination, supervision, direction, and motivation across the offices or departments (Joseph A. Litterer, 1963, pp. 65–66). The vertical division of jobs, in turn, comes with authority shared from the top to bottom. With the allocation of authority from the top down, a hierarchical structure emerges unavoidably. In other words, the scalar pillar or principle considers the formation of a hierarchical process through which a coordinating authority operates in the entire organisation (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1967, pp. 27–28). The literature, by and large, distinguishes two general levels within the hierarchical structure: line authority and staff authority. Line authority is defined as a type of relationship in which the functions of a position feature direct command over the other position. In contrast, staff authority is defined as one that does not feature any exercise of direct command but advises or counsels (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1967, p. 50). The hierarchy's consequences for civil society organisations result from the capacity it provides the organisational leadership with decision-making authority. In a dynamic environment, a flat hierarchy can obscure the organisation's quick navigation through challenges and opportunities. In contrast, a tall hierarchy, consolidating the decision-making authority in the hands of a few at the top, would provide the organisation with quick manoeuvring capacity. As can be immediately recognised, the implications of the formal organisation for civil society associations reflect the import of the characteristics of non-civil spheres—the market and the state, and hence, require the compromising of solidarity within. Nevertheless, their role can also be that of facilitating input, shedding civil society off, as discussed later below.

Colonisation of civil society associations through informal organisation

In the civil sphere theory, the colonisation of or destructive intrusion into the civil sphere by the other (uncivil) spheres is about the extension of the norms and agenda of the non-civil spheres through the civil sphere. When translated into the organisational level, such intrusions can be explained by the logic of informal organisations. For this reason, the following paragraphs elaborate upon the informal organisation, concluding with propositions on how the informal organisation may operate as the mechanism of *colonisation* for civil society organisations.

The organisation theory literature suggests that informal organisation is an unavoidable reality of organisations, emerging in parallel and, often but not necessarily always, in

contradiction to the formal one (W. G. Scott, pp. 17–21),²⁵ though disagreements also exist regarding the logical priority between them.²⁶ Philip Selznick²⁷ provides three core premises on the informal organisation. The first premise suggests that every organisation creates an informal structure. Secondly, it is proposed that in every organisation, the goals of the organisation, those which are stated in its formal missions, are modified by processes within the organisation. Modification can be in the form of abandoning, deflecting or elaborating. Thirdly, the process of modification is effected through the informal organisation (Selznick, 1957, p. 197). For Selznick, the formal organisation is the first order, out of which emerges the informal organisation (1966a, p. 39). Accordingly, it would strengthen the organisation if the members of the organisation accepted and pursued the organisational goals. Nevertheless, this can never be achieved to the fullest extent, and the formal organisation is always compromised (Selznick, 1966a, pp. 8–9). The ever-present nature of the informal organisation and it is often, if not always, contradiction to or divergence from the formal organisation—the latter, despite all its above-discussed

²⁵ The study of the informal organisation is traced back to the ‘Hawthorne studies’ of Elton Mayo published in 1933 (Close (1974, p. 443), while others find Barnard’s work influential in diverting scholarly attention to the informal organisation (Reif et al. (1973, p. 390). Furthermore, it is built on several key representations of early research on the informal organisation such as those conducted by Roethlisberger and Dickson (1941), Barnard (1938), W. Waller and W. Henderson (1940).

²⁶ For instance, Selznick’s view of organisations (1957) does not entirely overlap with these authors’ works. If there is a significant consistency between what his view on the organisations and those elaborated by Roethlisberger and Dickson (1941), there are some medium-significant differences when compared to Chester I. Barnard’s view (1938). For instance, if the informal organisation precedes the formal organisation in Barnard’s view, it emerges only with the onset of the formal organisation in Selznick’s view. In Barnard’s view, the informal organisation is less ‘organisation’ than in Selznick. In Barnard, the informal organisation is ‘the aggregate of the personal contacts and interactions and the associated groupings of people’. In Selznick, as it is elaborated below, the informal organisation is more than the mere sum of informal interaction among the members of the organisation. Among them, it is only Selznick that brings the concept of institutionalisation. For the sake of parsimony, these differences are not discussed here in detail.

²⁷ Philip Selznick is one of the early scholars who studied informal organisations within formal organisations and the relationship between formal and informal organisations. Although his writing on formal and informal organisations did not develop a theory in its full sense, it offers significant insights into the issue. His essay published in 1957, *Leadership in Administration*, which is still described as ‘a work of stature that has withstood the test of time’ (Terry, 1993), is taken as the major source for learning his ideas about the formal and informal organisations, supported his other writings. His writings in this book are mainly based on his preceding books *TVA and the grassroots: A study in the sociology of formal organisation* (1949) and *The Organisational Weapon* (1952). However, much of the contemporary literature is believed to underplay Selznick’s finding on the inner world of the organisation, in particular the interplay between the formal organisation and the informal organisation (Besharov & Khurana, 2015). Although in his work published in 1949, Selznick places the major emphasis on the origins of the informal organisation arising from the day-to-day running, in his later essay published in 1957, he employs a much broader focus on the informal organisation and its relation to the formal organisation.

compromising character, is oriented towards the achievement of the stated mission—also echoes well with the continuous compromising of civil society’s ideals. However, the interplay between the formal and informal organisation is elucidated later below. Before that, the rationale for the formation of informal organisations needs to be laid out in order to understand better how it may be related to formal organisations.

The reasons provided in the literature for the emergence of informal organisations within formal organisations are numerous, and formally organised civil society associations can be no exception in this. In Selznick, the failure of the formal organisation to account for all activities and situations within the organisation creates a space for the rise of the informal organisation. Thus, Selznick sees the major source of the informal organisation in the day-to-day tasks—‘operational goals’, as the formal organisation fail to address them relevantly (Selznick, 1943, p. 48). In a way supporting this, the source of the informal organisation was even found to be in interpersonal relations (Graham, 1971). The results of the study conducted on the informal organisation within the US Army (Anonymous, 1946) also support Selznick’s argument. S. Fisher (1965) demonstrates that not only gaps in the formal organisation but also its dysfunctions can create opportunities for the development of the informal organisation. Similarly, Carzo and Yanouzas treat what they call non-formal behaviour within the organisation as an unintended and unanticipated result which appears because of the dysfunction in the formal organisation (1967, pp. 117–118). The elements of the informal organisation (such as religious and ethnic divide) are also found to be imported from outside the organisation (from *uncivil spheres* in the case of civil society organisations), as evidenced by Hall (1946). An argument for the dysfunctionality of the formal organisation as a source for the informal organisation has also been substantiated in a study by Katz (1965), who posits that the narrow definition of tasks can cause disenfranchisement and grants a sphere of autonomy external to tasks but within the organisation. Furthermore, the limitations to rationality, as developed by Simon (1957), can also provide some explanation for the emergence of the informal organisation, as elaborated by Argyris (1973). Last but not least, Argyris discusses incongruences between the psychological needs of individuals and the demands of the formal organisation as one of the sources feeding the emergence of the informal organisation (1964). A similar view is also adopted by Mescon (1959, p. 35).

Drawing an analogy between the informal organisation and what he refers to as natural communities, Selznick also considers the development of administrative ideologies, the creation

and protection of elites, and the emergence of contending groups competing for dominance as part of the informal organisation. Over time, he argues, discernible and repetitive modes of responses to pressures coming both from inside and outside crystallise into a social structure—the informal organisation. This is to say that the informal organisation carries the baggage of history, reflecting the survival process through which the organisation has passed (Selznick, 1966a, pp. 13–15). This view is also consistent with the system approach in that a social structure is born out of the frequency and duration of interaction and sentiments of organisation members (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1967, p. 5). However, for Selznick, the emergence of the informal organisation is not only *historical* but also *functional* and *dynamic*. It is functional in that it aids the organisation to adapt itself to changing internal and external circumstances. It is dynamic in that it generates energy within the organisation, potentially causing conflicts (Selznick, 1966a, pp. 39–40).

These foregoing discussions suggest that, like any other organisations, civil society associations taking a formal shape will inevitably host also informal organisation that emerges from the limitations of the formal organisation in addressing all activities and situations, interpersonal relationships, and possible dysfunctions within the formal structure. There is no reason to think that these arguments may apply little to no to civil society associations. Rather, the opposite can be the case. The social orientation (rather than material and power compared to the state and the market) of civil society organisations could make them more vulnerable to the emergence of informal organisations within. In light of the discussion above, the existence of informal organisations within civil society associations means that the ideal mission and goals stipulated in their formal structures will invariably be modified, deflected, or elaborated upon by the informal processes within the association as a result of the reasons listed above. Furthermore, the existence of informal organisations within civil society associations can lead to the creation and protection of elite groups, the emergence of contending interest groups, and the development of administrative ideologies that would incrementally drive the organisation away from formally established ideals. These elements, while informal, may play a significant role in shaping the identity and culture of the association, thereby influencing its real-world functioning.

Formal institutionalisation shields civil society from informal institutionalisation

So far, this section *first* highlighted how the formal organisation may cause the compromising of civil society ideals, opening the door to the flow of elements of the other spheres through the civil sphere, and *second* demonstrated how the informal organisation—the

unavoidable reality of the organisational life—may further contribute to the colonisation of civil society organisation, facilitating the reproduction of the *uncivil* elements within civil society organisations. In turn, the following paragraphs aim to shed light on the interplay between formal and informal organisations with a focus on how the formal organisation can shield off civil society ideals. As stated earlier, the moderating role of the formal organisation is double-edged. More concretely, the succeeding conceptual analysis demonstrates how the formal organisation can protect civil society associations from external intrusions or deviations made through the informal organisation.

While the formal and informal organisations are the outcomes, the processes bearing them can be referred to as *formal* and *informal institutionalisation*. *Formal institutionalisation* is, thus, understood here as the process of establishing and deepening formal organisation, while *informal institutionalisation* indicates the same for informal organisation. *Formal institutionalisation* may also seem to involve the internalisation of the formally established norms, which would mean the strengthening of compliance with the formal organisation. However, it can rarely be so without further modification in practice to the formally articulated ones. This becomes particularly visible when the discussions on the reasons for the emergence of the informal organisation are recalled from the paragraphs above. Hence, at any ultimate end, *informal institutionalisation* is expected to yield modification to the formal organisation or divergence from it, though possibly to varying degrees.²⁸

Whether the inputs into *informal institutionalisation* are always external, either directly or indirectly, or can also be internal remains a question of debate between those favouring the *generative* school and those the *reproductive* school in the literature (1987, pp. 444–447). Far from solving this question here, attention is paid to the former approach to illuminate the potential role of formal institutionalisation against external colonisation within civil society organisations through informal organisation. In this view, through the embodiment of values of

²⁸ These concepts have been used often in slightly varying meanings. Richard W. Scott (2014) identifies three pillars of institutions – regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. Accordingly, regulative institutions concern rules which are formally and legally created and imposed through rewards and punishment mechanisms (R. W. Scott, 2014, pp. 59–60). In contrast, the normative institutions include legally or formally non-binding, normative rules that emerge in social life (R. W. Scott, 2014, pp. 64–66). In the third pillar, the cognitive dimensions of human existence are stressed. Thus, cultural-cognitive institutions are understood as shared conceptions which defines the nature of social reality and set the frames for the creation of meaning (R. W. Scott, 2014, p. 67) . The phenomena that Selznick refers to merely as *institutionalisation* concerns the second and third pillars of institutions identified by Scott, according to Besharov and Khurana (2015).

the outer world, the organisation thus becomes informally *institutionalised* (Selznick, 1966a, p. 20). Similarly, Katz (1965) sees organisation members as carriers of the cultural environment surrounding the organisation. Zooming out from individual members of the organisation and slightly moderating but still confirming Selznick's argument, Goffman questions the clear-cut understanding of the boundary relationship between the organisation and its social context, suggesting that every organisation is surrounded by a 'semi-permeable membrane' (Peter M. Blau & Scott, 1962, p. 195). In contrast, the internalisation of the formal organisation by organisation members, imbued with peer control, would strengthen the functioning of the formal organisation and, thus, weaken the informal organisation or prevent it from further growth (Peter M. Blau, 1963, p. 63). Argyris similarly names training and indoctrination among the mechanisms of organisational influence (Argyris, 1965a, pp. 102–103).

These discussions imply the following. *Formal institutionalisation* provides thus a constant source of reference within the organisation against the inclinations to modify the formally set missions, goals and rules or diverge from them, which results from their continuous reproduction within the organisation under the conditions of imperfectness (of the formal organisation) and external intrusions.

For civil society organisations, Selznick's concept of informal institutionalisation serves as a pivotal intersection where formal institutional values merge with not only internally produced informal patterns but also external societal norms. This confluence can be integral for CSOs, which often operate at the crossroads of social justice, human rights, and prevalent societal and cultural norms. How these organizations navigate this interplay might, thus, crucially shape their effectiveness and credibility.

Members of CSOs often import societal and cultural values from their communities into the organization, which can have a dual impact. On the one hand, it can enrich the organizational culture by integrating diverse perspectives that align with and strengthen the organization's mission and ideals. Conversely, this amalgamation can result in conflicts between the organization's ideals and the personal beliefs of its members. Whether civil society organisations can indeed form what Goffman refers to as a 'semi-permeable membrane'—a selective barrier around themselves—may, at least, partly depend on their formal institutionalisation. Similarly, such boundary management, which is fundamental for CSOs to remain true to their ideals stated in the formal organisation while also being adaptive and responsive to societal shifts and demand, requires deep-reaching formal institutionalisation, too. Only such formal institutionalisation—

more concretely speaking, well-established five major aspects, could guarantee that the civil society organisation's actions and decisions are consistently aligned with its ideals and objectives, thereby safeguarding its integrity and mission.

Nevertheless, as discussed at the beginning of this section—those major facets of the formal organisation identified, along the lines of which *formal institutionalisation* functions—could also have a strong impact on the interplay between the ideals of the civil society organisation and demands of reality on it. Hence, one cannot draw one-sided conclusions on the implications of formal institutionalisation on civil society ideas. As said earlier, it is double-edged. On the one hand, as the discussions above suggest, formal institutionalisation fences off informal institutionalisation, which is the source of deviation from the ideals. On the other hand, the same elements of formal institutionalisation—*rationalisation*, *professionalisation* and *bureaucratisation*, *hierarchy-building*, and *formal commitment*—require the compromising of the ideals.

From the independence of the civil sphere to the autonomy of civil society organisations

What appears to be the independence of the civil sphere from other spheres in the *civil sphere* theory has no chance but to evolve into the question of *autonomy* when translated into the organisation level. The discussions on the four perspectives identified in the literature have already pointed out how the focus shifts from the sphere level in the conflictual perspective to the organisation level in the *symbiosis* perspective. While it is possible to talk about *independence* at a higher level of abstraction, at the organisation level, one can only talk about the *autonomy* of the organisation, as it would hardly be possible to talk about the modern organisation anything but its exchange with the environment and the resulting interdependencies. Hence, the translation of the *civil sphere* into the organisation level requires a similar conceptual shift. To this end, the discussions below explore how the concept of autonomy can be utilised in relation to civil society organisations.

As already said at the beginning of this section, the concept of autonomy can be found across different strands of literature. However, given the micro-perspective on civil society in this study, the following paragraphs extract insights from the organisation theory on the question

of autonomy²⁹. Although one substantial review of the literature suggests the lack of sufficient convergence in the conceptualisation of the concept of autonomy in the literature (Arregle et al., 2023), certain general boundaries of the common understanding that exist in the literature can be drawn. Garnier (1982, p. 893), for instance, defines *autonomy* as “*the division of the decision-making authority between a local unit and an outside organisation that controls it*” (Garnier, 1982: 893). Similarly, maintaining the authority to make decisions within the organisation (or of its unit) is a key attribute of autonomy in Inkson et al. (1970, p. 328). Pennings (1976, p. 690) defines autonomy in terms of the “*discretionary power of an organization with respect to elements of its environment.*” Pugh et al. (1969, p. 108) bring an additional nuance by implicitly recognising the scalability of autonomy and, second, its relativeness when they define autonomy as “*the proportion of decisions that could be taken within the organisation as distinct from those which had to be taken at the level above it*”.

Ranft and Lord (2002) enrich our understanding of autonomy by differentiating between strategic autonomy, functional autonomy, and symbolic or cultural autonomy. Others also propose similar differentiations (Datta & Grant, 1990; P. S. Davis et al., 1992; Lumpkin et al., 2009; Vera et al., 2016). Although such differentiations are significant in terms of detailing the varying significance of different aspects over which the organisation may maintain its autonomy, the division among them may not be as clear-cut as they suggest (Arregle et al., 2023). A deficiency in operational autonomy may undermine an organization's capacity to determine its strategic objectives, known as strategic autonomy. Conversely, the absence of strategic autonomy can be substantially, if not wholly, offset by the liberty to manage daily operations autonomously.

One shared characteristic among the discussed definitions of autonomy is that none of them problematizes interdependence, whether in terms of resources or otherwise, between the organisation and its environment or a parent unit at a higher level of hierarchy as part of the concept. Rather, the multiplicity of interdependent ties between the organisation and its environment was established as one of the major sources of the organisation's social capital (see,

²⁹ The question of autonomy has been addressed at least at three levels within the organisation theory literature: individual autonomy – the autonomy of the individual within the organisation (see, e.g., Heldal and Dehlin (2021); Öberg and Wockelberg (2021)), organisational autonomy – the autonomy of units within the organisation (see, e.g., Arregle et al. (2023)) and the inter-organisational autonomy – the autonomy between the organisation and its environment (see, e.g., Arvidson and Linde (2021)). The discussions that follow will address inter-organizational autonomy, or the autonomy from external influences, particularly from the state.

e.g., Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Moreover, being adaptive to the demands of the environment and in constant exchange with it is considered to be one of the key prerequisites not only for the survival of the organisation, whether this adaption is part of the routine work leaving the overall character structure of the organisation unchanged or an effort to address an extraordinary challenge to it (Selznick, 1966a, pp. 33–34).

In a rare study deploying the organisation theory literature to explain the autonomy of civil society organisations from the foreign funding that comes with strings attached, Arvidson and Linde (2021) argue that discretion—a degree of freedom enjoyed under certain control the boundaries of which are defined by rules, standards and norm—can help construct autonomy in such cases. However, such an approach seeks to construct autonomy within individual relations between the organisation and an external agent. The underlying assumption in this view, thus, suggests that the exchange between the organisation and the environment, in this case, external funders, need not be understood as the loss of autonomy if the existing discretionary space still allows for self-determining. Pursuing a similar line of argumentation, Xiao (2018) demonstrates in the case of a Chinese non-profit organisation that through the differentiation of roles of managers at the higher and mid-levels of the echelon, it is possible to bridge the divide between governmental control and organisational autonomy.

At the general level, one can consider how the availability of different discretionary spaces would allow for a broader understanding of autonomy. With every new relationship added, the organisation may, thus, gain a larger capacity to influence the setting of the boundaries of the discretionary space in individual relationships unless all relationships are strictly coordinated from a single source. The discussions of the country cases in the preceding sections, in particular in the case of Russia, have already pointed out how the discrepancies at different levels of governance, as well as between different governmental structures, play out in authoritarian contexts. Moreover, it has also been found that authoritarian governments pursue not one-size-fits-all but differentiated policies, even floating ones. It is such an environment that makes the strict coordination of discretions in individual relationships impossible, creating, thus, wider room for manoeuvre—*strategic flexibility*—for civil society organisations vis-à-vis not only the state in general but individual external actors, be they governmental, foreign, business or other societal actors. The concept of embedded autonomy offered in the literature is thus intended to capture such a complex phenomenon. Nevertheless, what is largely overlooked in this regard and what can already be concluded from the discussions above is the dynamic nature

of such autonomy. Hence, its embeddedness also creates a certain dynamism in the extent and content of autonomy enjoyed by civil society organisations.

Such an understanding of autonomy, thus, does not see any particular cooperative relation of civil society organisations with the state as a threat to its autonomy but the lack of sufficient diversity in the total of relations a civil society organisation possesses or failure on the side of the civil society organisation to carve out a discretionary space. Diversity of ties and their strategic deployment in the pursuit of broader discretionary space, combined, is, hence, key to the autonomy of civil society organisations. As already discussed in the *civil sphere* theory, the *co-optation by the state* and *transnationalisation* are two broader categories of such ties potentially counterbalancing each other. Hence, within the above-defended understanding of autonomy, it becomes possible to accommodate both *co-optation by the state* and *transnationalisation*—the expansion of the ties of civil society organisations beyond the national boundaries and, thus, out of the reach of the authoritarian states under whose power they operate, simultaneously.

Autonomy as the accommodation of co-optation by the state and transnationalisation

The way Selznick defines the concept of *co-optation* further facilitates the possibility of accommodating both *co-optation by the state* and *transnationalisation* under the roof of, or in congruence with, *autonomy*. Accordingly, *co-optation* refers to the “*process through which new elements are absorbed into the leadership or policy-determining structures of the organisation to ward off threats to the stability or existence of the organisation*”. For Selznick, *co-optation* is a strategic instrument for political and administrative purposes and more effective than coercion as the latter’s endurance can be limited. *Co-optation* enables, accordingly, the environment of the co-opter to bring about changes in the leadership, structure, or policy of the organisation. However, the governing or initiating group does not transfer actual power. Yet, *co-optation*, which is a type of adaptive response, also brings about changes in the co-opting organisation. By making a certain commitment to the co-opted, the co-opter introduces some rules or limitations to the choices available to it (Selznick, 1949, pp. 10-13). When appropriate for civil society-authoritarian state relations, this view recognises a chance for the former to influence the latter, as the state itself becomes subject to certain constraints in this relationship. Similarly, Peter M. Blau and Scott (1962, p. 197) defend that not only the co-opted but also the co-opter define and re-define their goals in this process. Following a similar line of argument, Thompson identifies *co-optation* as one of the cooperative strategies positioned between cooperation and coalescing.

The motivation on the side of the initiator—that is, the state in the case here—is to adapt their environments to its own demands and, thus, reduce uncertainty and, thus, a type of symbiotic relationship (1967, pp. 32–37).

Similarly, the understanding of *autonomy* defended above also allows the accommodation of *transnationalisation* of civil society organisations, which, as discussed earlier, can be similarly double-edged and carry risks similar to the ones rendered by the co-optation by the state. On the one hand, foreign funding is evidenced to enable independent civic activism (Salmenniemi, 2007, p. 28) and serve the diversification of the origins of organizational resources (Falkenhain, 2020), with the clear goal of maintaining a distance from the state (Tai, 2015, pp. 4–5). Nevertheless, transnational ties may produce, as suggested, a new relationship of dependency between civil society actors and foreign actors with whom they engage (Dana, 2015, p. 207) or come with certain strings attached that instrumentalise the local civil society (Datzberger & Nguyen, 2018). However, contra-arguments can also be found in the literature (see, e.g., Arvidson & Linde, 2021).

Beyond accommodating both transnationalisation and co-optation by the state individually, the understanding of *autonomy* advocated above also allows their simultaneous accommodation by civil society organisations. Hence, the organisational autonomy of civil society is not necessarily lost, though constrained and reconstituted, when subject to co-optation by the state or contingent ties with foreign actors. Rather, it is better served when civil society organisations possess multiple ties, allowing them to carve out a broader discretionary space.

Lastly, the understanding of autonomy defended above can be considered in at least two dimensions. By drawing on the literature review part, in particular the discussions on the Russian and Turkish cases, the present research identifies financial linkages and institutional or network linkages as two major dimensions on which civil society organisations build ties to transnational actors and the authoritarian state of the hosting country. Particularly, the Russian case showed that financing is a major tool for authoritarian control over civil society organisations. Both cases also demonstrated how different networks established or operated by government agencies serve as arenas for the co-optations of civil society organisations. Similarly, financing and network membership are the major, though not necessarily the only, dimensions of exchange between civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes and their transnational partners. These two dimensions are by no means the only ones. However, in terms of resources and institutional access, they carry particular significance.

5.5. Autonomy served by the diffused effect of formal institutionalisation.

Two major general propositions can be drawn from the discussions in the preceding section. First, formal institutionalisation is demonstrated to potentially have a diffused effect on civil society organisations. Second, such a diffused effect may have implications for their autonomy. The current section aims to summarise the discussions in the preceding section and eventually boil them down to specific hypotheses that are tested in this research.

Diffused effect of formal institutionalisation

As argued, formal institutionalisation may function as a shield against informal institutionalisation, on the one hand, and as a moderator of civil society claims on the other. Further elaborating on them would help better establish the proposed diffused effect of formal institutionalisation. Three arguments can be put forward for the former function. The first argument concerns how informal institutionalisation can compromise civil society ideals within authoritarian regimes. The primary danger with the informal institutionalisation of civil associations within non-democratic regimes lies in the possibility of the reproduction of the external non-democratic culture, attitudes and interests, or what Alexander defines as *primordial* qualities, within civil society organisations, through which the influence of the state, but not only that of it, can flow in. This line of argumentation about the reproduction of authoritarian tendencies within civil society organisations—which are not only among those which are state-sponsored but also among those which have significant detachment from the state—was captured in the literature as the political culture argument (Helliker, 2012; Kagoro, 2005; D. Lewis, 2013; Wischermann, Bunk, et al., 2016; Wischermann, Cuong, & Phuong, 2016). Although informal institutionalisation is not completely avoidable, as discussed earlier, formal institutionalisation reduces informal institutionalisation that would arise in the absence of the latter. Hence, against this danger, formal institutionalisation brings formal regulation, which is embedded in the law, to the actions of individuals within the organisation and ties them to the formally committed goals within civil associations.

Second, formal institutionalisation also legitimises civil society organisations vis-à-vis the state and their wider audiences. By formally establishing themselves, civil society organisations gain formal references to the law. Formal regulations and formal goals become the manifestations at the organisational level of whatever civil ideals exist within the law of the

country. It is through such a nominal manifestation of civil ideals that formal institutionalisation may provide civil society organisations with a certain shield against the unlawful interventions of the state, even though this cannot fully protect them. A recent case study on civil society in Burundi confirms that civil society organisations which possess stronger organisational legitimacy (regulatory, normative and cognitive) are less likely to be targeted by the regime than those with less organisational legitimacy (Poppellwell, 2018; Vu, 2019, p. 433), which is also in line with the understanding of legitimacy for civil society organisations as “lawful, admissible and justified” offered by Edwards (2000).

Last but not least, formal institutionalisation can be salient for the widening of organisational ties and the successful exercise of strategic flexibility through them. Hence, formal institutionalisation can be expected to provide the necessary capacity to transcend national boundaries and engage with highly institutionalised transnational civil spheres, too. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the relevant literature having a consensus regarding the predisposition of authoritarian regimes to erecting obstacles to the formation of formalised civil society organisations (Albrecht, 2005; Appe et al., 2019; Hildebrandt, 2013; Moser & Skripchenko, 2018; Wu & Chan, 2012, p. 10; Yuanfeng, 2015).

In contrast to the former function, the *moderating function* of formal institutionalisation on civil society organisations considers the compromise of civil society ideals and claims. Through the terms such *NGOization* (Ishkhanian, 2014; Wischermann, Cuong, & Phuong, 2016) and *professionalisation* (Busuleanu, 2014; Hahn-Fuhr & Worschech, 2014; Henderson, 2002), a small strand of literature addresses this function of formal institutionalisation literature. It can also be argued that, nevertheless, such moderation to civil society ideals or claims may also contribute to the right balance between mission and survival, preventing them from pursuing a radical policy for the former at the cost of the latter (Tai, 2015). It must be, then, at least partly due to such an effect of formal institutionalisation that often members of civil society organisations are treated as informed experts rather than as independent voices (Aasland et al., 2016; Aasland et al., 2020, p. 425; Abdel-Samad, 2017; Bogdanova et al., 2018; Kanti Bandyopadhyay, 2013, p. 648). Moreover, formal institutionalisation can also make civil society organisations subject to specific formal regulations dictated by the state, thus facilitating the control of the state over them.

Implications for the autonomy of civil society organisations

Having established in the previous sections the diffused effect of formal institutionalisation on civil society organisation, embedded within a macro perspective offered by the *civil sphere* theory as an analytical framework, the current section puts forward specific propositions on how different aspects of formal institutionalisation may affect the autonomy of civil society organisations. However, given the lack of sufficient studies relevant to the stated question, the hypotheses proposed below are drawn partly from the general logic behind the discussions on formal institutionalisation and the general implications of it for civil society organisations suggested in Section 5.4 and partly intuitively based on common sense. Hence, the proposed hypotheses build on several broad assumptions³⁰.

The first of such assumptions is that different aspects of formal institutionalisation distinguished—*formal commitment*, *bureaucratisation*, *professionalisation*, *hierarchy*, and *rationalisation*—have varying relevance for the two dimensions of autonomy identified earlier—financial and institutional. The allocation of these aspects of formal institutionalisation along the dimensions of autonomy is as follows: *rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation*, and *hierarchy* are considered relevant for autonomy in the financial dimension, while *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* are relevant for autonomy in the institutional dimension. Such differentiation of the direct relevance of different aspects of formal institutionalisation to financial and institutional autonomy is based on their differing natures. *Rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* are more directly connected to the criteria of efficiency and effectiveness and, in general, the decision-making process. These are the factors that are essential for the management of resources and, hence, fundamental to achieving and maintaining financial autonomy, particularly in the authoritarian context where funding sources are scarce and used as levers of control.

In contrast, *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* are assumed to have higher relevance for the organisation's institutionalised ties with its environment. Thus, the general logic lies in the internal versus external focus of these groups of variables. To reiterate, these assumptions have no support beyond the justification provided below, the discussions on these aspects provided in Section 5.3 and the data supporting it, as no similar research has ever been

³⁰ In the literature review, only two studies that explicitly deploys insights from the organisation theory have been identified: Arvidson and Linde (2021); Xiao (2018). Both address the question of autonomy. No study addressing the consequences of formal institutionalisation for civil society organisations from the organisation theory perspective has been identified. Though, there exist a number of studies generally addressing the issue under the terms of *NGOization* Ishkhanian (2014); Wischermann, Cuong, and Phuong (2016) and *professionalisation* Busuleanu (2014); Hahn-Fuhr and Worschech (2014); Henderson (2002).

conducted in the case of civil society organisations under authoritarian rule and in a way relevant to the conceptualisation of autonomy in this context. In this sense, these assumptions themselves can offer new questions for future research. Subsequently, the hypotheses about the relationships proposed below are not necessarily pinned down to the strong defence of any particular explanation rooted in the literature. Instead, a number of potential explanations are provided in defence of effect below. Hence, these hypotheses are there to advance the arguments about the effects of independent variables over dependent variables, which are consequently put to the test. It is in the light of the empirical results to follow that the value of future research on the specification of explanations for the accounted effects can be seen.

To start with, the logic of the relevance of *rationalisation* for financial autonomy is very direct. As the discussion of *rationalisation* showed, the concept concerns the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. Even though the first intuition may suggest a positive impact of *rationalisation* over the financial autonomy of civil society organisations, careful thinking can suggest differently. The drive to achieve such autonomy—to balance between transnational funding and state funding, to put it more concretely—is a politically or normatively motivated act and, therefore, may not be subject to efficiency and effectiveness considerations. Rather, such a drive could often require compromising efficiency and effectiveness considerations. The clash between the drive or motivation for autonomy and concerns about efficiency and effectiveness can be particularly true for authoritarian regimes where the state pressure and offer of financial co-optation is prevalent, as the earlier discussions evidenced. Or, from a reverse perspective, civil society organisations under authoritarian rule may need to compromise the efficiency and effectiveness criteria in order to navigate the political and normative complexities serving their financial autonomy.

Moreover, rationalisation, or the achievement of efficiency and effectiveness, often involves standardisation. However, such a practice would bring rigidity to the manoeuvring capacity of civil society organisations. The nimbleness needed to shift between different funding sources to maintain the balance demanded for autonomy in the authoritarian context can thus be overwritten by strong rationalisation.

More specifically, the cost-benefit analysis inherent in rationalisation might take organisations to favour certain funding sources, be it the state or certain transnational ones, over others based solely on efficiency, risking autonomy. There is no doubt that in order to compete with transnational funding, the authoritarian state might choose to make its own funding administratively simpler and more cost-effective to manage than transnational funding, and

often, transnational funding could come with more complex reporting requirements or conditions.

Rationalisation can also invite optimal resource allocation, which can lead civil society organisations to seek stable and predictable funding. For the reasons just provided above, state funding can prevail as a more viable option in this case. In short, rationalisation can lead to a transactional view of funding relationships, narrowing the focus on the utility of funding and, therefore, resulting in the ignorance of the loss of autonomy under state interference in the long term. In light of these considerations, the first hypothesis proposes:

H_{1a}: The rationalisation of civil society organisations negatively relates to their financial autonomy manifested in the balance between transnational funding and government funding.

Similarly, *bureaucratisation*—that is, the growing share of non-managerial staff, or if to put in the right terminology, the *line staff*, in the total—may have negative implications on financial autonomy. The presence of a large bureaucratic staff would create a constant need for their survival within the organisation. Hence, it may also not be subject to the political or normative motivation of striking the right balance between transnational funding and state funding. In other words, a large bureaucracy, which is more loyal to the organisation than *professionals*—the managerial staff who have larger freedom to move out, as suggested in the previous section, engenders an inherent need for funding stability, which might be more readily available through state channels than transnational ones or whichever can be gained easily.

A large *line of staff* can also create strong resistance within the organisation to the quick shifts in funding sources and eventually create inertia within the organisation. This reliance could diminish the organisation's capacity to maintain financial autonomy through the delicate act of balancing between transnational and state funding. Maintaining the staff can, thus, emerge as a strong drive, prevailing over considerations of autonomy and contributing to the rigidity in the organisation's strategy for autonomy. Such a risk-averse culture that *bureaucratisation* sustains eventually might lead to mission drift—the failure to balance between the necessities of reality and civil society ideals or claims, as the earlier discussions on *bureaucratisation* in Section 5.4 articulated. All these considerations eventually imply:

H_{1b}: The bureaucratisation of civil society organisations negatively relates to their financial autonomy manifested in the balance between transnational funding and government funding.

In contrast, *hierarchy* can positively affect the financial autonomy of civil society organisations as it structures roles and leaves the decision-making to a few—streamlined decision-making. Hence, the political or normative drive to maintain the balance between transnational and state funding, which requires, as argued earlier, certain strategic flexibility, can be better exercised within a group of a few who have a voice over the decision-making rather than a large audience with more or less equal role. Moreover, a hierarchical organisational structure may be better positioned to resist state pressure to conform to governmental funding preferences both within and outside the organisation. Moreover, hierarchical organisations can better centralise decision-making on funding and, hence, safeguard against different units or departments that may pursue their own funding agendas. Hence, it can be hypothesised that:

H_{1c}: The range of hierarchy levels within civil society organisations positively relates to their financial autonomy manifested in the balance between transnational funding and government funding.

In its turn, *institutional autonomy*—that is, autonomy achieved through the balance between the ties to the transnational and government-controlled networks—can be expected to be served by a different set of formal institutionalisation aspects—the two remaining of the identified aspects, *formal commitment* and *professionalisation*.

Professionalisation—that is, the differentiation of different expertise functions within the organisation—can negatively affect institutional autonomy for several potential reasons. First, it might have this negative effect due to the diverging departmental motivations and agendas, potentially reducing the chances for agile steering of the leadership towards institutional autonomy. Departments might seek different external alliances for support and validation, including those with state bodies, thereby reducing institutional autonomy. Wider-ranging departments or units might also contribute to the complexity of management, shrinking the organisation's flexibility, which is key to striking the right balance between the ties to transnational actors and the state. The discussions on the formal organisation in Section 5.3 have already highlighted the disloyalty of professionals, unlike bureaucrats. Professionalisation—the differentiation of expertise functions—can thus create opportunities for individual members to pursue their specialisation-related objectives, diluting the organisational mission and eventually distracting them from the organisational goal of autonomy. For the same reason, professionalising members of civil society organisations may be risk-averse and, therefore, act as internal disrupters or “naysayers” before the leadership aiming to strategically balance the ties to different external actors at the cost of the interests of these professionals.

H_{2a}: Professionalisation within civil society organisations negatively relates to the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations manifested in the balance between the ties to transnational and government networks.

In turn, *formal commitment*, as articulated earlier, can help maintain the translation of the civil force of law into the intra-organisational context and, thus, empower members of the organisation, enabling the varying motivations for institutional ties to manifest, while the lack of it may leave a larger room for the exercise of informal power or authority with a preference for transnational or state affiliations. *Formal commitment* includes legal obligations and contractual relationships and, therefore, can bolster the integrity of civil society organisations, making them less susceptible to external pressures, including those from the state, thus supporting institutional autonomy. Besides, establishing strong formal commitment within civil society organisations can confer greater legitimacy on them. Such legitimacy is double-faceted. It can be internal among members of the organisation and external in the organisation's relation with the wider society and the state, even though this legitimacy can often be disrespected. In short, legitimacy bestowed by *formal commitment* can contribute to the solidifying of the position of civil society organisations vis-à-vis the state, although authoritarian states might frequently overstep it.

Furthermore, as argued above in the discussions on the formal vs informal organisation interplay, cementing commitments formally can help civil society organisations reduce the informal influence, often personal, that may skew towards particular interests. Internal *formal commitment* might also help mitigate the overstepping of roles and unjust interference in decision-making and, thus, enable the leadership to steer better towards the autonomy of the organisation. Last but not least, establishing *formal commitment* can help make relations with the state more predictable, though it would also open the door for more administrative or regulatory influence of the state. These potential explanations provide the following hypothesis:

H_{2b}: Establishing formal commitment within civil society organisations relates positively to the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations manifested in the balance between the ties to transnational and government networks.

From a theoretical perspective, independent of the authoritarian context, *formal commitment* itself can be determined by other aspects of formal institutionalisation. At least two aspects of formal institutionalisation that can contribute to the establishment of formal commitment can be identified. *Bureaucratisation* can eventually demand formalising the governance structure within the organisation through legal obligations and contractual relationships. Simply put, this would help avoid unregulated spots that create room for

uncertainty from which the informal organisation disrupting the organisational objectives may arise, including the potential for conflicts. Similarly, the growing levels of *hierarchy* can, thus, be expected to demand the formalisation of commitment within the organisation. The logic behind this is that the larger the line staff and the higher the hierarchy, the more the need for formally pinning down the relationship within the organisation and between the organisation and its environment, as it brings committed regulation and certainty.

Although these two relationships may not be exclusively specific to civil society in authoritarian contexts and rather reflect the general dynamics within the organisation, the significance of entering these two determinants of formal commitment is that they, thus, can be seen as the indirect determinants of the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes. Simply put, it eventually means that the latter two factors influence institutional autonomy through formal commitment. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H_{3a}: Bureaucratisation positively relates to the formal commitment within civil society organisations.

H_{3b}: The range of the hierarchy levels positively relates to the formal commitment within civil society organisations.

Lastly, all the hypothesised relationships above are expected to differ according to the authoritarian quality of the regime—how authoritarian the regime is. In the present study, this argument is tested by comparing the Russian and Turkish cases, as the former represents a hardliner autocracy, while the latter is an example of a moderate autocracy.

The theoretical framework proposed throughout the discussions above and visualised in Figure 6 *Visualisation of the Proposed Theoretical Framework*. below aspires to explore the intricate relationship between the organisational dynamics and autonomy of civil society organisations under authoritarian rule. When taken together, the proposed framework evokes one foundational premise that the internal organisational dynamics of civil society organisations interplay with the authoritarian context and can variously determine their autonomy. One major potential implication of the proposed theoretical framework for the literature is that it offers a new explanation for the autonomy of civil society organisations, an alternative to the ones found in the literature. Overall, the literature offers two general categories of explanations for the autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes. First, the agency-based explanations see the independence of civil society organisations as embedded in the agency of actors. Second, the structure-based explanations treat the broader societal factors, above all, but not only the political regime, as the determinants of the independence of civil society. While the

agency-based explanations mostly address the lowest level of the macro-micro linkage offered at the beginning of Section 5.4 and in Figure 5 above, the structure-based explanations are positioned partly on the sphere and partly on the institutional terrain levels, leaving behind a void at the organisational level. Though not necessarily contradicting these two broad categories of explanations, the proposed theoretical framework establishes a mid-level explanation by taking an organisational focus and translating the question of independence into the question of the autonomy of civil society organisations.

In doing so, it contributes to the already emerging organisational focus within the identified *symbiosis* perspective in the literature. Secondly, by further developing the concept of autonomy, the proposed theoretical framework aspires to transcend the understanding of independence found in the literature that views cooperation with the state as unquestionably compromising while neglecting to see the potential of dependence of civil society organisations on transnational cooperation. The way *autonomy is conceptualised here* advocates that it is not interdependency with the environment as such but rather the limited diversity of ties and the lack of strategic balancing among them that can compromise the autonomy of civil society organisations. Finding a delicate equilibrium, above all, between transnational and state funding and affiliations emerges, thus, as a bulwark preserving the autonomy of civil society organisations. This balance is particularly poignant in the context of authoritarian states, where the nuances of regime quality—from the hardliner to the moderate—can significantly modulate the interplay between organisational structures and autonomy. Generally, the hypotheses proposed—though speculative in the absence of directly relevant empirical and conceptual backing—serve as beacons guiding the empirical inquiries here, raising more questions than the answers proposed. Thus, the theoretical framework laid forth invites a scholarly examination that peer into the interstices of organisational dynamics and their implications for the autonomy of civil society organisations under authoritarian rule.

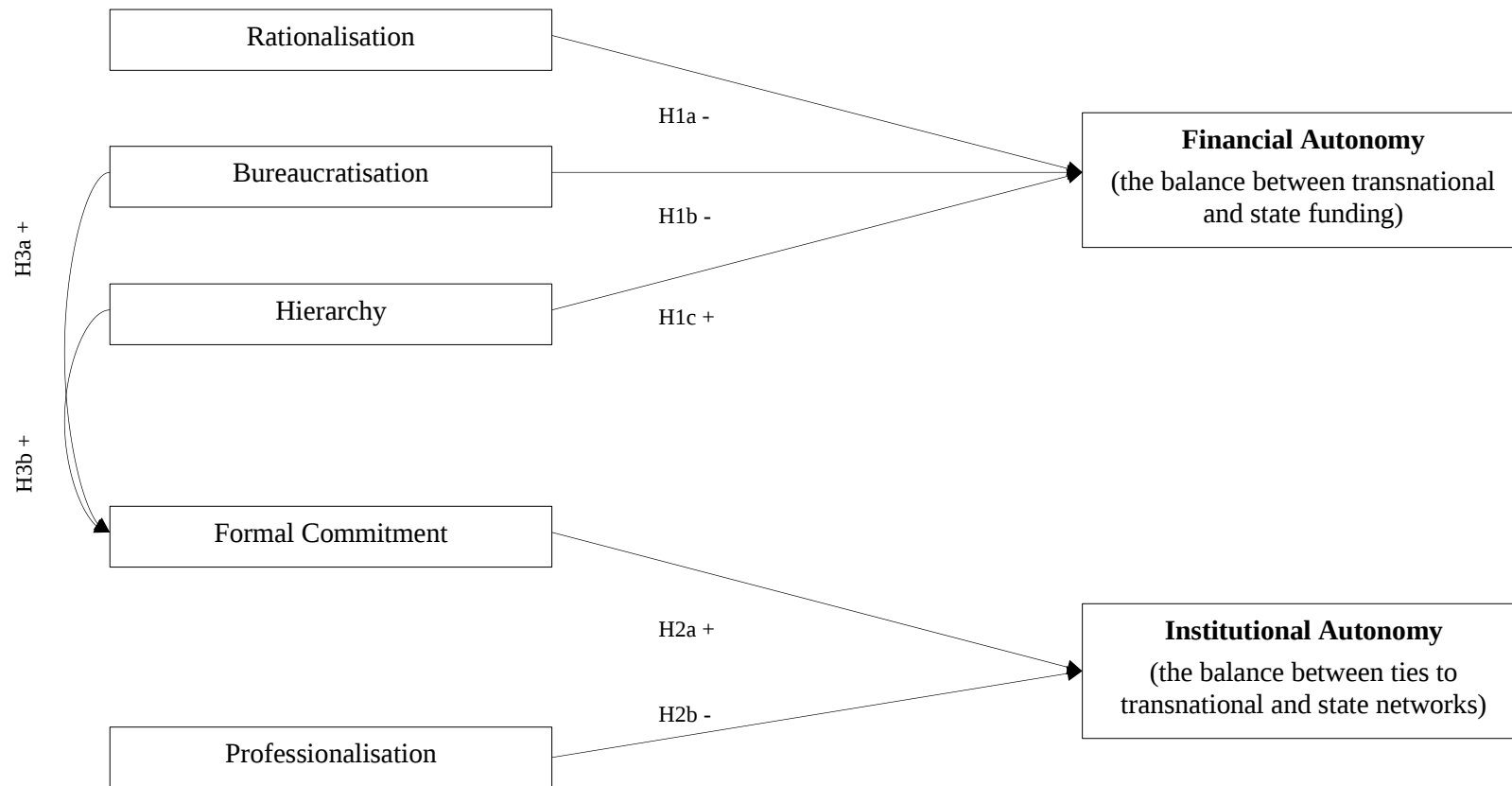


Figure 6 Visualisation of the Proposed Theoretical Framework.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research design

The proposed theoretical framework, more precisely, the hypothesised relationships, is tested quantitatively based on a novel dataset established through an original survey with the Russian and Turkish civil society organisations. The datasets are combined for more robust analysis. Nevertheless, the regime difference is accounted for in the analysis, producing a comparative view across the selected two country cases.

The selection of country cases

A mixed strategy was deployed for the selection of country cases. In total, two country cases were selected to test the hypothesis put forward in the previous chapter. A number of considerations drove the case selection. Above all, the prominence of the country case was considered. Secondly, the cases were valued for their potential to shed light on regional patterns of relationships between civil society and authoritarian states - Turkey in MENA and Russia in Eurasia. The autocracy level of the regime was determined according to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2022. Additionally, it was controlled that the country could stand as ‘an average case’: it had no circumstances or had not recently gone through political, economic or social processes that made it an extreme or unordinary case. Moreover, the countries with a formal tutelary regime were eliminated from the list of candidate country cases. The reason for this lies in their specific nature, which makes them not a general but a specific category of authoritarian regimes. However, this does not necessarily indicate the inapplicability of the proposed theoretical framework to them but their irrelevance for the theory generation purposes. Moreover, it was ensured that both country cases stand as of similar categories in terms of their scale, even though this is not small-n comparative design research in a strict sense of the word. Finally, for the feasibility of the survey instrument, the accessibility of civil society organisations was considered.

Three points need particular attention regarding the selected country cases. The existing literature on external autocratic linkage (Gilbert & Mohseni, 2018; B. Lang, 2018; SCHMOTZ & Tansey, 2018) suggests that authoritarian practices can be learned and promoted through regional and even cross-regional linkage. This can apply to Russia and Turkey, which, as regional powers, were influential in shaping their respective regions—Eurasia and the MENA.

In the past two decades, Russia followed a consistent authoritarian consolidation path (Toepler & Fröhlich, 2020). It was a clear role model in state-civil society relations for the autocratic or further autocratising countries in post-Soviet Eurasia. For the MENA region, Turkey was long seen as a moderate Islamic country model that established a certain democratic path. Starting from the early 2010s, the tide in Turkey has shifted (Eslen-Ziya & Kazanoğlu, 2022), and the region also does not seem to be on track to democracy as it was supposed to be at the beginning of the 2010s (Durac & Cavatorta, 2015; Teti et al., 2018). Although Turkey is not the only country experiencing authoritarian backlash in the region and perhaps still one of the most democratic ones, as a regional power, it still can lead or shape authoritarian practices in the region, in particular in terms of more nuanced policies. Therefore, the study of state-civil society relations in these two countries renders significant potential for shedding light on potentially region-wide patterns in Eurasia and MENA regions.

Secondly, as already demonstrated in the literature review section, the existing literature on civil society in Russia and Turkey provides quite non-monolithic contexts compared to small-sized countries. This implies that the large size of the country, in particular, understood as power distance between the central government and local authorities, the variety of needs and demands across regions, as well as higher cultural heterogeneity, may lead to diverse patterns of behaviour, relationships and attitudes between civil society on the one hand and local authorities, citizens and transnational actors on the other side. Such differentiation may also be found in small-sized countries, however, to a smaller extent and less contrast. In this sense, Russia and Turkey emerge as two cases in which much diversity and subtle patterns can be counted on even if not these diversities are considered in the sampling process.

Thirdly, despite both having reached a certain level of authoritarian maturity run by tough-handed leaders, Russia and Turkey still possess, or at least did so during the time of writing, some significant amount of active civil society associations. The number of active associations in Turkey (“dernekler”) increased from 69.7 thousand in 2003 to 121.5 thousand in 2020 (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü, 2021). This increase is explained by the growth of both pro-government or religious NGOs encouraged by the government and anti-government, secular NGOs who have seen civil society as a way of channelling their voices. In Russia, the number of civil society associations (“obshchestvennye organizatsii”) on the government’s registry grew from 53,655 in 2014 (Федеральная служба государственной статистики РФ, 2014) to 59,494 as of 15 April 2021 (Министерство юстиции Российской Федерации, 2021). The growth period overlaps with the crack-down

campaign that followed the 2012 post-election demonstrations. Not all the registered organisations are operational and genuine. However, a 10% growth in the number of public organisations within seven years against the repressive environment is one of the factors making the Russian case interesting for this study. How can this be explained? Are we observing, like in the Turkish case, the alignment of the ruling party with public associations or the mobilisation of public associations on an autocratic consolidation path?

Although the number of civil society associations cannot be taken as an indicator of the strength of civil society, a few general statistics from Turkey and Russia already indicate that the relationship between the state and civil society associations can be more complex than the existing literature suggests. The literature review has already allocated a special focus to both countries and demonstrated qualitatively further complex nuances that make these countries particularly significant for studying civil society within authoritarian regimes.

Fourth, in both countries, the political regimes are *creators* rather than *appliers* in the sense that they are both capable of innovating the regime design, as has already been proved in recent years. Russia was the first to introduce an extensive list of legal restrictions to the operation of civil society organisations in the country starting from the late 2000s, which was reflected in other Eurasian countries. These innovations are not limited only to civil society-government relations but concern the whole of the political regime. The Putin-Medvedev power shuffle is a unique Russian experience. Meanwhile, the political regime in Turkey went through a substantial redesign in the 2010s under the AKP leadership, converting from a parliamentary regime to a self-styled presidential regime.

Identifying the unit of study: Which civil society organisations?

The unit of study of this research is the civil society organisation, a concept that, within any given context, demands meticulous identification and cannot be discerned through cursory examination. The *civil sphere* theory provides two major criteria for this, as discussed earlier: it builds on universal solidarity. It means it builds on norms that do not distinguish among humans based on primordial qualities. Yet, this criterion is not easily controllable in practice, particularly in sampling. Whether identified entities truly commit to such a norm or not can hardly be discerned if a large number of organisations is the case, which is the case in this study, except perhaps very extremely visible cases. Yet, what can be relatively easily discerned, instead, is whether it is a self-serving club or not. Self-serving clubs or groups do not fit the definition in the civil sphere, one significant difference compared to the definitions of civil society operated

elsewhere (see, e.g., Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 1993). However, the outward or inward orientation is a formally distinguished category neither in Russia nor in Turkey, therefore posing serious difficulties in identifying the unit of study in these cases.

The second criterion that can be found both in the *civil sphere* theory and in most of the currently popular definitions is related to its locus—beyond the state and the market, yet still in the public sphere. The basic translation of this criterion into the practice is that the identified entity is legally neither part of the state structure nor is engaged in for-profit commercial activities. However, as discussed later, this boundary may not be that direct, either. From the organisation's point of view, in order to qualify as an organisation, one needs to meet a few requirements. First, it needs to be not an individual action but a joint action of individuals. Secondly, it needs to have a stated goal and a certain role differentiation within. However, in large sampling, there is no possibility of controlling each case individually but relying upon the declared status. The extent to which the declared status holds is out of the possibility of control.

Since this study focuses on *formal* civil society organisations, the form of such formality needs to be controlled similarly. The formal organisational forms in which citizens can come together for a non-profit purpose outside the state apparatus can be very diverse and change from one country to another. Usually found categories include, but are not limited to, public/civil associations or unions, public benefits associations, foundations, charities, trade unions, political parties, religious bodies, bar associations and chambers. This research addresses only public associations or unions—the most general category. In addition to being formally non-governmental, three formal characteristics of civil associations can be identified: i) whether the organisation engage in commercial activities; iii) whether the organisation is providing funding to other organisations or persons or not as its major or only function, iv) whether the organisation is a branch or local chapter of a foreign organisation. The formal organisational form of civil associations can vary according to these characteristics. One civil association could operate under any of these forms but also have a different organisational form as a sort of subsidiary organisation. The unit of study in this research is the most common and general formal organisational form of civil association, which is non-governmental, non-profit, and non-foundation—that is, it does not provide funds to other organisations or persons for charity purposes as a major or only function. As long as the organisation is non-profit, whether it has commercial activities or not is not differentiated. Engaging in commercial activities does not

necessarily make an organisation for-profit. Non-profit—where there is no share-holder—commercial activity can serve as a self-financing mechanism for the organisation.

In Turkey, the identified formal type of civil association is identified as ‘*dernek*’ according to Article 33 of the Constitution (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, Kanun No. 2709, 1982). The Turkish law regulating Turkish civil associations of the sort identified above - Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dernekler Kanunu No. 5253 (2004)—further specifies the terms and conditions of operation. The law does not prohibit civil associations from engaging in commercial activities as long as members do not make any profits. Therefore, selecting this particular form of organisation does not discriminate between those non-profits engaged in commercial activities and those non-profits that are not. Article 27 identifies a particular type of association called *public benefit associations* (PBAs), the issuance of such a legal status being in the power of the president. PBAs, which constitute only 0.84% of the total number of registered associations, are not considered study units within this research due to their specific condition in their relationships with the state.

The official registry also differentiates so-called sports and youth clubs as a separate category. The official statistics show that sport and youth clubs made up 22.34% of the total number of associations in Turkey in 2020 (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü). These organisations are not included in this study either. The reason for this is that in line with the *civil sphere* theory, sport, youth, or any other hobby clubs, which are *inward-oriented* as they aim to serve their members’ interests exclusively and, hence, remain outside the definition of civil association in this study and therefore, were excluded from the sampling. Similar to hobby and sports clubs, the category of professional and solidarity associations, which is the largest group all over Turkey and usually serves as alumni or support networks, is not covered by this study. They are usually attached to any other public organisation or university and often not truly active in reality. The group, therefore, constitutes 31.38% of the total registered civil associations in Turkey. The third largest (15.12%) group is constituted of associations operating for the implementation of religious services, which are usually established by local religious communities to provide their services to the construction and maintenance of a local building or space of religious importance with legal status. Another small group (0.39%) of Turkish associations that are not included in this research is the national-level associations serving retired officers, war veterans, and family members of martyrs, as well as their local branches. These four groups of associations, which do not meet the ‘*civil*’ criterion according to

the theory deployed in this research, constituted 70% of the total number of registered non-governmental, non-profit associations (122,087) in Turkey in 2020 (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü). The rest of the registered associations are spread over 17 groups of different thematical areas and beneficiary groups in society, from culture, tourism, education, and children to the food industry, agriculture, human rights, urban issues and others.

In the case of Russia, the right to associate is confirmed in Article 30 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (*Конституция Российской Федерации*, 1993). The Law on Non-Commercial Organisations identifies the types of non-governmental, non-profit organisations operating in the Russian Federation, in addition to a few others regulated differently (consumer cooperatives, real estate owners' associations, including homeowners' associations, horticultural and gardening non-profit partnerships). The definition given to 'non-commercial organisation' creates confusion. Article 2.1 defines 'non-commercial organisation' as an organisation whose main goal is not profit-making and who does not distribute profit among its members. This is a definition of a non-profit organisation similar to the Turkish case, which is similar to Western practice. However, in the Turkish case, non-profit does not mean non-commercial in the sense that the organisation cannot engage in a commercial activity, but that any income from such activity cannot be profit and distributed among members. However, engagement in non-profit commercial activity, which the law specifies as entrepreneurial activity, is recognised for organisations regulated under this law. The law identifies six types of non-profit ('non-commercial') organisations: public and religious organisations, foundations, non-profit partnerships, private institutions, autonomous non-profit organisations, and associations. The type of organisations in Russia subject to this study is *public organisations* (*общественные организации*, pronounced as *obshestvennie organizatsii*) identified in Article 6 of the above-mentioned law. It is one of the types of public unions (*общественные объединения*, pronounced as *obshestvennie obiedineniia*) as specified in Article 7 of the Law on Public Organisations of the Russian Federation (*Российская Федерация, Федеральный закон Об общественных объединениях*, 1995/30.12.2020). The other types of public unions include public movements, public foundations, public institutions, public initiatives of amateur performances, and political parties—none of which is subject to study in this research. Further sub-classifications of Russian public organisations are not available, and they are not distinguished on the information portal of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation available online (Министерства юстиции Российской Федерации, 2021). The only source found that may suggest some subclassification of public organisations in Russia is under Code 94.99 of the Russian Classification of Types of

Economic Activities (*OK 029-2014 (КДЕС РЕД. 2), 2014/29.12.2020*), however, not allowing for any clear differentiation among public organisations according to their activities that can match with the Turkish classification provided by the Civil Society Relations Directorate General of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Turkey. Nevertheless, multiple random checks of the list of public organisations on this portal show that, like in the Turkish case, the list of public organisations also includes hobby clubs such as sports clubs or gyms that do not meet the *civil* criterion according to the *civil sphere* theory deployed in this research. Similarly, nation-wide—‘all-Russian (*общероссийский*)’ organisations, which have some equal status to PBAs in the Turkish case, can be found on the list of registered public organisations provided by the Ministry of Justice. These organisations are registered with the Ministry of Justice directly, unlike all others, which are registered with local authorities. As in the Turkish case, these are not the type of organisations to be covered within this study due to their special status, making them a sort of extension of public institutions. Consequently, the type of organisational form of civil associations that were selected in both country cases is formally registered and operational non-governmental, non-profit organisations which are not *inward-oriented* and aimed to serve only or majorly the interests of their members and which are equal to *dernekler* in Turkey and *общественные организации (obshestvennie organizatsii)* in Russia.

Identifying the survey population

The identification of the survey population went through several stages. In both countries, the government agencies - the General Directorate for Relations with Civil Society of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the case of Turkey (*T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü*) and the Ministry of Justice in the case of Russia (*Министерства юстиции Российской Федерации, 2021*)—provide an online portal where the list of registered civil society organisations of these types could be accessed according to the country's administrative units. However, at least three serious problems with these datasets were encountered in the process of research. Firstly, they both provide the list of *registered* and formally ‘active’ organisations, which does not necessarily mean they are operational but not formally dissolved. In other words, they also include on-paper organisations—organisations which are registered but not operational. On the one hand, there was no easy way to check the operability status of the tens and even hundreds of thousands of organisations. To check the status of all of them would have required substantial resources and lengthy time, perhaps multiple years or a large team of assistants if it is ever possible at all. The data is not publicised in an easily utilisable format;

therefore, checking their status is practically impossible, at least within this research project. On the other hand, neglecting the fact that the lists included a substantial number of ‘on-paper’ organisations would have seriously affected the response rate and, overall, the validity and reliability of the results. Secondly, only in the Turkish case, were organisations grouped under subcategories according to their area of operation or overall mission, and hence allowed for filtering according to whether their area of operation or overall mission implied inward or outward orientation. The Russian portal did not allow for similar filtering of the identified formal type of organisations, as the dataset did not have any sub-categorisation according to the area of operation or overall mission, but only geographically. This made it impossible to eliminate inward-oriented, self-serving organisations on the list which were, by their self-identification, aimed to serve their members rather than to address the public or an issue of wider public concerns and which, by this virtue, remain outside the definition of civil association deployed in this research, as it has already been discussed in Section 6. Search for alternative comprehensive lists has delivered no results, too. In such a situation, specific strategies were deployed to identify the survey population in the selected country cases. These strategies diverge significantly, making it one of the shortcomings of the research design.

As the first step of the solution to this problem, the scope of the study was diminished to the four largest cities in both cases, resulting in the approximately 93,000 entries in total on both lists combined that meet the set parameters (See Table 2). As the second step, different strategies, though based on the same principles, were followed in the Turkish and Russian cases.

Russia		Turkey	
City or Region	# of organisational entries in the official registry	City or Region	# of organisational entries in the official registry
Moscow	29,760	Istanbul	23,715
Saint-Petersburg	9,021	Ankara	10,627
Novosibirsk	4250	Izmir	5,625
Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg)	5588	Bursa	4,494
Total	48,619	Total	44,461

Table 2: Civil society organisations on the official registry in Russia and Turkey.

In the Turkish case, the official registry of civil society organisations was used as a basis for the identification of the survey population. Following, the sub-categories that did not fit the definition of civil association deployed here were filtered from each city/region. Based on the

earlier discussion on the identification of the unit of study, the total of 21 subcategories were filtered to eliminate according to the following criteria:

- Small community/neighbourhood/sect/hobby/specific vulnerability or status-based organisations that serve only or majorly for the interests of its members,
- Auxiliary organisations attached to public institutions or religious houses,
- Professional unions established per sector across all or most of the regions,
- Organisations attached to business or cultural institutions,
- Organisations whose targets lie beyond Turkish society or created as an auxiliary organisation to cooperation between Turkey and other states or international organisations.

In total, 9 out of 21 sub-categories, including the three largest of them (No. 13, 16, 20 in below), were eliminated according to the criteria above.

No.	Category	Eliminated or kept
1	Environment, natural life, animal protection associations	Kept
2	Children's associations	Kept
3	Associations for solidarity with foreign Turks	Eliminated
4	Associations for the disabled	Kept
5	Educational-research associations	Kept
6	Associations to keep social values alive	Kept
7	Associations operating in the field of food, agriculture, and livestock	Kept
8	Rights and advocacy associations	Kept
9	Reconstruction, urban and development associations	Kept
10	Humanitarian aid associations	Kept
11	Associations supporting public institutions and personnel	Eliminated
12	Culture, art, and tourism associations	Eliminated
13	Professional and solidarity associations	Eliminated
14	Associations operating in the field of health	Eliminated
15	Martyr relatives' and war veterans' associations	Eliminated
16	Sports and sports-related associations	Eliminated
17	Individual teaching and social development associations	Kept
18	International organisations and cooperation associations	Eliminated
19	Associations for the elderly and children	Kept
20	Associations operating for the realisation of religious services	Eliminated
21	Thought-based associations (think-tanks)	Kept

Table 3 Filtering the subcategories of civil society associations in Turkey

Following, all the entries in the remaining subcategories (over 40,000) were checked manually for a website or a social media account address. This is based on the assumption that organisations that were outward-oriented and thus aimed to build wide solidarities would have needed a stable online presence to reach the public unless it is radically against the Internet in

general. This allowed the research to further filter down the list of organisations by eliminating those which did not fit the definition or existed only nominally (on paper). It should also be noted that the portal can be accessed by civil society organisations on the list with their own access details to update the information about themselves. Therefore, the information available on the government portal was considered to be relatively up-to-date. The application of this filter resulted in a radical decline in the number of organisations on the list, as shown in Table 4. Turkish civil society associations with registered web presence (01.06.2021). below.

No.	City/Region	% of organisations with available information about a website or social media account address in total	# of organisations with available information about a website or social media account address in total
1	Ankara	6%	667
2	Bursa	3%	149
3	Istanbul	4%	1003
4	Izmir	4%	148
Total			2067

Table 4. Turkish civil society associations with registered web presence (01.06.2021).

In the third stage, the websites or social media accounts of the organisations remaining on the list were manually controlled one by one for any single update (post, announcement, photo, video, etc.) in the last 18-month period. This activity was carried out in May 2021. The period was chosen so that it went back to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic period, and thus, any potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was avoided. After eliminating duplications and closed, wrong, and inactive (failing to meet the 18-month criterion) accounts, a total of 334 organisations remained on the list. This was a radical fall from over 44,000 entries on the official registry for the four largest cities/regions. Part of the reason for such a sharp fall is the narrow definition of civil association deployed in this research. However, Turkish experts asked specifically about this issue confirmed that although they had no source to rely on, it was highly likely that the final figure reached above reflected the actual figure of operational civil society organisations in Turkey. They put the overall number of civil society organisations of the sorts possessing the characteristics considered in this research, similarly, around 400-500 in total in Turkey.

Unlike Turkey, the Russian government's registry available online provided neither sub-categories nor information about the availability of websites or social media accounts. Moreover, it was a fixed list published by the Ministry of Justice, which organisations themselves cannot

access to update information about themselves, and therefore, running the risk of being not up-to-date. This demanded pursuing a different strategy, still based on the same principles, for the identification of the survey population in the Russian case. At the first stage, three large Russian “yellow page” or directory websites, on which “public organisations” were separately categorised and could be filtered by regions, were identified: www.yip.ru, www.mestam.info and www.cataloxy.ru. Additionally, two Moscow-specific sources were identified: www.msk365.ru and www.btk-online.ru. Since there was no possibility to download the databases, information about “public organisations” of regional (ROO—“*regionalnie obshchestvennye organizatsii*”) or nationwide (“*obshcherossiyskie obshchestvennye organizatsii*”) types was collected by simultaneously filtering them according to

- whether a website or social media account was provided, and
 - if yes, whether there was a single post on the website or social media account in the last 18 months.
- whether the organisation fits one of the eliminated categories in the Turkish case (the five criteria above).

Consequently, duplications were identified and removed, leaving behind 232 organisations in total for all four major cities/regions.

6.2. Operationalizing constructs

The quantitative part of this study aims to measure five aspects of the *formal institutionalisation* of civil associations and the *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* of civil associations. The definitions of these abstract constructs have already been provided and widely discussed in the previous sections. As the theoretical framework provides, *formal institutionalisation* itself is divided into lower-level constructs, which are *formal commitment*, *professionalisation*, *bureaucratisation*, *rationalisation* and *hierarchy*. Each of the five sub-constructs is measured with a single variable, making five variables in total (See Table 5). However, generating a single variable for each of these constructs in most cases required collecting data on two variables and then, based on them, developing a *synthetic* variable representing the concepts. Each of the representing variables builds on certain assumptions elaborated in the previous sections. The following paragraphs provide these assumptions behind the measurement instrument.

Formal institutionalisation	
Concept	Representing Variables
<i>Formal commitment</i>	The ratio of employment contracts to the total of employment and service contracts;
<i>Rationalisation</i>	Likelihood of having a written employee-specific task list for a period of 3 or 6 months (or more);
<i>Professionalisation</i>	Number of departments;
<i>Hierarchical structure</i>	Number of hierarchical levels
<i>Bureaucratisation</i>	The ratio of non-managerial staff to the total of managerial and non-managerial staff

Table 5 Operationalisation of Formal Institutionalisation

As said earlier, *formal commitment* can be divided into two types: i) formal registration, which brings a legal, formal status regulating the relationship between the organisation (civil association) and its environment—the state, the market and other members of the public as well as individual citizens outside the organisation, and ii) contractual relationship between the organisation and its members. The latter is the more significant indicator of formal institutionalisation since the former can remain on paper if the organisation is not functioning or does so but not properly. The idea is that formal institutionalisation of the relationship between the organisation and its members may be lacking despite the relationship with the external environment being formally institutionalised, yet the opposite is not imaginable. Therefore, formal commitment towards members emerges as a more reliable indicator or a higher index of formal commitment. Nevertheless, it is practically difficult or even impossible to collect data from organisations about cases lacking contractual relationships as they would hardly be willing to report such cases, even if they are rare cases. Moreover, in the Russian and Turkish contexts, when employment contracts are lacking, civil society organisations tend to prefer temporary service contracts that do not provide the rights and obligations that are envisaged in employment contracts. Therefore, there is assumed to be a significant difference between an employment contract and a service contract, at least in the cases of Russia and Turkey. Thus, the ratio of the employment contracts to the total of the employment and service contracts is considered to show the degree of formal commitment of the organisation towards its members and indirectly also towards the external environment. Nevertheless, there is still one more assumption that needs to be made explicit—what organisational membership means or who the members of the organisation are.

One would reasonably expect that because of its nature as citizen solidarity, membership in civil associations is not as clear-cut as that of public institutions or for-profit companies.

Legally, in both countries, there is a possibility for citizens to be members of civil society organisations but not take an active role in their day-to-day running. In this research, a stricter understanding of membership—the one characteristic of public institutions or for-profit companies—is deployed. This study saves the membership category at civil associations only for those who are engaged in the day-to-day running of the organisation, and by this virtue, it is assumed that a certain contractual relationship should exist between the organisation and its members to count as a formal commitment between the organisation and its members.

Among the sub-concepts or elements of *formal institutionalisation*, *rationalisation* is the most challenging to operationalise, as it is not a certain structural character or a certain membership category that can be easily observed but rather a mode of working valuing efficiency and effectiveness. It is ideally mainstreamed across all the decision-making and implementation stages. Because of its nature, the *rationalisation* of an organisation can be measured very diversely, and there is no single way of doing it that can be said to be unquestionably superior to the others. The principle deployed with regard to *formal commitment* above is also deployed here. Two major areas of *rationalisation* are distinguished: *rationalisation* towards the external environment and *rationalisation* in relation to the members of the organisation. Similarly, it is reasonably expected that *rationalisation* in relation to the members of the organisation is a higher indicator of *formal institutionalisation* than *rationalisation* towards the external environment and that the former presupposes the latter, too. *Rationalisation* in relation towards the members of the organisation is understood as the efficient and effective organisation of the behaviour of members within the organisation. One particular indicator of such *rationalisation* is found to be the likelihood of written job performances of members, which are reviewed and assessed by their line managers within a set period, such as 3 or 6 months or annually. However, instead of asking how many members of the organisation have such job performance objectives, the organisations were asked about their *likelihood* of having written job performances for their members on a scale from “1” to “4”, where “4” indicates most likely and “1” least likely. Generally, it is worth mentioning that among all the variables involved, this variable is the only one that does not represent factual information.

The operationalisation of the second sub-concept of *formal institutionalisation* is strictly based on organisation theory, which considers horizontal structuring or job division to be a major antecedent of *professionalisation*. As discussed earlier, division into departments or similar thematic units is considered to allow the members of the organisation to focus on a specific

framework of issues and, thus, be able to *professionalise* in their areas. Based on these assumptions, the number of departments is taken as an indicator of the *professionalisation* of the organisation as a whole. It is indeed a direct representation of the differentiation of expertise functions.

The relevant section above also explicates how *hierarchy* is considered to be born out of the horizontal division. Accordingly, once a certain job division is carried out within the organisation, there appears to be a need to coordinate and regulate the relationship between the equal-level departments from which hierarchy is born. The hierarchical structure is, thus, operationalised as the levels of authority or subordination within the organisation.

Bureaucratisation is understood as the expansion of a certain membership category of the organisation. Members in this category are considered not to possess special expertise and, therefore, lack discretionary power; instead, they implement routine administrative work that serves to realise the decisions of professionals or support the day-to-day running of the organisation. In order to measure this construct, information about the number of managerial staff and non-managerial staff is collected. Consequently, the share of the non-managerial staff in their total is calculated.

Autonomy, as already said in the previous section, is measured in two dimensions: *financial* and *institutional* (see Table 6). Theoretically, it is formulated as the degree of balance between *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state*, which is measured on the same scale on both dimensions, each with a single variable. This means in order to measure *autonomy* on these two dimensions, first, *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* are measured on the same two dimensions. Then, *autonomy* is measured through a formula calculating the balance between *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* one minus the absolute difference between the shares of the transnational and state funding in the last closed financial (financial dimension) or the number of current memberships in the transnational and state networks (institutional dimension). Accordingly, the closer the result to 1, the higher the autonomy. To measure the financial ties of civil associations, they were asked to provide a share of the total funding of all sorts (grants, donations, income made from service delivery, etc.) received from foreign-origin organisations and government institutions in the total budget of the last closed year, separately. The explanation of “foreign origin” is provided in the questionnaire as foreign organisations operating outside the country or foreign organisations operating inside the country.

Measuring these two constructs—*transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* on the same scales and the same dimensions allows the generation of two synthetic variables representing *financial* and *institutional autonomy* as the balance between *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state*. In order to generate variables for each type of *autonomy*, the absolute difference between the values of *transnationalisation* and *co-optation by the state* on each dimension is squared. Consequently, the greater this absolute divergence is, the more pronounced the imbalance becomes. However, this metric intentionally refrains from distinguishing whether the tilt is towards transnationalisation or state co-optation. In either scenario, it is posited that the autonomy of civil society entities is compromised, as the scope for manoeuvre is constricted.

Transnationalisation/Co-optation by the state	Representing variables
Financial linkage	the share of the foreign origin/state funding in total in the last closed annual budget;
Institutional linkage	the number of memberships in transnational institutional forums, platforms or networks;

Table 6 Operationalisation of Transnationalisation and Co-Optation by the State

Since the two country cases are combined in the statistical analysis, a dummy variable is created to indicate the country origin of cases in terms of their degree of authoritarianism. The *democracy status* of the BTI index establishes Russia as more authoritarian than Turkey (see Figure 7 below). Although the difference between the democratic statuses of Russia and Turkey is not large enough to allow them to be classified within different categories, the difference can still be significant. Particularly, in two sub-indicators—*political and social integration* and *political participation*, which are significant for the existence of civil society, there are significant differences, as can be seen in the figure below. For this reason, the established dummy variable was named *authoritarian regime quality* and coded the Russian cases as “1” and the Turkish cases as “0”.

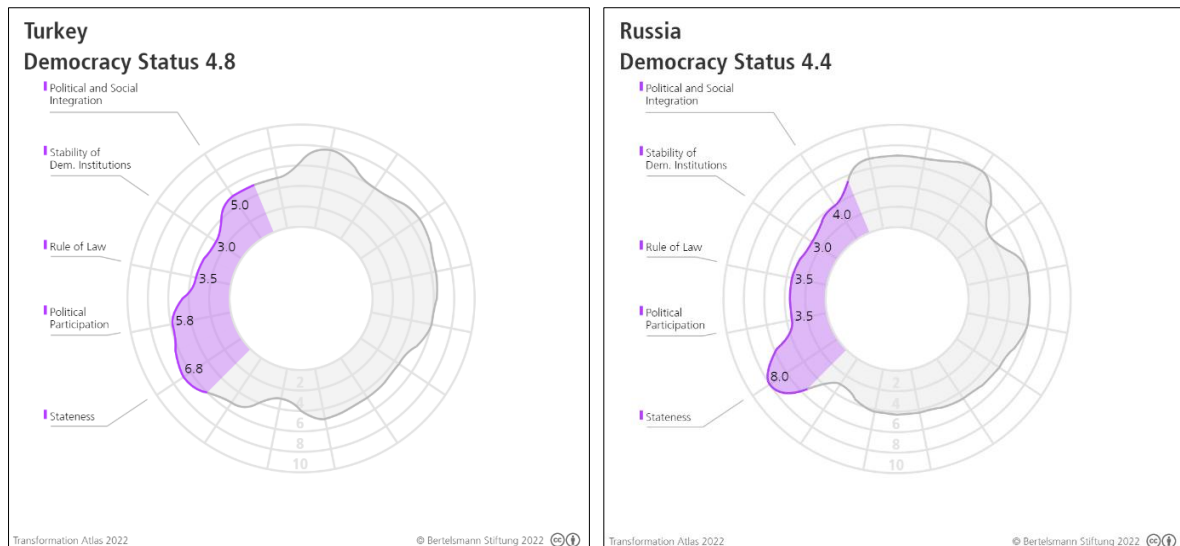


Figure 7 BTI Democracy Statuses of Russia and Turkey (2022).

6.3. The measurement instrument and data collection

The Questionnaire

Despite the extensive literature review and the control of further non-academic, professional sources, no measurement instrument meeting the needs of the research design could be identified at least partially. Therefore, a novel survey instrument was designed from scratch to measure the constructs in the proposed theoretical framework. The operationalisation of seven constructs envisaged in the theoretical framework required 11 different types of variables to be generated (*bureaucratisation*, *professionalisation*, *financial autonomy*, and *institutional autonomy* require two variables to be generated per each).

Given the sensitivity of surveying people within authoritarian regimes, the information section served to establish maximum transparency about the survey and build trust with the participants. The introductory section provided detailed information about the purpose of the survey, the institutional affiliation of the researcher with further hyperlinks to the university webpage of the author, where further detailed information about the research is provided, and the university webpage of the first doctoral research supervisor.

Moreover, participants were informed how their contact details had been identified to ensure that they were not selected for any specific reason other than being a civil society organisation meeting the definition deployed in this research. Additionally, the author's contact details were provided to contact in case participants experienced a problem with the survey instruments. In the process, a total of four organisations were contacted for different purposes

related to the survey instrument. This makes a total of 3.5% of the total responses and less than 1% of the total survey population of both countries combined, suggesting no significant potential for the bias resulting from the use of the instrument. The survey was fully anonymised; no information that could be later used to identify the organisation or the person who filled out the survey was collected.

The questionnaire included 24 multi-choice and scale questions grouped into four sections (See Appendix II for the questionnaire in English, Russian and Turkish). The first section, which consists of 9 questions, collected profile data on formal registration, whether the organisation is the branch or local chapter of a foreign organisation or not, the geographical coverage of the office(s), total staff size, organisational age, major type and field of action, the number of projects implemented in the last three years, and whether the organisation was engaged in commercial activity or not in the last three years. However, for the parsimony of the analysis conducted below, the data generated through this section of the survey was not utilised but only informed the analysis in the background.

The second section asked in total seven questions about *formal institutionalisation*—the number of departments (*professionalisation*), the number of employment contracts (deployed for the generation of *formal commitment*), the number of service contracts (deployed for the generation of *formal commitment*), the likelihood of having a written job performance objective for the members of the organisation (*rationalisation*), the number of managerial staffs (deployed for the generation of *bureaucratisation*), the number of non-managerial staff (deployed for the generation of *bureaucratisation*) and the number hierarchical levels (*hierarchy*).

The next two sections asked four questions on four dimensions of financial, knowledge, network and discursive ties to the transnational civil sphere and the government, respectively. However, only the data concerning financial and network dimensions were included in the analysis, again for the purpose of simplicity. The other two dimensions were not included in the analysis. In questions where there was a need to fix the way certain concepts were understood, such as the level of hierarchy and the number of departments, brief explanations were provided. This served to control the way questions were understood by participants and thus ensured the reliability of the data collection.

The questionnaire was originally developed in English and, consequently, translated into Russian and Turkish by the author. Feedback on the English version of the questionnaire was collected by two independent researchers, and subsequently, the questionnaire was correspondingly improved. Following, the Turkish questionnaire was controlled by a retired

senior manager from the business who is a native speaker of Turkish. Similarly, the Russian questionnaire was controlled by a retired scholar of philosophy who is a native speaker of the Russian language. As the second step, each questionnaire was tested with four civil society members or experts from the corresponding countries.

Running the survey

Although the initial aim was to pursue a standard probabilistic sampling method, the lack of reliable population lists on the countries has led to specific strategies for the identification of samples. The strategies deployed for the identification of the survey population in both cases have already been elaborated in Section 6.1 above. In total, 232 organisations for the Russian case and 334 for the Turkish case could be identified as constituting the population of the unit of study. The general email addresses or the email addresses of directors of the identified organisations were eventually collected manually from their websites or social media accounts. In the Russian case, out of the 232 organisations, the email addresses of five organisations could not be found on their websites or social media accounts, leaving 227 organisations with email addresses on the list. Further efforts to contact them were fruitless. Out of the 334 organisations on the Turkish list, 29 missed email addresses even after long efforts to contact the organisations through social media to ask for their email addresses, leaving behind 306 organisations on the list. The survey was run through the *Survey Monkey* online platform from 19 July 2021 to 19 January 2022. Within this period, three reminders were sent to the recipients with a month-and-a-half break between each wave. In the Russian case, out of the total of 227 email addresses, six had email delivery failures and, therefore, were automatically listed out, while out of the total of 221 email addresses delivered, 17 recipients had opted out from all future emails from the account sending this survey. In the Turkish case, out of the 306 email addresses to which the survey was attempted to be sent, 20 had failed delivery. The Turkish survey reached 286 email addresses at the first contact, of which two opted out from receiving any future email from the account sending this survey.

Survey statistics	Russian case	Turkish case
Identified	232	334
Email addresses found	227	306
Survey Delivered	221	286
Opted out after the first attempt	17	2
Fully filled response forms	34	78
Response rate (in relation to the delivered emails)	15.38%	27.27%

Table 7 Survey Statistics

6.4. Analysis

The descriptive analysis of all continuous variables (except for *Rationalisation*, which is an ordinal variable) run prior to the inferential analysis exposed high skewness (except for formal commitment and bureaucratisation) and kurtosis (except for formal commitment and financial autonomy) for most of the variables included in the analysis (See Appendix III). Despite high skewness and kurtosis, no transformations were not applied to the variables as preserving the original scale of the data was essential for maintaining theoretical clarity and interpretability and as the large sample size ($n=112$) tends to mitigate the impact of non-normality on parameter estimation. In turn, the analyses were supported through a set of diagnostic tests, residual plots and robust methods like bootstrapping (See Appendix IV).

In total, three theoretical models (with seven unique independent variables or predictors) were put to the statistical test through multivariate linear regression analysis. In line with the proposed theoretical framework, the first model tested the effects of *rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* on *financial autonomy*, while the second model weighed how far *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* could explain *institutional autonomy*. The third model included *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* as predictors of *formal commitment*. Each model was run in two steps (making them hierarchical regression models). In the first step, only the stated independent variables were included in the statistical analysis (basis models: 1.1, 2.1, and 3.1). In contrast, the second step added authoritarian regime quality and its interaction effect with all independent variables (interaction models: 1.2, 2.2, and 3.2).

The analysis involved three distinct approaches to testing the relationships between predictors and outcomes across six models, with each approach carefully evaluated for its methodological rigour and theoretical coherence (for the summary of all models, see Table 8 below). The first approach involved running the original models without excluding any observations, preserving the full dataset and ensuring that the analysis reflected the entire range of variability within the sample. This approach provided consistent results across models and retained the significance of major predictors (excluding the interaction terms and the dummy variable, *authoritarianism*), except for *formal commitment* in Model 2.2. Despite these strengths, heteroscedasticity persisted in some models, such as Model 1.2 and Model 2.1, raising concerns about potential biases in the standard errors. Consequently, bootstrapping was applied to these original models to address potential issues of heteroscedasticity, offering robust p-values and confidence intervals for all predictors.

The second approach focused on the removal of influential outliers identified through Cook's Distance. By excluding these extreme cases, the fit of certain models improved, as evidenced by higher adjusted R^2 values in models like 1.1 (increasing from 0.135 to 0.243). However, this approach also led to the loss of significance for *formal commitment* in Model 2.1, a theoretically important variable. While this reduction in noise was statistically advantageous for some models, the loss of a critical predictor called into question the broader applicability of this approach to all models. Additionally, heteroscedasticity remained unresolved in models like 2.1, indicating that the removal of influential outliers alone was insufficient to fully address some of the key diagnostic concerns.

The third approach involved removing overlapping outliers identified both as influential outliers (Cook's Distance) and as multivariate anomalies (Mahalanobis Distance). This hybrid approach balanced the removal of problematic cases while minimising the risk of overfitting or excessive data loss. The resulting models demonstrated stable adjusted R^2 values and consistent predictor significance in most cases. However, *formal commitment* in Model 2.1 became insignificant under this approach, even after bootstrapping was applied to validate the results. This outcome raised concerns about the theoretical integrity of the analysis, as *formal commitment* is a key variable in explaining institutional autonomy, particularly the indirect effects of *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy*. Although this method successfully reduced undue influences from extreme observations, it did not resolve the persistent heteroscedasticity in critical models such as 1.2 and 2.1, limiting its overall utility.

Given these considerations, the decision was made to build further discussions in the next section on the results of the original models with bootstrapping as the primary findings, given their robustness and theoretical coherence. This approach preserves the significance of primary predictors in most instances while addressing potential biases through bootstrapped p-values and confidence intervals. To enhance methodological transparency, results from the second and third approaches are included in the reporting table below. This dual approach allows for a balanced presentation of results, emphasising both the theoretical priorities of the study and the robustness of the statistical methods employed. This strategy is further justified by the persistent heteroscedasticity in critical models, which bootstrapping effectively mitigated without compromising the theoretical structure of the models. Appendix IV provides the summary of diagnostics of linearity, normality, autocorrelation, multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity for the models in all three approaches.

Model 1.1 Financial Autonomy								
	Original		Boot-strap	Influential outliers removed		Overlapping outliers removed		Boot-strap
Adjusted R Sq.	.135	< .001	X	.243	< .001	.185	< .001	X
	Beta	p-value	p-value	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value	p-value
Rationalisation	-.287	.002	.002	-.499	< .001	-.349	< .001	< .001
Bureaucratisation		Insig.	Insig.		Insig.		Insig.	
Hierarchy	.252	.006	.040		Insig.	.283	.002	.007
Model 1.2 Financial Autonomy								
Adjusted R Sq.	.333	< .001	X	.479	< .001	.333	< .001	X
Rationalisation	-.218	.008	.010	-.327	< .001	-.218	.008	.010
Bureaucratisation	-.255	.003	< .001	-.312	< .001	-.255	.003	< .001
Hierarchy	.213	.039	.008	.207	.016	.213	.039	.008
Authoritarianism	.375	< .001	< .001	.372	< .001	.375	< .001	< .001
Auth_x_Rational		Insig.	Insig.	.161	.030		Insig.	Insig.
Auth_x_Bureaucrat	.237	.005	.002	.282	< .001	.237	.005	.002
Auth_x_Hierarchy		Insig.	Insig.		Insig.		Insig.	Insig.
Model 2.1 Institutional Autonomy								
Adjusted R Sq.	.364	< .001	X	.113	< .001	.151	< .001	X
Professionalisation	-.610	< .001	< .001	-.366	< .001	-.359	< .001	.006
Formal Commitment	.218	.005	.034		Insig.	.259	.005	Insig.
Model 2.2 Institutional Autonomy								
Adjusted R Sq.	.575	< .001	X	.413	< .001	.382	< .001	X
Professionalisation	-.270	< .001	< .001	.263	.002	-.228	.006	< .001
Formal Commitment		Insig.	Insig.		Insig.	.163	.056	Insig.
Authoritarianism	-.175	.010	.009	-.165	.035	-.170	.038	.024
Auth_x_Professional	-.534	< .001	< .001	-.481	< .001	-.417	< .001	< .001
Auth_x_FormCommit		Insig.	Insig.		Insig.		Insig.	
Model 3.1 Formal Commitment								
Adjusted R Sq.	.175	< .001	X	.115	< .001	.199	< .001	X
Bureaucratisation	.391	< .001	< .001	.297	.003	.449	< .001	< .001
Hierarchy		Insig.	Insig.		Insig.		Insig.	Insig.
Model 3.2 Formal Commitment								
Adjusted R Sq.	.440	< .001	X	.549	< .001	.508	< .001	X
Bureaucratisation	.492	< .001	< .001	.544	< .001	.476	< .001	< .001
Hierarchy	.355	< .001	< .001	.408	< .001	.492	< .001	< .001
Authoritarianism	-.532	< .001	< .001	-.594	< .001	-.563	< .001	< .001
Auth_x_Bureaucrat	.293	< .001	< .001	.240	< .001	.278	< .001	< .001
Auth_x_Hierarchy	.261	.006	.003	.369	< .001	.336	< .001	< .001

Table 8 Summary of all the models in three distinct approaches.

Supplementary Analysis: Non-linearity, Prediction and Mediation

To supplement traditional linear regression analyses, baseline models (Models 1.1, 2.1, and 3.1) were tested using various machine-learning approaches. Four machine learning algorithms were applied: Random Forest Regression (non-linear, non-parametric), Gradient Boosted Trees Regression (non-linear, semi-parametric), Polynomial Regression (non-linear, parametric), and XGBoost Linear Regression (linear, semi-parametric). For each, performance metrics such as R-Square, Adjusted R-Square, MAE, MSE, RMSE, MSD, and MAPE were computed to assess model performance comprehensively (for the results, see Table 9 below). All analyses involved k-fold cross-validation, promising robust results.

Across all three models, Gradient Boosted Trees Regression consistently delivered the best results. It achieved the highest R-Square and Adjusted R-Square values, indicating that it captured the variability in the data better than any other model. For Model 1.1, Gradient Boosted Trees yielded an R-Square of 0.71 and the lowest error metrics (MAE = 6.50, RMSE = 18.85, MAPE = 2.65), outperforming the other machine learning algorithms. Similarly, in Model 2.1, Gradient Boosted Trees achieved an R-Square of 0.87, with a remarkably low MAPE of 1.20. Model 3.1 showed similar trends, with Gradient Boosted Trees yielding an R-Square of 0.71 and an error rate (MAPE = 0.34) that underscored its robust predictive capabilities. Random Forest Regression emerged as the second-best performing model, providing reasonably accurate predictions across all three baseline models, while its R-Square values were slightly lower than those of Gradient Boosted Trees. While its R-Square values (e.g., 0.55 for Model 1.1, 0.64 for Model 2.1, and 0.60 for Model 3.1) were slightly lower than those of Gradient Boosted Trees, it demonstrated reliable performance and a notable ability to handle complex, non-linear relationships. These results highlight its value as a complementary non-parametric model for validating findings from other approaches. By contrast, Polynomial Regression and XGBoost Linear Regression underperformed in all models. Polynomial Regression showed an inability to capture the variability in the data adequately, with R-Square values of 0.14, 0.34, and 0.13 across the three baseline models. Similarly, XGBoost Linear Regression was limited in its effectiveness, yielding R-Square values of 0.08, 0.31, and 0.17. Both algorithms also produced higher error metrics, suggesting that simpler parametric and linear relationships are insufficient to explain the dynamics of the predictors and outcomes.

Model 1 Predictors: Rationisation, Bureaucratisation, Hierarchy Target: Financial Autonomy	Non-Linear			Linear and Parametric
	Non-parametric		Semi-parametric	
Metrics	Random Forest	Gradient Boosted Trees	Polynomial	XGBoost Linear
R-Square	0.55	0.71	0.14	0.08
Adjusted R-Square	0.55	0.71	0.14	0.08
Mean absolute error	19.02	6.50	27.32	28.01
Mean squared error	541.46	355.27	1039.52	1105.78
Root mean squared error	23.30	18.85	32.24	33.25
Mean signed difference	1.09	1.25	0.11	-0.20
Mean absolute percentage error	6.64	2.65	8.98	9.44
Model 2 Predictors: Professionalisation, Formal Commitment Target: Institutional Autonomy				
Metrics	Random Forest	Gradient Boosted Trees	Polynomial	XGBoost Linear
R-Square	0.64	0.87	0.34	0.31
Adjusted R-Square	0.64	0.87	0.34	0.31
Mean absolute error	0.39	0.09	0.60	0.61
Mean squared error	0.36	0.13	0.66	0.68
Root mean squared error	0.60	0.36	0.81	0.83
Mean signed difference	0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.00
Mean absolute percentage error	2.73	1.20	2.81	3.78
Model 3 Predictors: Bureaucratisation, Hierarchy Target: Formal Commitment				
Metrics	Random Forest	Gradient Boosted Trees	Polynomial	XGBoost Linear
R-Square	0.60	0.71	0.13	0.17
Adjusted R-Square	0.60	0.71	0.13	0.17
Mean absolute error	0.52	0.20	0.77	0.74
Mean squared error	0.40	0.29	0.87	0.82
Root mean squared error	0.63	0.54	0.93	0.91
Mean signed difference	-0.01	-0.03	0.00	0.01
Mean absolute percentage error	0.60	0.34	1.68	1.67

Table 9 Testing the theoretical models in machine learning algorithms

These findings suggest that theoretical relationships in the study are inherently non-linear, requiring algorithms like Gradient Boosted Trees or Random Forests that can model intricate interactions. The superior performance of Gradient Boosted Trees highlights its adaptability to complex patterns, making it the preferred method for predictive accuracy in this

analysis. In contrast, the lower performance of Polynomial and XGBoost Linear Regression underscores their limitations in capturing these non-linearities. Future iterations of the models could benefit from fine-tuning hyperparameters and incorporating additional non-linear methodologies to refine predictions further.

Last but not least, mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Models 4 and 5) to explore the indirect effects of *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* on *institutional autonomy* through the mediator, *formal commitment* (for the effects, see Table 10 below; for the model summaries see Appendix V). The results revealed partial mediation in both cases. For *bureaucratisation*, the direct effect on *institutional autonomy* was negative and significant, while the indirect effect through *formal commitment* was positive and significant (effect = 0.7992, 95% CI [0.0258, 1.9055]). This suggests that higher levels of *bureaucratisation* reduce *institutional autonomy*, but this effect is mitigated when *formal commitment* is considered, highlighting its mediating role. Similarly, for *hierarchy*, the direct effect on *institutional autonomy* was negative and significant, but the indirect effect through *formal commitment* was not statistically significant (effect = 0.0690, 95% CI [-0.0372, 0.2186]). These findings indicate that while *formal commitment* partially mediates the effect of *bureaucratisation*, its mediating role in the relationship between *hierarchy* and *institutional autonomy* is weak or negligible.

Effect	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error (SE)	t-statistic	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Model 4.1: Bureaucratisation → Formal Commitment						
Constant	0.4078	0.0380	10.7448	0.0000	0.3326	0.4830
Bureaucratisation	0.3131	0.0647	4.8404	0.0000	0.1849	0.4412
Model 4.2: Bureaucratisation → Formal Commitment → Institutional Autonomy						
Constant	-1.3817	0.7505	-1.2194	0.2253	-2.4027	0.5724
Bureaucratisation	-2.2652	0.8385	-2.7015	0.0080	-3.9271	-0.6034
Formal Commitment	2.5526	1.1223	2.2744	0.0249	0.3282	4.7770
Model 5.1: Hierarchy → Formal Commitment						
Constant	0.4526	0.0522	8.6619	0.0000	0.3490	0.5561
Hierarchy	0.0393	0.0172	2.2866	0.0241	0.0052	0.0734
Model 5.2: Hierarchy → Formal Commitment → Institutional Autonomy						
Constant	-1.3817	0.7505	-1.2194	0.2253	-2.4027	0.5724
Hierarchy	-0.4106	0.1949	-2.1061	0.0375	-0.7969	-0.0242
Formal Commitment	1.7559	1.0560	1.6627	0.0992	-0.3372	3.8489

Table 10 Effects of Bureaucratisation and Hierarchy on Institutional Autonomy

While the mediation analysis adds nuance to the findings, it does not contradict the main models. The findings for the indirect effect of *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* are consistent with the findings from Models 1 to 3. Nevertheless, Models 1 to 3 were designed with distinct theoretical purposes—examining the effects of specific predictors on *financial autonomy* and *institutional autonomy*. In doing so, it excluded *bureaucratisation* from Model 2.1, justified by the lack of deductive reasoning for the effect of *bureaucratisation* on *institutional autonomy*. The mediation analysis, therefore, provides additional evidence of cross-dimensional relationships that were not considered in the original models, enriching the overall interpretation of the results without altering the theoretical underpinnings of the main models.

7. Results and Discussions

7.1. The results of empirical analysis

Formal Institutionalisation and Financial Autonomy

Models 1.1 and 1.2 above tested the effects of *rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation*, and *hierarchy* on the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations, as postulated in hypotheses (H_{1a-c}). H_{1a} suggested that the pursuit of rationalisation, with its emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, might conflict with the need to delicately navigate between transnational financial connections and state financial links, which demands continuous strategic adaptability from civil society organisations. However, an overriding focus on efficiency and effectiveness was argued to have a disruptive effect on this necessary agility. The baseline model confirmed this expectation demonstrating a significant negative effect for *rationalisation*. In contrast, the stratification of hierarchy within an organisation was hypothesised to enhance financial autonomy. The logic followed from that a hierarchical structure centralises decision-making power, thereby granting leaders more strategic leeway, albeit possibly at the cost of internal solidarity. These reflections led to the proposition of H_{1c}, which argued for a positive impact of *hierarchy* on *financial autonomy*. The baseline model also offered support for this hypothesis. However, contrary to H_{1c}, no significant effect for *bureaucratisation* was found in this baseline model. The theoretical framework posited that the rigidity inherent in bureaucratisation, with its focus on stability, might limit the financial dexterity of civil society organisations. Autonomy, as a political and normative aspiration, might necessitate the sacrifice of stability. As such, and as elaborated in Section 5.3, bureaucratisation could necessitate the relinquishment of civil society ideals in the face of pragmatic demands.

The interaction model, which introduced interaction terms with the regime variable, provided significant effects for all three predictors, the regime variable, and one of the three interaction terms. These results enable a more nuanced understanding of the financial autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes. While the effects of *rationalisation* and *hierarchy* experience only a slight change from the baseline model to the interaction model, *bureaucratisation* and its interaction term gain a significant effect in the latter. *Bureaucratisation* gaining a significant negative effect in the interaction model, demonstrates that in the less authoritarian context (Turkey), bureaucratisation can stifle autonomy by prioritising stability over flexibility. However, its positive interaction effect, which has a similar size, annuls its

hypothesised negative effect ($-.255 + .237 = -.018$) for the more authoritarian context (Russia). In the case of Turkey, the imperative to maintain autonomy by balancing between the transnational and state financial linkages was, hence, proved to be a pressing issue. A conceivable interpretation for the lack of effect of bureaucratisation in the more authoritarian Russia, where resources are scarce and accessibility to them is more controlled, a bureaucratic presence within civil society entities could imply, on the one hand, the increased internal impetus to establish state financial relationships, as previously mentioned, but, on the other hand, enhanced flexibility within the bureaucratic framework under the pressure of tight financial conditions faced. In such contexts, organisational bureaucracies might acquire newfound agility, inadvertently providing the structural pliancy that enables leaders to steer through and safeguard their autonomy under authoritarian constraints. Furthermore, this flexibility could also stem from the informal institutionalisation of authoritarian political norms within the organisations, which might preclude bureaucracy from developing an independent agency within the organisation. For organisational bureaucracy to exercise stronger agency vis-à-vis the managerial line, formal regulations and contractual relationships might not be sufficient or less effective in more authoritarian contexts. Even when such an agency exists formally, the cultural codes may prevent its exercise due to self-censor or peer pressures within the organisation—the point that can be well picked by the political culture argument in the relevant literature. Overall, these results underscore the contingent nature of bureaucratisation's effects on financial autonomy, demonstrating how organisational structures interact with the institutional environment.

Last but not least, the positive direct effect of the regime variable (*authoritarianism*) on *financial autonomy* demonstrates that balancing between transnational and state financial linkage can be a stronger characteristic feature of civil society organisations in hardliner autocracies rather than in moderate autocracies. Such a result does not necessarily contradict the conceptualisation of the autonomy of civil society organisations as the strategic management of multiple interdependencies. Still, it can be an indicator of the availability of more diverse interdependences to civil society organisations within moderate autocracies and of the diminished significance of the state financial linkage among them for civil society organisations. The importance of the linkage to the broader context, the regime variable as accounted for in this study, is further evidenced by the large increase in adjusted R-squared (from .135 in Model 1.1 to .333 in Model 1.2) from the baseline model to the interaction model.

Overall, the conjectural nature of the aforementioned arguments indicates that discerning the causal dynamics between formal institutionalisation and general organisational autonomy, and particularly between bureaucratisation and financial autonomy, necessitates thorough qualitative inquiry. Alternative theoretical frameworks might also enhance comprehension of the relationship between the formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations and their autonomy in authoritarian settings. Therefore, this investigation can only illustrate the interplay between bureaucratisation and the quality of authoritarian regimes without arriving at any conclusive assertions on the matter.

Formal Institutionalisation and Institutional Autonomy

The proposed theoretical framework established *institutional autonomy*—the balance between the ties to transnational and state-operated networks such as forums, working groups, etc.—as the function of *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* as well as their interaction. Firstly, professionalisation was hypothesised to have a negative effect on the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations H_{2a}. The argumentation for such an effect was triple-fold. By appropriating the arguments from the organisation theory for civil society organisations and authoritarian contexts, it was proposed that professionalisation within an organisation can fragment departmental objectives and dilute leadership directives, undermining the pursuit of autonomy by fostering divergent alliances. Furthermore, professionalisation was argued to stifle the nimbleness or—strategic flexibility—required to maintain a delicate equilibrium between transnational and state ties, often valorising individual professional objectives over collective goals. Both the baseline and interaction models affirmed the hypothesised relationship between professionalisation and institutional autonomy. However, the decrease of the negative effect from the baseline model to the interaction model, as well as the significant effect of the interaction term, suggest that the negative effect of *professionalisation* is much stronger in the case of Russia (hardliner autocracy) than in the case of Turkey (moderate autocracy).

In contrast, it was argued that *formal commitment* within civil society organisations, characterised by formal regulation both internally and externally and contractualisation of relationships with members, enhances internal empowerment and mitigates the sway of informal, potentially biased power, thereby reinforcing institutional autonomy. This commitment not only legitimises organisations both internally and in the wider societal context, potentially solidifying their stance in relation to the state, but also curtails arbitrary role overstepping. Hence, H_{2b} anticipated the positive effect of *formal commitment* over *institutional autonomy*. With the

increase of formal commitment within civil society organisations, their institutional autonomy, manifested in the balance between the ties to transnational and state networks, was expected to grow. While the hypothesis was affirmed in the baseline mode, no significant effect was found for *formal commitment* in the interaction model. Even though its interaction term yielded no significant result, the loss of effect from the baseline model to the interaction model or that its effect is absorbed by the regime variable or interaction terms in the latter model eventually indicates that the effect of *formal commitment* can be regime-dependent. Such a result can potentially be explained by two factors. Above all, as the theoretical framework articulates, formal institutionalisation is double-edged. On the one hand, it can shield civil society organisations against the influences of the authoritarian environment being channelled through informal institutionalisation, facilitate the translation of the civil force of the law into the organisational level, and earn more legitimacy for civil society organisations vis-à-vis the state and within society. On the other hand, formal institutionalisation is argued to bring in elements characteristic of uncivil spheres and hence, compromise the mission and solidarity within. From the double-edge view of formal institutionalisation, it can, hence, be suggested that formalising commitments within civil society organisations operating under a more autocratic rule can potentially eliminate its positive effect over institutional autonomy, leading to the disturbance of the balancing between institutional ties to the transnational sphere and the state. Nevertheless, the point requires closer scrutiny than merely suggesting potential explanations.

Finally, the negative effect of the regime variable over *institutional autonomy*, which contrasts its positive effect on financial autonomy in Model 1.2, suggests that finding the right balance between the institutional ties to the transnational sphere and those to the state is a much harder task in hardliner autocracies (here in the case of Russia) than in moderate autocracies. Overall, the contingency of the model on the regime variable is also supported by the substantial increase in the adjusted R-squared from the baseline model to the interaction model (from .364 in Model 2.1 to .575 in Model 2.2) despite the loss of the effect of hierarchy in the latter.

Indirect Effects on Institutional Autonomy

While the earlier models tested the effects of different elements of formal institutionalisation on the financial and institutional autonomy of civil society organisations operating under authoritarian rule, the third theoretical model relates to the interaction among different elements of formal institutionalisation, more specifically, the effects of *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* over *formal commitment*. Hence, it also concerns the indirect

effects of these predictors over *institutional autonomy* via *formal commitment*. In this regard, the theoretical framework proposed that bureaucratisation, as the expansion of non-managerial roles, necessitates a formal governance structure, which entails legal and contractual obligations to mitigate uncertainties and potential conflicts (H_{3a}). Concurrently, an increase in hierarchical levels calls for clearly defined roles and responsibilities, thereby solidifying formal commitment to ensure regulated interactions and certainty within and outside the organisation (H_{3b}). These dynamics, while not unique to authoritarian settings, are pivotal as they indirectly shape the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations within such regimes by reinforcing formal commitment.

The baseline model affirmed H_{3a}, showing a significant effect of *bureaucratisation* over *formal commitment*. However, no effect was observed for *hierarchy* in this model. Nevertheless, once interaction terms with the regime variable were introduced in the interaction model, not only did *bureaucratisation* increase its effect size (from .391 in Model 3.1 to .492 in Model 3.2), but *hierarchy* also gained a substantial significant effect (.355 in Model 3.2). Moreover, the interaction terms of both predictors with the regime variable showed significant effects (.293 and .261, respectively). The results suggest that the hypothesised relationships between *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* on the one hand and *formal commitment* on the other are much stronger in the case of the hardliner autocratic regime of Russia than in the case of the moderate autocratic regime of Turkey. Consistent also with the results from Model 2, the regime variable is found to adversely determine *formal commitment*, suggesting how formal commitment could be more difficult to establish in hardliner autocracies than in moderate autocracies. This observation is also consistent with the findings in the literature. Earlier discussions in the literature review sections told the story of how authoritarian regimes generally disfavour the legal establishment of civil society organisations, which earns them more legitimacy both vis-à-vis the state and within society. Like the earlier two models, the contingency on the regime is further supported by the substantial increase in the adjusted R-squared from the baseline model to the interaction model (.175 in Model 3.1 to .440 in Model 3.2).

The findings largely validate the proposed theoretical constructs, with the empirical data affirming the predicted relationships, though contingent upon the regime variable—how authoritarian the regime is. The emerging picture that initially seems straightforward gains considerable depth when one compares the outcomes from Russia, with its more entrenched autocracy, to those from the relatively moderate autocracy of Turkey. While the hypothesised

effect of *bureaucratisation* over *financial autonomy* and that of *formal commitment* over *institutional autonomy* were found to apply to the moderate autocracy of Turkey than the hardliner autocracy case of Russia, the opposite was found to be the case for *professionalisation's* effect over *institutional autonomy* and the effects of *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* over *formal commitment*. These findings offer a compelling case for further probing into the role of formal institutionalisation in shaping the autonomy of civil society organisations measured on different dimensions. Beyond these variable/model-oriented conclusions, these results have broader implications for Russia's and Turkey's specific contexts, aspects of which are to be unpacked in the succeeding section below.

Interpreting the supplementary analysis

As supplementary to the linear regression analyses, baseline models (Models 1.1, 2.1, and 3.1) were tested using machine learning algorithms to explore potential non-linear relationships and enhance predictive accuracy. To this end, the theoretical models were tested through two non-linear and non-parametric algorithms, namely Random Forest Regression and Gradient Boosted Tree Regression. Additionally, a non-linear and semi-parametric polynomial regression and a linear XGBoosted were deployed. Gradient Boosted Trees Regression consistently outperformed other algorithms, demonstrating the highest R-Square and lowest error metrics across all models. It demonstrated a higher level of prediction for all three models (.71, .87, and .71, respectively), suggesting a strong non-linear relationship between the predictors and the target variables in all three models, reinforcing the need for an advanced theoretical construction of complex interactions among variables (See Table 11).

Model	Adjusted R² Linear Regression (non-split models)	Adjusted R² Gradient Boosted Trees	Difference
Model 1 (Financial Autonomy)	0.135	0.710	+0.575
Model 2 (Institutional Autonomy)	0.364	0.870	+0.506
Model 3 (Formal Commitment)	0.175	0.710	+0.535

Table 11 Comparing the performance of linear and non-linear models

These results, overall, align with the hypothesised multi-faceted interplay between formal institutionalisation and organisational autonomy in authoritarian contexts, offering complementary validation of the linear regression findings.

Mediation analyses further enriched the interpretation by examining the indirect effects of *bureaucratisation* and *hierarchy* on *institutional autonomy* through *formal commitment*. The results revealed partial mediation in both cases. *Bureaucratisation* exhibited a negative direct effect on *institutional autonomy* (though *bureaucratisation* was not included in Model 2 above) but a significant positive indirect effect through *formal commitment* (effect = 0.7992, 95% CI [0.0258, 1.9055]). This dual nature of *bureaucratisation* suggests that while it constrains autonomy directly, it simultaneously fosters formal commitment, which in turn enhances institutional autonomy. This finding nuances the results of Model 3, which demonstrated the positive effect of *bureaucratisation* on *formal commitment* and highlighted its contingent nature when interacting with regime characteristics. For *hierarchy*, the mediation results showed a weaker pattern. While the direct effect on *institutional autonomy* was negative and significant, the indirect effect through *formal commitment* was not statistically significant (effect = 0.0690, 95% CI [-0.0372, 0.2186]). This indicates that while *formal commitment* plays a role in mediating the relationship, its influence is insufficient to counteract the direct negative effects of *hierarchy*. While these results only partially align with the findings (regarding the positive indirect effect of *bureaucratisation*), they further indirectly validate how the inclusion of the regime variable is key to understanding the effects of formal institutionalisation over the financial and institutional autonomy of civil society organisations.

7.2. Aligning the results with the discussions on the cases of Russia and Turkey

The current section juxtaposes the findings of the empirical analysis with the concluding points of Sections 4.1 and 4.2 above (respectively, the discussion of the Russian and Turkish cases based on the literature), aiming to ascertain the degree to which these specific findings correspond with the established scholarly understanding. Hence, the discussions below can be seen, in a sense, the corroboration of the empirical results through the literature, in which directly pertinent studies can hardly be identified. The succeeding dialogue between the empirical results and the conclusions from the discussion of the literature on the two cases helps expose not only the congruences between them but also the shortcomings of the proposed theoretical framework. Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging in advance that the connection between the findings and the existing research on Russia and Turkey is somewhat indirect, as no prior work has directly dealt with the formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations and its implications for their autonomy, as understood in this study.

The results of empirical analysis, above all, demonstrate the differences resulting from the authoritarian regime quality between Russia and Turkey. More specifically, the effects of *professionalisation* in Model 2 and the whole set of relationships considered in Model 3 show a relatively better fit for the Russian case than the Turkish case, gauged by the interaction terms. This can be explained by the fact that the proposed model presupposed the co-optation by the state as a constant and consistent pressure. Without such pressure, state ties in the overall set of interdependencies a civil society organisation may have would weigh relatively less than when such pressure is present. It is in the presence of such pressure that civil society organisations can be expected to balance between transnationalisation and co-optation by the state. Hence, these findings reaffirm the particular applicability of the model to authoritarian contexts. The discussion of the Turkish case points to a notable divergence in the strategies employed by the governments of Turkey and Russia in relation to civil society. Russia adopts a dual strategy of confrontation vs. co-optation, whereas Turkey employs a method of appropriation and containment. More specifically, the Turkish government's strategy seems to not be as inhibiting as Russia's, given the fact that Turkey is far behind Russia in the authoritarian consolidation path and has a better and longer democracy record. Consequently, in the absence of the stark dual approach that characterises the Russian situation, the model's applicability to Turkey may understandably be less pronounced. Nevertheless, the reverse finding for bureaucratisation in Model 1 and potentially for formal commitment in Model 2, requires further scrutiny.

The difference between the cases can also be attributed to the strong historical and ideological cleavages in Turkish society, which may trump the strategic flexibility required for organisational autonomy—the shortcoming of the proposed model. Eventually, historical and ideological attachments may intersect and override the resource-focused organisational quest for autonomy or, generally, the idea of autonomy as such. Similarly, the deep-root ideological schism may also play a role in the government's calculations towards civil society organisations. Even though the Russian government might be no less ideological than the Turkish government, the ideological divide within Russian society is not as deep as in Turkish society. While the Russian government also seeks civil society organisations' alignment along the government discourse and policies, there might be no prior categorical exception in this regard. Yet, in the Turkish case, given the deep-rooted split in society, the Turkish state might not even identify certain segments of civil society as the addressees of its appropriation strategies.

Moreover, the Turkish state's dominant role in shaping the agenda and impact of civil society organisations in the realm of fundamental rights and freedoms, despite the role of EU support in the growth of Turkish civil society, can further explain the relatively weaker empirical results for the Turkish case. The literature review has also highlighted the advantages arising from state funding in accessing the state, which can further justify the difference in the results of the institutional autonomy model, in particular. The latter point also underlines the possible association between financial and institutional autonomy, where the relationship could be causal both in mechanistic terms (funding may come with strings attached that have consequences for institutional autonomy) or intentional (civil society organisations may choose state funding for access it provides to the state-operated networks).

The institutional autonomy of civil society organisations needs also to be considered in light of the discussions in the literature. The inspection of the literature on the Russian case in Section 4.1 highlighted the government's policies aimed at institutionalising its relations with civil society organisations through multi-level governance networks. This is further indirectly validated by the direct (negative) effect of the authoritarian regime quality over institutional autonomy in the empirical results. This finding is also consistent with the suggestion in the studies on the case of Russia that even though there exists a certain room for manoeuvre and non-contentious dissent within the government-controlled networks, the state has tight control over and through these networks. Last but not least, the presence of a direct (negative) effect of the authoritarian regime quality on institutional autonomy can also be related to the deep-seated culture of the *network state* in Russia, where being part of and loyal to the *sistema* is key to the survival of civil society organisations.

The literature's assertion that within the governance networks operated by the government agencies at different levels in Russia, a certain level of dissent still exists, though not in an overtly political way, can also be explained by the findings of this study regarding the effects of professionalisation over institutional autonomy being stronger in the Russian case than in the Turkish case. The autonomy achieved by civil society organisations through delicate balancing between transnational and state finance and institutions can potentially explain the presence of such dissent within the government-operated networks. Further exploration of this argument can help enrich the understanding of this phenomenon, which the current literature attributes only to the Russian state's development and legitimacy-related interests in tolerating limited criticisms within these networks.

Moreover, while bureaucratisation was expected to cultivate a rigid culture and, therefore, negatively determine the financial autonomy of civil society organisations, its effect was found to be significantly diminished in the Russian case compared to the Turkish case. The potential explanation provided for this result above highlights the learning of adaptability by bureaucratisation under strenuous conditions in the Russian case. This aligns well with the literature underlining the adaptability of Russian civil society, which was extensively discussed in Section 4.1. The literature review highlighted an array of studies focusing on the tactics that civil society organisations employ in response to growing governmental restrictions. These works commend the creativity of civil society organisations in continuously modifying their strategies and target audiences while remaining true to their missions. However, there is a notable omission in this body of research: it seldom, if ever, addresses the impact of this adaptation process on the organisations' structural dimensions. Hence, the finding regarding the reduced influence of bureaucratisation in the Russian case underscores this significant oversight in the existing literature.

The fit of the proposed theoretical framework for the Russian case, despite the constraints put on the financing of civil society organisations by foreign sources, is a surprising finding. This result indirectly indicates the increased adaptability and creativity of civil society organisations to accommodate both, and their acknowledgement of how foreign funding is crucial for maintaining their autonomy. However, the discussion of the Russian case also highlights the severe limitations brought to the foreign funding of civil society organisations, posing a challenge to the proposed theoretical framework given its presupposition regarding the availability of some foreign funding. Two arguments can be brought in this regard. First, foreign funding, as reported also in the survey by Russian civil society organisations is not fully cut or was not so at the time of data collection. Secondly, the conceptualisation of autonomy did not limit the idea of strategic balancing among multiple different sources of financing only to two sources—transnational and the state—but only for the purpose of this study, these two sources were considered. Future research might look into local alternatives to state funding to further substantiate the understanding of financial autonomy defended here.

To summarise, the resonance of the empirical results in the relevant literature on the two cases highlights the following. First, some of the proposed theoretical relationships (professionalisation in Model 2 and the whole set of relationships in Model 3) fit the Russian case better than the Turkish case. Second, the presuppositions of the proposed theoretical

framework on the presence of constant pressure for co-optation and the availability of opportunities for transnationalisation need to be controlled. Although the current study partly addressed the latter point by involving the authoritarian regime quality through the cross-country comparison, future research may involve more specific aspects in this regard. However, the extent of opportunities available for transnationalisation has not been controlled at all. Third, the results for bureaucratisation in Model 1 highlighted the diverging effects of local contexts. The insights about the adaptability of Russian civil society organisations in the face of increasing government restrictions posit a challenge to the universal thinking about the rigidity of bureaucracies in authoritarian contexts. The discussions of the results in the preceding section provided some potential explanations for this. In the same vein, the null effect of hierarchy on formal commitment in the baseline Model 3.1 but its significant effect when the interaction terms are included invites re-considerations about the regime-related specific controls for the enrichment of the propositions. Future research might consider more specific aspects related to the theoretical framework, such as measurements on the restrictiveness of the regulatory framework, the specificities of government policies towards civil society, or the state of ideological polarisation in society (as in the case of Turkey), to enhance the understanding of civil society dynamics.

The discussions above highlight some key points in the results of empirical analyses that can be related to the findings in the literature, though indirectly. However, by no means do these discussions exhaust the potential of the empirical findings to further enrich the knowledge of the selected cases. Similarly, the extant literature's potential to further affirm and highlight the limitations of the theoretical framework proposed in this study is not fully exploited. Therefore, the resonance of the empirical findings might be far-reaching when juxtaposed with a more nuanced analysis of the cases of Russia and Turkey or other countries available in the literature. Nonetheless, some implications can be drawn for the general knowledge from these discussions, which the next section will deliver.

7.3. Implications for positive theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes

Notwithstanding numerous shortcomings it may have, the proposed theoretical framework provides some potentially fruitful grounds upon which future research on civil society explaining the autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes by their organisational features can be conducted. Above all, the present study distinguished the importance of the organisation level for the analysis of civil society. Once the organisation level

is taken up, the door opens to the organisational characteristics of civil associations. Moving in this direction, the study is set to demonstrate the relevance of formal institutionalisation to the autonomy of civil society organisations. The diverging effects of five different aspects of formal institutionalisation prove how diffused its effect on civil society organisations can be. The diffused effect of formal institutionalisation was possible to establish thanks to the guidance of the macro-theory deployed here—the *civil sphere* theory, whose primary premise suggests that civil society ideals are compromised while realised. The presented diffused effect of formal institutionalisation builds mostly, but not exclusively, on this duality of compromising while realising found in the *civil sphere* theory. The diffused effect of formal institutionalisation can be understood in at least four ways.

- *First*, different aspects of formal institutionalisation are shown to have different direct effects—some positive (hierarchy and formal commitment), while others negative (rationalisation, bureaucratisation, professionalisation —on the autonomy of civil society organisations).
- *Secondly*, different aspects of formal institutionalisation are shown to have direct effects on different dimensions of autonomy: rationalisation, bureaucratisation, and hierarchy bear effects on financial autonomy, while formal commitment and professionalisation feed into the formation of the institutional autonomy of civil society organisations.
- *Thirdly*, the direct and indirect effects of some aspects of formal institutionalisation, namely bureaucratisation and hierarchy, proved to influence financial autonomy directly but institutional autonomy indirectly—via formal commitment.
- *Fourth*, bureaucratisation is found to have a negative direct effect (on financial autonomy) and a positive indirect effect (on institutional autonomy) simultaneously. Nevertheless, such a mixed effect can be much more than the case of bureaucratisation, as this study does not exhaust analyses of the relationships among all aspects of formal institutionalisation.

So far known to the author, no other study has openly addressed these questions. Hence, by theoretically laying out the relevance of formal institutionalisation and its diffused effect and empirically demonstrating it, the current research addressed a significant oversight in the

literature. These findings also contest the assertions made by certain research that views the formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations as unambiguously detrimental. As already discussed earlier, these studies deploy *NGOization* or *professionalisation* with negative connotations without providing precise conceptual framing or reference to the organisation theory. This study provides strong counter-evidence to this assertion in the literature, showcasing that the ramifications of formally institutionalising civil society entities extend beyond a straightforwardly negative interpretation. Perhaps more important than establishing counter-evidence, the proposed theoretical framework invites the scholarship to discriminate between different aspects of formal institutionalisation and, in doing so, involve the organisation theory as a source of cross-literature fertilisation. At the end of the day, having civil society organisations discussed for long without seeing them as organisations requiring organisational perspectives must not go unscrutinised.

Moreover, the research provides a new conceptualisation of the autonomy of civil society organisations that goes beyond the independent vs dependent dichotomy and that can embrace civil society organisations' co-optation by the state to some extent and simultaneously its transnationalisation without normatively classifying them as a certain sort of civil or uncivil society. By bringing in perspectives from organisation studies, the present work re-conceptualised autonomy as strategic flexibility gained through balancing different interdependencies of the organisation with its external environment. In this view, there is no possibility for avoiding interdependencies between the organisation and its environment but for the management of them so that the room for manoeuvre among them is greater for the organisation to pursue its own mission and hence, to be self-directed. Such autonomy arises from the authority of decision-making maintained through the discretionary space recognised for the organisation in its interdependencies. In such a view, having ties to the authoritarian state does not necessarily result in the loss of autonomy for civil society organisations unless it is counter-balanced by alternative ties. The more alternatives exist, the higher the chances of counterbalancing. Or the more (diverse) the ties of the organisation, the less it is dependent on individual relationships.

Secondly, such a conceptualisation allows us to embrace the criticisms often raised regarding the dependence of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes on foreign financing, knowledge transfer or empowerment. Hence, in this view, the autonomy of a civil society organisation is a matter of degree and can change dynamically depending on the

management of ties to different elements of the environment. This also means that the more autonomous organisation is not one that enjoys merely greater autonomy from the authoritarian state while being overly reliant on another kind—say, transnational actors. Rather, it is the one that has no over-reliance on any single or limited number of ties.

Nevertheless, the reconceptualisation of autonomy in this research suffers from at least two major shortcomings. First, only the two dimensions are established: financial and institutional, while the organisation studies literature may offer a number of others such as strategic, normative, operational, etc. For the sake of parsimony, the current study chose to focus only on dimensions of autonomy. Future studies may probe into others. Secondly, the current research operationalised the autonomy of civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes as the balance between only two broad categories of ties: transnational and state. This limitation has also been openly acknowledged in the discussions above. While there can be some other categories, the selected ones are proposed to be more salient. The constant co-optation pressure by the state demanded one of them, while only transnationalisation, with a few insights from the literature, is considered to be capable of countering the influence of the state. Nevertheless, self-funding or local networking with other societal elements (for instance, media and business) independent from the state can well be alternatives. Moreover, the discussion of the selected cases demonstrated that the state is not a cohesive system or a unitary actor but rather represented by fragmented actors. Similarly, transnationalisation is not unitary and, therefore, may need to have internally differentiated categories. Hence, future applications of the proposed conceptualisation of autonomy may look into more nuanced operationalisation instruments that can address the diversity of actors on the one hand and differentiate the more influential ones on the other. As a work that pioneers such an organisational approach to civil society in authoritarian contexts, the choice between parsimony and complexity has often, as in this case of the conceptualisation and operationalisation of autonomy, been made in favour of the former, leaving numerous shortcomings, along with substantial findings, for future research.

The current research had its goal of contributing to the series of studies in the literature that deploy the *symbiosis* perspective, either explicitly or implicitly. Through the reconceptualisation of the autonomy of civil society organisations in authoritarian settings and establishing formal institutionalisation as the significant, though double-edged, determinant of the former, the current research worked towards the stated goal. The findings reveal the limitations of the other three perspectives identified in the literature, namely the *conflictual*

perspective, the *cooperative adjustment* and the *co-optative joinder*. As discussed earlier, the *conflictual* perspective sees civil society-authoritarian state relationships as exclusively a zero-sum game, manifested in a constant struggle between the sides. Although the *cooperative adjustment* does not fundamentally alter the conflictual view, it tends to acknowledge the instances of cooperation between civil society and authoritarian state, while the *co-optative joinder* can be seen as a pushback of the conflictual perspective in which the cooperative elements of the relationship between civil society and authoritarian state are undermined only as the strategies of the latter to tame the former. Meanwhile, the *symbiosis* approach avoids reducing the civil society-authoritarian state relationship to its conflictual aspects, highlighting the necessity for cooperation between the sides yet not rejecting the co-optation efforts of the state. Hence, the *symbiosis* perspective, as said earlier, deploys a more nuanced approach. Thanks to such an approach, it becomes possible to conceptualise the autonomy of civil society organisations as embedded in the management of the network of ties and expose the double-edged function of formal institutionalisation. The treatment of formal institutionalisation with unequivocally negative connotations in the literature, hence, owes their failure to recognise the diffused effect of formal institutionalisation to the *conflictual* perspective.

The resulting difference between the *symbiosis* perspective on the one hand and the other three also demonstrates how the former can push beyond the thick normative lenses bestowed by the judgemental lenses of the liberal, republican and in-between accounts, which sees civil society in a constant and uncompromising struggle with the authoritarian state, sees the former at best as *in-form*ation and at worst as *uncivil*, or recognises a little room cooperation between them. The judgemental lenses borrowed from the normative theorising in empirical studies, hence, deploy rigid conceptualisation of the relationship between the two that also extends towards the question of civility—that is, who counts and who does not in civil society.

Beyond sacrificing the nuanced view of civil society within authoritarian regimes, such thick normativity also restricts the analytical strategies available to the scholarship to two major options: the “mirroring” strategy—the assessment of the real situation at hand against the ideal benchmarks and the descriptive explorations of the characteristics and strategies deployed by civil society and the authoritarian state in mutual interaction. However, on the grounds provided by the *symbiosis* perspective, this research also aspired, as its overall aim, to contribute to the *positive* theorising on civil society—that is, studying civil society in authoritarian contexts in their own terms, which is also in line, as briefly mentioned earlier, with the scholarly calls for

and efforts to de-Westernise the conceptualisation of civil society. Therefore, the present study eschewed the analytical strategies prevalent in the relevant literature, which typically evaluate civil society organisations within authoritarian regimes based on their alignment or deviation from normative standards of expected civil society behaviour or state interaction. Instead, it deployed the explanatory strategy that can help understand the phenomenon of civil society under authoritarian rule beyond the points of divergence or convergence compared to the normative ideals. Hence, the primary impetus of this research was the investigation of causality, as opposed to merely describing or evaluating the situation at hand. Therefore, beyond the specific results arising from the empirical analysis, the approach deployed in this study establishes one case for *positive* theorising on civil society.

8. Synoptic Reflections on the Research Trajectory and Outcomes

This closing section reflects upon the pathway pursued from the introductory words to the discussions of the results and their implications for general knowledge with a hope to compensate for the complexity and possible confusions arising from the broad literature review strategy and application of diverse methods at different stages. This requires, above all, reflection on the overall goal of the research, which was to offer a case for *positive* theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes. Although the existing literature reviews on the subject, which are limited in number and unsystematic, might already indicate the presence of reasonable grounds for making this claim, the very claim itself had to be substantiated in the study. Hence, the first task of the research was to justify its cause by engaging in a comprehensive literature review rather than building on existing grounds. To this goal, the research started with the close scrutiny of the extant literature of two different strands—the normative accounts of civil society and the empirical studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes. Consequently, the results were juxtaposed to expose the influence of normative theorising on empirical studies. Such an endeavour not only helped to justify the cause but also provides the necessary grounds for offering an example study of positive theorising. Such an ambitious goal, hopefully, could convince the reader of its success and make contributions to the extant literature that would attract the attention of the relevant scholarly audience.

The literature review of this study can serve as a three-series of stand-alone contributions to the literature in its own right. Firstly, the review of the prevailing normative accounts (liberal, republican and in-between) establishes their judgemental lenses for civil society within authoritarian regimes. The very ambition of extracting these judgemental lenses is new to the literature, as no prior study has set it as its specific objective. However, while saying this, one should also bear in mind that the range of accounts reviewed has not been exhaustive, pre-eminently leaving out the radical democratic theory of civil society. Secondly, the review of the empirical studies on civil society within authoritarian regimes identified four perspectives. So far, no similar work was produced before, as far as known to the author. The four perspectives—*conflictual*, *cooperative adjustment*, *co-optative joinder* and *symbiosis*—are not just four views independent from one another, but rather, they present a certain dialectical development process in the literature. At its core, this dialectical process is between the efforts to break with the judgemental lenses preached by the normative accounts discussed here and pushback by them.

By unravelling the four perspectives, the present study helps structure future engagements in this process, too.

In comparison to the previous two literature review contributions, the third contribution of the literature review is relatively less substantial but more specific. It fortified the *symbiosis* perspective while concurrently furnishing the context for the empirical analysis to follow. The synthesis of research on Russia and Turkey yielded a nuanced tableau that delineated both the parallels and the distinct divergences borne of each country's unique blend of authoritarian regime characteristics, as well as their respective historical and cultural nuances. Numerous directions for future research can be found in those discussions, which demonstrated that sufficient knowledge was compiled in the literature waiting for more systemic reviews that can help boost the overall knowledge of the phenomenon of civil society in authoritarian contexts. Additionally, the brief reviews of the sociological approaches to civil society and the organisation theory literature can potentially benefit those interested in these subjects.

The move from the literature review to the theoretical framework was sustained by several considerations. Above all, the *symbiosis* perspective was identified as a fertile ground for *positive* theorising, as it makes the most in pushing beyond the thick normativity dominating the literature from the very beginning. It has also been found that there is a certain shift from a macro perspective to a micro perspective on the way from the conflictual perspective to the *symbiosis* perspective. This shift further substantiated the need for the organisational perspective, which became possible by distinguishing the levels of abstraction in the study of civil society delivered at the beginning of the theoretical framework. However, the particular questions of autonomy and formality/informality were identified as the major mainstreaming questions in the cases of Russia and Turkey and beyond. It must not be very unexpected to see the question of independence or autonomy arise in the studies on civil society in authoritarian settings. At the end of the day, it implies a certain paradox in itself. Meanwhile, the question of formality/informality emerges in the context of the strategies deployed by civil society organisations to survive and make their way under the crushing pressure of the authoritarian regime. Although this linkage between the question of autonomy on the one hand and the question of formality/informality is not always explicitly articulated in the case analysis, it underpins a large part of the discussions in the literature. Hence, the current research is set to excavate this overlooked linkage. It is through these several considerations that the theoretical framework was developed.

Three major points in the theoretical framework require further clarification, with the foremost being the differentiation of the multiple empirical layers in the study of civil society. The extant literature on civil society often operates with vague or ambiguous abstraction levels of civil society: civil society is the community of activists, a group of associations or a field, sphere or arena. Yet, it remains unclear in the literature how they relate to each other. As part of the objective to translate the selected macro-perspective—the *civil sphere* theory (or, more accurately, only parts of it) into the organisation level, the stated problem was addressed, too. The delineation of six levels of abstraction of civil society from *individual action* through *joint actions of individuals (organisation)*, *institutional terrains (regulatory and communicative institutions)* and *civil sphere* to ultimately the society level offers a more refined view than the latent distinction of activists, associations and field/arena/sphere or the elementary dichotomy of agent and structure found in the extant literature. Despite this, the proposed levels of abstraction need not be seen as a definitive structuring but rather as an invitation to alternative considerations.

Nonetheless, translating a macro-level account such as the civil sphere theory into the organisation level runs several risks associated with the changing levels of abstraction. From a macro perspective, the *civil sphere* theory explains broader social phenomena. Therefore, reducing the theory to the organisation level could result in the oversimplification of complex phenomena, even though this research took a careful position by not claiming to translate the *civil sphere* theory as a whole. The endeavour taken here is only about drawing implications of the *civil sphere* theory for the level of civil associations as understood organisations. Nonetheless, the risk of oversimplification may remain. Secondly, the right balance between agency and structure might be lost in such an endeavour, as the heavy structure weighing emphasis of the macro theory can be dragged to the organisation level, too, without recognising a room for the agency of individuals. Meanwhile, the third group of risks relates to the operationalisation of concepts, such as the jump from *independence* to *autonomy*, which unavoidably results in the loss of certain meaning. The insights borrowed from the organisation theory served to compensate for the potential risks. Despite all, running these risks is very normal, and even these risks are unavoidable when each level is considered as the sum of constituting elements plus *emergent properties*. So, descending this ladder of empirical layers or levels of abstraction requires the loss of *emergent properties* at each level. Hence, shifting from the sphere level to the organisation level unavoidably results in the loss of emergent properties at the sphere and institutional terrain levels.

Despite such losses on the way and besides its specific propositions, the construed theoretical framework calls on the scholarship to recognise civil associations as organisations where necessary (when dealing with formally established entities) and, hence, bring in the organisational perspective in the study of civil society be it within authoritarian regimes or democracies. However, formal institutionalisation is not the only perspective through which civil associations can be analysed. It applies to *mechanistic*—that is, purposefully designed—organisations rather than self-formed associations, while the latter can be examined through the works done on *social* or *organic* organisations available in the organisation theory literature. Therefore, formal institutionalisation needs not to be seen as the one-size-fits-all conceptual baggage in addressing civil associations as organisations.

Even though it is not the only conceptual baggage, formal institutionalisation can still be very useful in understanding formally established civil society entities. On the one hand, the diffused effect it has on the autonomy of civil society organisations challenges the established position in the literature that unanimously treats “*NGOization*” or “*professionalisation*” as unequivocally compromising civil society ideals or claims. Although it is true, it is only half of the picture, which is subtler, as has already been demonstrated. On the other hand, the diffused effect builds on the presupposition of the distinctness of those five aspects of formal institutionalisation, namely *rationalisation*, *bureaucratisation*, *hierarchy*, *formal commitment* and *professionalisation* identified in the organisation theory. Nevertheless, these elements or aspects may be heavily dependent on one another to the extent that they do not deserve any conceptual distinction. This is, conceptualising formal institutionalisation as a whole or differentiated into a smaller number of categories may be more appropriate than focusing on presupposed distinct aspects of it. Yet, if this is the case, the varying effects of the variables identified to represent these abstract constructs (those five aspects) require further conceptualisations. Hence, depending on the answer, the question may reduce from the effect of different aspects of formal institutionalisation to the question of different organisational elements or practices having an impact on the autonomy of civil society associations.

Likewise, the way autonomy is conceptualised in this study deserves further scrutiny. Autonomy, as conceptualised in this study, is fluid and dynamic; therefore, it enables a more elaborate conception. However, it departs significantly from the thickly normative views that treat the independence of civil society from the state as a defining feature of the former. One major problem with the latter approach relates to the cross-level translation. The independence

of civil society considered at the macro level—that is, the structural independence of civil society from the state—is often applied equally at the lower levels of abstraction. The application of a macro-level concept at the lower levels of abstraction for the reasons already discussed above is problematic. Generally, macro-level constructs are often too abstract to fit the measurement or observation requisites at the organisational level. Therefore, translating the macro-level constructs, such as *independence*, into operational terms applicable at the organisation level is a problem of scale or misalignment, yet it goes unnoticed or insufficiently addressed in the literature. The conceptualisation of autonomy in this research fills this void in the literature. Nevertheless, as acknowledged earlier, the operationalisation of the concept was only two-dimensional: financial and institutional, whereas the literature of firm or management studies entails other dimensions such as strategic, normative, and operational, to name just three. However, this is not the only problem with the operationalisation of autonomy.

The measurement of the *balance* between transnationalisation and autonomy is more complex than it may seem initially. The availability of different formulas for the measurement and their varying implications make the outcomes more or less sensitive. The picture may be further complicated when autonomy is operationalised as the management of the balance between not only the two types of ties but more.

Analogously, the operationalisation of the other concepts and the emerging instrument of measurement are the first of their types, and therefore, far from perfection, and requires further improvements. Particularly, the operationalisation of *rationalisation* was challenging as the phenomenon it intends to measure can be expected to be mainstreamed across most if not all, activities within the organisations. Reducing such a concept to a single variable that is intended to serve as a proxy indicator for the whole process of efficiency and effectiveness creation can eventually entail severe problems. Overall, the phenomena that were intended to be measured are latent and require multiple measurement approaches and instruments for approaching precision.

Nonetheless, the major question begging further reflection is the question of effect vs. causality. The justifications for the relationships proposed drew on the appropriation of the insights from the organisation theory and common intuition in the absence of any other relevant scholarly work. Therefore, the ambition fell short of defending a specific explanation of causal mechanisms for the articulated hypotheses, but possible general explanations for the effect were speculated. At the end of the day, no quantitative study can provide a causal explanation but

assume about it. Hence, for future research remains a task to investigate such causal mechanisms qualitatively.

Despite the lack of (strong) defence for specific explanations, the results of the empirical analyses back most hypothesised relationships. The found effects, overall, emphasise the relevance of considering *formal institutionalisation* as a significant predictor of the organisational autonomy of civil society associations operating in authoritarian contexts. The findings, when combined, further support the primary argument of this thesis that the formal institutionalisation of civil society organisations has a diffused impact on their autonomy, at least on two dimensions. However, since the analyses were conducted on two country cases, the validation of the results for general knowledge requires further tests beyond the selected cases.

Besides the specific results, the difference in the results between the cases of Russia and Turkey deserves further attention. Even though the proposed theoretical framework found empirical support in both cases, the strength of effects in certain relationships indicated a greater fit in the case of Russia than in the case of Turkey. The difference was attributed to the authoritarian regime quality in this study, building on the presuppositions about the presence of the constant pressure of co-optation in the case of Russia. However, the juxtaposing of the results to the literature on the cases also revealed to some extent how the country-specific historical and sociological factors related to the very fabric of society and state-society relationships that may potentially influence the outcome. Hence, future studies may seek to integrate more aspects of the regime quality and societal factors into the framework, particularly when the purpose is to provide an account at a higher level - the institutional terrain or sphere levels. Such an embedded conceptualisation may serve more precision in the results and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of civil society within authoritarian regimes.

The above-presented reflections on the research trajectory and outcomes, hence, demonstrate not only the shortcomings of this study but also the range of questions for future research. From the very central argument about the lack of positive theorising on the subject to the influence of normative theorising on the empirical literature, as well as the specificities of the conducted empirical analyses, it lays out numerous open questions for future inquiry. Hence, the contribution of this study to the literature need not be seen only in terms of its overall objectives but also in terms of the questions it discloses. Nevertheless, the overall ambition of positive theorising on civil society within authoritarian regimes renders a potential to be expanded to the wider literature of authoritarianism.

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Appendix I

Journal Articles	Country cases	Subject
Truex (2017)	China	Consultative authoritarianism, citizen participation as a feedback mechanism
Nothias (2020)	Africa	Digital activism
Spires (2011a)	China	Contingent symbiosis, local grassroots-government cooperation,
Mertha (2009)	China	Fragmented authoritarianism, civil society in policy entrepreneurship
J. C. Teets (2013)	China	Consultative authoritarianism, local government-civil society cooperation
Fu (2017)	China	Disguised collective action
Spires (2020)	China	Regulation as a political control, gap between the law and the perceptions of civil society actors
Morgenbesser (2020)	Southeast Asia	Autocratic innovation. The classification of tools developed by authoritarian regimes.
Yabanci (2019)	Turkey	Containment and appropriation of civil society
Gilley (2012)	China	Authoritarian environmentalism, the monitoring role of local civil society actors
Hu and Sidel (2020)	China	Civil society persisting its role in responding to the pandemics despite the constraints.
Skokova et al. (2018)	Russia	Civil society is caught between confrontation and co-optation.
Owen and Bindman (2019)	Russia	Limited Pluralism in Policymaking and Delivery in Contemporary Russia
Reuter and Robertson (2015)	Russia	The role of parliament in co-opting civil society leaders
Tysiachniouk et al. (2018b)	Russia	NGO survival strategies in response to the ‘foreign agent’ label.
Lorch and Bunk (2017)	Algeria, Mozambique	Civil society’s contribution to legitimating the authoritarian regime
Tauber (2021)	Jordan	Divergent roles of civil society actors in addressing social problems
Hudáková (2021)	Tunisia	Varying roles played by civil society before, during and after the revolution of 2011
Toepfl (2018)	Russia	Consultative authoritarianism, citizen participation as a feedback mechanism
Cheskin and March (2015)	Russia	Contentious politics of consentful and disentful types.

Table 12 Top 10 most cited journal articles (from the bibliometric analysis)

Appendix II

Questionnaire in English

DESCRIPTION

Purpose of the survey

The survey that you are considering taking is conducted by Murad Nasibov as part of his doctoral research carried out under the supervision of Prof. Dr Andrea Gawrich at the Institute of Political Science, the Justus-Liebig University of Giessen (Germany). The questionnaire aims to measure overall the following qualities of civil society associations in your country:

- formal institutionalisation,
- transnationalization,
- co-optation by the state.

Content

In this questionnaire, you will be asked to answer a total of 24 questions. Except for two, all of them are multi-choice questions. The survey consists of 4 sections. Section 1 asks, in total, 9 general questions about your organisation. Section 2 asks a total of 7 questions intended to measure the overall formal institutionalisation of your organisation. Section 3 asks a total of 4 questions about your organisation's transnational linkage, while Section 4 asks a total of 4 questions about your organisation's relations with the state.

Why your organisation?

Your organisation was selected based on random sampling from an extensive list of organisations in your country. The sampling was carried out based on the list of organizations that are on the official registry and have provided their websites. The email address to which this survey was sent was taken either from your organization's website, if it is available there, or sent by your organization following a request sent through the contact form on your website.

Anonymity

This survey is fully anonymous. As you will notice later when you start the survey, the name of your organisation is not asked in the survey. Identification of survey participants is by no means possible. The information asked is not of a type that can be used to identify survey participants. The collected data will only be used by Murad Nasibov and only for his academic research and will not be shared with any other person or organisation. The political sensitivities of the country context are well understood by the researcher and will be considered accordingly at all relevant stages of the research, with the purpose of not causing any harm to the participants of the survey. The researcher has also committed himself to the ethical code of the Justus-Liebig University.

This survey serves only academic purposes. The more precise your answers are, the better they will serve academic research. Please aim to answer all questions. These questions can by no means be understood as an evaluation of your organisation or the work your organisation does. Neither has it aimed to learn about any political views held dear by your organisation.

For any question, you can contact the author at murad.nasibov@sowi.uni-giessen.de

For the description of the research conducted by Murad Nasibov, for which this survey is conducted, please, visit: <https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/fb03/institute/fb03/ifp/forschung/qualifizierungsarbeiten/promotionsprojekte-ifp/nasibov>

SECTION 1. PROFILE QUESTIONS

1. Is your organisation officially registered in Turkey/Russia?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Does your organisation have a statute?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. In how many other provinces of Turkey/Russia does your organisation have an office in total?
A range from 0 to 100
4. Is your organisation officially a branch/representation of a foreign organisation?
Yes
No
5. What is the major mode(s) of action of your organisation? You can choose more than one answer if necessary.
 - a. Policy monitoring or advocacy
 - b. Public campaigning
 - c. Service Provision
 - d. Capacity-building/Training/Empowerment
 - e. Financial and Asset support
 - f. Research
 - g. Media production
 - h. Community development
 - i. Mediating relations/Facilitation of communication
 - j. Ideology promotion/Historical/Preservation of traditions
6. What is the major field(s) of action of your organisation? You can choose more than one answer, if necessary
 - a. Human Rights/Women Rights/Minority Rights/Juvenile Justice
 - b. Public Finance
 - c. Elections/Democracy/Local governance
 - d. Social protection/Health/Education/Child Rehabilitation/Psychological support
 - e. Cultural preservation and promotion
 - f. Tolerance-building/peace-building
 - g. Agriculture
 - h. Industry, Trade and Service
 - i. Individual development
7. What is the total staff size of your organisation, including technical and part-time employees?
A range from 1 to 1000
8. How old is your organisation? If the operation of your organisation has ever been broken for a period of more than a year since its establishment, please indicate the time that has passed since the relaunch after the last break.
A range from 0 to 150
9. How many projects has the organisation had in the past 3 years?
A range from 0 to 100

SECTION 2. FORMAL INSTITUTIONALISATION

10. How many departments or units are there in your organisation (this does not include geographical units/offices)?
A range from 1 to 20
11. How many members of your organisation have an employment contract with your organisation? Please do not include service contracts here.
A range from 1 to 100

12. How many members of your organisation have a service contract with your organisation? Please do not include here work contracts.
A range from 1 to 100
13. Do full-time employees of your organisation usually have a written list of specific tasks set for a certain period, such as 3 or 6 months and controlled by the supervisor at the end of that period?
- Yes
 - No
14. How many people in total currently work in the managerial line at your organisation?
A range from 1 to 100
15. How many non-managerial staff members in total currently work at your organisation?
A range from 1 to 100
16. How many hierarchical levels are there in your organisation? For instance, if you have a director, one managerial level and team members led by the manager, then you have three hierarchical levels.
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 or more

SECTION 3. TRANSNATIONALISATION

17. What was approximately the total share of foreign grants, donations and service contracts in your organisation's total annual budget in the last closed financial year? Foreign grants, donations and services are those provided by foreign organisations or individuals, whether residing in or outside Turkey/Russia.
A range from 0 to 100%
18. How many training, workshops or similar event series delivered by foreign-origin organisations in total were attended by members of your organisation as part of their jobs either abroad or at home in the past three years?
A range from 1 to 100
19. How many transnational or international platforms, forums, or any other networks in total is your organisation (represented by any organisation member) member to?
A range from 0 to 100
20. To how many documents initiated by any foreign organisation operating abroad, such as strategy, policy document, manual, guidelines, report, or any other similar documents, has intellectual contribution been made by your organization in the past three years?
A range from 0 to 100

SECTION 4. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE/GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

21. What was approximately the total share of grants, donations and service contracts that you received from state/government structures (both at the national and local levels) in your organisation's total annual budget in the last closed financial year?
A range from 0 to 100%
22. In the past three years, how many training, workshops or similar event series delivered by a state/government structure have the members of your organization attended as part of their jobs?
A range from 1 to 100
23. How many platforms, forums, networks, or working groups established by the state/government structures is your organisation a member of?
A range from 0 to 100
24. To how many government-initiated documents such as strategy, policy documents, manuals, guidelines, reports, or any other similar document has a contribution been made by your organization in the past three years?
A range from 0 to 100

You have come to the end of the survey. Thank you for taking part in it!

Questionnaire in Russian

АНКЕТА

1. ОПИСАНИЕ

1.1. Цель опроса

Опрос, который вы собираетесь принять, проводится Мурадом Насибовым в рамках его докторского исследования, проводимого под руководством профессора доктора Андреа Гаврич в Институте политических наук Университета Юстуса-Либиха в Гиссене (Германия). Анкета направлена на общее изучение следующих качеств ассоциаций гражданского общества в вашей стране:

- формальная институционализация,
- транснационализация,
- кооптация со стороны государства.

1.2. Содержание

В этой анкете вам будет предложено ответить на 25 вопроса. За исключением двух, все вопросы с несколькими вариантами ответов. Анкета состоит из 4 разделов. В разделе 1 задаются 10 общих вопросов о вашей организации. Раздел 2 задает 7 вопросов, которые предназначены для измерения общей формальной институционализации вашей организации. В разделе 3 задаются 4 вопроса о транснациональных связях вашей организации, а в разделе 4 задаются 4 вопроса об отношениях вашей организации с государством.

1.3. Почему ваша организация?

Ваша организация была выбрана на основе случайной выборки из обширного списка организаций в вашей стране. Выборка проводилась на основе списка организаций, которые находятся в официальном реестре и предоставили свои веб-сайты. Адрес электронной почты, на который был отправлен этот опрос, был взят либо с веб-сайта вашей организации, если он там доступен, либо отправлен вашей организацией по запросу, отправленному через контактную форму на вашем веб-сайте.

1.4. Анонимность

Этот опрос полностью анонимен. Как вы заметите позже, когда начнете опрос, название вашей организации не запрашивается в опросе. Идентификация участников опроса ни в коем случае невозможна. Запрошенная информация не относится к тому типу, который можно использовать для идентификации участников опроса. Собранные данные будут использоваться только Мурадом Насибовым и только для его академических исследований и не будут переданы никаким другим лицам или организациям. Политическая чувствительность контекста страны хорошо понимается исследователем и будет учитываться соответствующим образом на всех соответствующих этапах исследования с целью не причинить никакого вреда участникам опроса. Исследователь также придерживается этического кодекса Университета Юстуса-Либиха.

Этот опрос служит только академическим целям. Чем точнее вы дадите ответы, тем лучше они будут служить академическим исследованиям. Пожалуйста, постарайтесь ответить на все вопросы. Эти вопросы ни в коем случае нельзя понимать как оценку вашей организации или работы, которую она выполняет. Он также не ставил своей целью узнать о каких-либо политических взглядах, которым дорожит ваша организация.

По любым вопросам вы можете связаться с автором по адресу murad.nasibov@sowi.uni-giessen.de

Описание исследования Мурада Насибова, для которого проводится данный опрос, можно найти на сайте: <https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/fb03/institutfb03/ifp/forschung/qualifizierungsarbeiten/promotionsprojekte-ifp/nasibov>

РАЗДЕЛ 1. ПРОФИЛЬНЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ

1. Ваша организация официально зарегистрирована в России?

- а. Да
- б. Нет

2. Есть ли у вашей организации действующий устав?

- а. Да
- б. Нет

3. Всего в скольких регионах России есть офисы вашей организации?

Диапазон от 0 до 100

4. Является ли ваша организация официальным представительством или филиалом иностранной организации в России?

да

Нет

5. Каков основной вид деятельности вашей организации?

а) Мониторинг политики и / или адвокация

б) Общественная агитация

в) Предоставление услуг

г) Создание потенциала / обучение / расширение прав и возможностей

д) Финансовая поддержка и поддержка активов

е) Исследования

ж) Производство средств массовой информации

з) Развитие сообщества

и) Посредничество в отношениях / облегчение общения

й) Продвижение идеологии / Историческое / Сохранение традиций

6. Каковы основные направления деятельности вашей организации?

а) Права человека / Права женщин / Права меньшинств / Ювенальная юстиция

б) Общественные финансы

в) Выборы / Демократия / Местное самоуправление

г) Социальная защита / Здоровье / Образование / Реабилитация детей / Психологическая поддержка

д) Сохранение и продвижение культурного наследия

е) Формирование терпимости / миротворчество

ж) Сельское Хозяйство

з) Промышленность, торговля и услуги

и) Индивидуальное развитие

7. Какова общая численность персонала вашей организации, включая технических сотрудников и сотрудников, работающих неполный рабочий день?

Диапазон от 1 до 1000

8. Сколько лет вашей организации? Если деятельность вашей организации когда-либо прерывалась на период более года с момента ее создания, укажите время, прошедшее с момента перезапуска после последнего перерыва.

Диапазон от 0 до 150

9. Сколько проектов реализовала организация за последние 3 года?

Диапазон от 0 до 100

10. Принимала ли ваша организация участие в коммерческой деятельности в последние три года?

да

Нет

РАЗДЕЛ 2. ФОРМАЛЬНАЯ ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИЯ

11. Сколько отделов или подразделений имеется в вашей организации (без учета географических подразделений / офисов)?

Диапазон от 1 до 20

12. Сколько членов вашей организации имеют трудовой договор с вашей организацией? Пожалуйста, не включайте сюда сервисные контракты.

Диапазон от 1 до 100

13. Сколько членов вашей организации имеют контракт на обслуживание с вашей организацией? Пожалуйста, не включайте сюда трудовые договоры.

Диапазон от 1 до 100

14. Есть ли сотрудники вашей организации, как правило, письменный перечень конкретных задач, поставленных в течение определенного периода, например, 3 или 6 месяцев, и под руководством вышестоящего в конце этого периода?

а. да

б. Нет

15. Сколько человек работает на управленческом уровне в вашей организации?

Диапазон от 1 до 100

16. Сколько всего сотрудников, не относящихся к руководству, работает в вашей организации в настоящее время?

Диапазон от 1 до 100

17. Сколько уровней иерархии существует в вашей организации? Например, если у вас есть директор, один или несколько менеджеров равного уровня, а весь остальной персонал подчиняется этим менеджерам, то в ваших организациях есть три иерархических уровня. Если в дополнение к этому есть еще и попечительский совет над вашим директором, то у вас есть четыре уровня иерархии в вашей организации.

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5 или больше

РАЗДЕЛ 3. ТРАНСНАЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИЯ

18. Какова примерно общая доля иностранных грантов, пожертвований и контрактов на обслуживание в общем годовом бюджете вашей организации за последний закрытый финансовый год? Иностранные гранты, пожертвования и услуги - это те, которые предоставляются иностранными организациями или физическими лицами, проживающими в России или за ее пределами.

Диапазон от 0 до 100%

19. Сколько всего тренингов, семинаров или аналогичных мероприятий, организованных организациями иностранного происхождения, посетили члены вашей организации в рамках своей работы за границей или дома за последние три года?

Диапазон от 1 до 100

20. Сколько всего транснациональных или международных платформ, форумов или любых других сетей является членом вашей организации (представленной любым членом организации)?

Диапазон от 0 до 100

21. За последние три года, во сколько документов, инициированных иностранной организацией, работающей за границей, таких как стратегия, программный документ, руководство, руководящие принципы, отчет или любые другие подобные документы, ваша организация внесла интеллектуальный вклад?

Диапазон от 0 до 100

РАЗДЕЛ 4. ОТНОШЕНИЯ С ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫМИ / ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННЫМИ СТРУКТУРАМИ

22. Какова примерно общая доля грантов, пожертвований и контрактов на обслуживание, полученных вами от государственных / правительственных структур (как на национальном, так и на местном уровнях) в общем годовом бюджете вашей организации за последний закрытый финансовый год?

Диапазон от 0 до 100%

23. Сколько тренингов, семинаров или аналогичных мероприятий, проведенных государственной / правительственной структурой, за последние три года посетили члены вашей организации в рамках своей работы?

Диапазон от 1 до 100

24. Сколько платформ, форумов, сетей или рабочих групп, созданных государственными / правительственными структурами, является членом вашей организации?

Диапазон от 0 до 100

25. За последние три года, во сколько документов, инициированных правительством, таких как стратегия, программный документ, руководство, руководящие принципы, отчет или любой другой аналогичный документ, ваша организация внесла интеллектуальный вклад?

Диапазон от 0 до 100

Вы подошли к концу опроса. Спасибо, что приняли в нем участие!

Questionnaire in Turkish

ANKET

1. AÇIKLAMA

1.1. Anketin amacı

Bu anket, Murad Nasibov tarafından doktora araştırması için yapılmaktadır. Nasibov araştırmasını Almanyanın Giessen şehrinde Justus-Liebig Üniversitesi Siyaset Bilimi Enstitüsü'nde Prof. Dr. Andrea Gawrich'in danışmanlığında gerçekleştirmektedir. Anket, Türkiye'deki sivil toplum kuruluşlarının genel olarak aşağıdaki özelliklerini ölçmeyi amaçlamaktadır:

- resmi kurumsallaşma,
- ulusötesileşme,
- devlet/hükümet yapılarıyla ilişkiler.

1.2. İçerik

Bu ankette toplam 25 soruyu cevaplamamız istenecektir. Soruların hepsi çoktan seçmeli sorulardır. Anket 4 bölüme ayrılmıştır. Bölüm 1, kuruluşunuz hakkında toplam 10 genel soru sorar. Bölüm 2, kuruluşunuzun resmi kurumsallaşmasını genel olarak ölçmeyi amaçlayan toplam 7 soru sorar. Bölüm 3, kuruluşunuzun uluslararası bağlantısı hakkında toplam 4 soru sorarken, Bölüm 4 kuruluşunuzun devletle ilişkileri hakkında toplam 4 soru sorar.

1.3. Neden kuruluşunuz?

Kuruluşunuz, ülkenizdeki kapsamlı bir kuruluş listesinden rastgele örneklemeyle dayalı olarak seçilmiştir. Örnekleme, resmi sicilde yer alan ve web sitelerini sağlayan kuruluşların listesi esas alınarak yapılmıştır. Bu anketin gönderildiği e-posta adresi kuruluşunuzun web sitesinden alınmıştır.

1.4. Anonimlik

Bu anket tamamen anonimdir. Daha sonra ankete başladığınızda fark edeceğimiz gibi ankette kurumunuzun adı ve ya anketi cevaplayan kişinin ismi sorulmaz. Anket katılımcılarının belirlenmesi hiçbir şekilde mümkün değildir. Araştırmacı kendisi dahil hiç kimse hangi cevapların hangi kuruluş ve ya kişi tarafından verildiğini sonradan belirleyemez. Sorulan bilgiler, anket katılımcılarını tanımlamak için kullanılabilecek türden değildir. Toplanan veriler sadece Murad Nasibov tarafından ve sadece akademik araştırmaları için kullanılacak ve başka hiçbir kişi veya kuruluşla paylaşılmayacaktır. Cevaplarınızda ne kadar kesin olursanız, bu anket o kadar çok akademik araştırmaya katkı sağlamış olacaktır. Bu maksatla da, tüm soruları cevaplamamız istenecektir. Bu sorular hiçbir şekilde kurumunuzun veya kurumunuzun yaptığı işin bir değerlendirmesi olarak anlaşılamaz. Kuruluşunuz tarafından değer verilen herhangi bir siyasi görüş hakkında bilgi edinmeyi de amaçlamaz. Herhangi bir sorunuz için araştırmacı ile murad.nasibov@sowi.uni-giessen.de adresinden iletişime geçebilirsiniz. Murad Nasibov'un doktora araştırması ile ilgili detaylı bilgi için gerek duyarsanız, şu adresi ziyaret edin: <https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/fb03/institutfb03/ifp/forschung/qualifizierungsarbeiten/promotionsprojekte-ifp/nasibov>

Bu anket 7-15 dakikanızı alacaktır.

BÖLÜM 1. PROFİL SORULARI

1. Kuruluşunuz Türkiye'de resmi olarak kayıtlı mı?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

2. Kuruluşunuzun bir tüzüğü var mı?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

3. Kuruluşunuzun Türkiye'nin toplam kaç ilinde ofisi var?

0 ile 100 arasında bir aralık

4. Kuruluşunuz resmi olarak yabancı bir kuruluşun şubesi/temsilcisi mi?

- Evet
- Hayır

5. Kuruluşunuzun başlıca eylem mod(lar)ı nelerdir? Gerekirse birden fazla cevap seçebilirsiniz.

- a) Politika izleme ve/veya savunuculuk

- b) Kamusal kampanya
 - c) Hizmet Sunumu
 - d) Kapasite Geliştirme/Eğitim/Güçlendirme
 - e) Mali ve Varlık desteği
 - f) Araştırma
 - g) Medya üretimi
 - h) Toplumsal kalkınma
 - i) Arabuluculuk ilişkileri/İletişimin kolaylaştırılması
 - j) İdeolojinin desteklenmesi/Tarihi/Geleneklerin korunması
6. Kuruluşunuzun ana faaliyet alanı/alanları nelerdir? Gerekirse birden fazla cevap seçebilirsiniz
- a) İnsan Hakları/Kadın Hakları/Azınlık Hakları/Çocuk Adaleti
 - b) Kamu Maliyesi
 - c) Seçimler/Demokrasi/Yerel yönetim
 - d) Sosyal koruma/Sağlık/Eğitim/Çocuk Rehabilitasyon/Psikolojik destek
 - e) Kültürel koruma ve tanıtım
 - f) Hoşgörü inşası/barış inşası
 - g) Tarım
 - h) Sanayi, Ticaret ve Hizmet
 - i) Bireysel gelişim
7. Teknik ve yarı zamanlı çalışanlar dahil olmak üzere kuruluşunuzun toplam personel sayısı nedir?
1'den 1000'e kadar bir aralık
8. Kuruluşunuz kaç yaşında? Kuruluşunuzun işleyişi, kuruluşundan bu yana bir yıldan fazla bir süre boyunca kesintiye uğradıysa, lütfen son aradan sonra yeniden başlatmanın üzerinden geçen süreyi belirtin.
0 ile 150 arasında bir aralık
9. Kuruluşun son 3 yılda toplamda kaç projesi oldu?
0 ile 100 arasında bir aralık
10. Kuruluşunuz son üç yılda her hangi bir kâr amaçlı faaliyetlerde bulundu mu?
Evet
Hayır

BÖLÜM 2. RESMİ KURUMSALLAMA

11. Kuruluşunuzda kaç departman veya birim var (buna coğrafi birimler/ofisler dahil değil)?
1'den 20'ye kadar bir aralık
12. Kuruluşunuzun kaç üyesinin kuruluşunuzla iş sözleşmesi var? Lütfen hizmet sözleşmelerini buraya dahil etmeyin.
1'den 100'e kadar bir aralık
13. Kuruluşunuzun kaç üyesinin kuruluşunuzla hizmet sözleşmesi var? Lütfen iş sözleşmelerini buraya eklemeyin.
1'den 100'e kadar bir aralık
14. Kuruluşunuzun tam zamanlı çalışanları genellikle 3 veya 6 ay gibi belirli bir süre için belirlenmiş ve bu sürenin sonunda amir tarafından kontrol edilen belirli görevlerin yazılı bir listesine sahip midir?
a) Evet
b) Hayır
15. Kuruluşunuzda şu anda yönetim kademesinde toplam kaç kişi çalışıyor?
1'den 100'e kadar bir aralık
16. Şu anda kuruluşunuzda yönetici olmayan personelde toplam kaç kişi çalışıyor?
1'den 100'e kadar bir aralık
17. Kuruluşunuzda kaç tane hiyerarşik seviye var? Örneğin, bir yöneticiniz varsa, bir veya birden fazla eşit düzey yöneticiniz varsa ve diğer tüm personel bu yöneticilere bağlıysa, kuruluşunuzda üç hiyerarşik düzey vardır. Buna ek olarak, yöneticiniz üzerinde bir müteveli heyeti de varsa, organizasyonunuzda dört seviye hiyerarşiniz vardır.
a) 1
b) 2
c) 3

- d) 4
- e) 5 veya daha fazla

BÖLÜM 3. ULUSÖTESİLEŞME

18. Son kapatılan mali yılda kuruluşunuzun toplam yıllık bütçesinde yabancı bağışların, bağışların ve hizmet sözleşmelerinin toplam payı yaklaşık olarak ne kadardı? Yabancı bağışlar, bağışlar ve hizmetler, Türkiye/Rusya içinde veya dışında ikamet eden yabancı kuruluşlar veya bireyler tarafından sağlananlardır.

0 ile %100 arasında bir aralık

19. Son üç yılda kurumunuzun üyeleri yurt dışında veya yurt içinde görevleri gereği yurt dışı menşeli kuruluşlar tarafından verilen eğitim, çalıştay veya benzeri etkinlik serilerinden toplam kaç tanesine katıldı?

1'den 100'e kadar bir aralık

20. Kuruluşunuz (herhangi bir kuruluş üyesi tarafından temsil edilen) toplamda kaç ulusötesi veya uluslararası platforma, foruma veya diğer ağlara üyedir?

0 ile 100 arasında bir aralık

21. Yurtdışında faaliyet gösteren herhangi bir yabancı kuruluş tarafından başlatılan strateji, politika belgesi, el kitabı, kılavuz, rapor veya benzeri belgelerden kaç tanesine son üç yılda kuruluşunuz tarafından fikri katkı yapılmıştır?

0 ile 100 arasında bir aralık

BÖLÜM 4. DEVLET/HÜKÜMET YAPILARIYLA İLİŞKİLER

22. Devlet/hükümet yapılarından (hem ulusal hem de yerel düzeyde) aldığınız hibelerin, bağışların ve hizmet sözleşmelerinin son kapatılan mali yılda kuruluşunuzun toplam yıllık bütçesindeki toplam payı yaklaşık olarak neydi?

0 ile %100 arasında bir aralık

23. Son üç yılda, bir devlet/hükümet yapısı tarafından verilen eğitim, çalıştay veya benzeri etkinlikler dizisine örgütünüzün üyeleri işlerinin bir parçası olarak katıldılar mı?

1'den 100'e kadar bir aralık

24. Kuruluşunuz devlet/hükümet yapıları tarafından kurulmuş kaç platform, forum, ağ veya çalışma grubu üyesidir?

0 ile 100 arasında bir aralık

25. Son üç yılda kuruluşunuz tarafından strateji, politika belgesi, el kitabı, kılavuz, rapor veya benzeri herhangi bir belge gibi devlet tarafından başlatılan kaç belgeye katkı sağlandı?

0 ile 100 arasında bir aralık

Anketin sonuna geldiniz. Katıldığınız için teşekkür ederiz!

Appendix III

Descriptive Statistics									
	# of obs.	Min. value	Max. value	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
Professionalisation	112	,00	19,00	4,63	3,60	2,052	,228	4,836	,453
FormalCommitment	112	,00	,98	,56	,25	-,377	,228	-,337	,453
Bureaucratisation	112	,00	,95	,49	,33	-,279	,228	-1,452	,453
Hierarchy	112	,00	7,00	2,73	1,34	,736	,228	2,123	,453
Autonomy Financial	112	-99,00	1,00	-28,51	34,90	-,920	,228	-,651	,453
Autonomy Institutional	112	-13,00	1,00	-1,05	2,73	-2,368	,228	6,553	,453
Valid Cases (listwise)	112								

Table 13 Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables included in the analyses

Rationalisation		
	N	%
1,00	46	41,1%
2,00	20	17,9%
3,00	22	19,6%
4,00	24	21,4%

Table 14 Frequency analysis of rationalisation.

Appendix IV

Before the removal of any outliers (original models)			
Models	Statistic (W)	Df	Significance
Model 1.1	.910	112	<.001
Model 1.2	.974	112	.026
Model 2.1	.960	112	.002
Model 2.2	.938	112	<.001
Model 3.1	.942	112	<.001
Model 3.2	.976	112	.044
After the removal of influential outliers			
Models	Statistic (W)	df	Significance
Model 1.1	.919	112	<.001
Model 1.2	.979	112	.077
Model 2.1	.859	112	<.001
Model 2.2	.902	112	<.001
Model 3.1	.952	112	<.001
Model 3.2	.976	112	.037
After the removal of overlapping outliers (both influential and multivariate anomalous)			
Models	Statistic (W)	df	Significance
Model 1.1	.920	112	<.001
Model 1.2	.979	112	.077
Model 2.1	.895	112	<.001
Model 2.2	.932	112	<.001
Model 3.1	.942	112	<.001
Model 3.2	.966	112	.006

Table 15 Shapiro Wilk Test for Normality

Model	# of predict ors	BP Statistic	To	Critical Value		Conclusion
				Chi ² _{df. α=0.05}	Chi ² _{df. α=0.01}	
Before the removal of any outliers (original models)						
Model 1.1	3	8.736	>	7.81	11.34	Mild heteroscedasticity
Model 1.2	7	21.28	>	14.07	18.48	Severe heteroscedasticity
Model 2.1	2	38.64	>	5.99	9.21	Severe heteroscedasticity
Model 2.2	5	4.704	<	11.07	15.09	No heteroscedasticity.
Model 3.1	2	0.672	<	5.99	9.21	No heteroscedasticity.
Model 3.2	5	4.704	<	11.07	15.09	No heteroscedasticity.
After the removal of influential outliers						
Model 1.1	3	0.672	<	7.81	11.34	No heteroscedasticity.
Model 1.2	7	16.24	>	14.07	18.48	Mild heteroscedasticity
Model 2.1	2	39.76	>	5.99	9.21	Severe heteroscedasticity
Model 2.2	5	10.528	<	11.07	15.09	No heteroscedasticity
Model 3.1	2	0.672	<	5.99	9.21	No heteroscedasticity
Model 3.2	5	5.04	<	11.07	15.09	No heteroscedasticity
After the removal of overlapping outliers						
Model 1.1	3	2.46	<	7.81	11.34	No heteroscedasticity
Model 1.2	7	21.28	>	14.07	18.48	Severe heteroscedasticity
Model 2.1	2	40.43	>	5.99	9.21	Severe heteroscedasticity
Model 2.2	5	17.47	<	11.07	15.09	Severe heteroscedasticity
Model 3.1	2	0.112	<	5.99	9.21	No heteroscedasticity
Model 3.2	5	5.49	<	11.07	15.09	No heteroscedasticity

Table 16 Breusch-Pagan test results for heteroscedasticity

Model	Before the removal of any outliers	Bootstrap	Influential outliers removed	Overlapping outliers removed	Bootstrap
Model 1.1	1.871	1.871	2.072	2.174	2.174
Model 1.2	2.184	2.184	1.896	2.184	2.184
Model 2.1	1.706	1.706	2.021	2.149	2.149
Model 2.2	1.944	1.944	2.018	2.182	2.182
Model 3.1	1.833	1.833	1.991	1.890	1.890
Model 3.2	2.079	2.079	2.184	1.980	1.980

Table 17 Durbin-Watson test results for autocorrelation

Before the removal of any outliers)	Predictors	Tolerance results	VIF results
Model 1.1	Rationalisation	.981	1.019
	Bureaucratisation	.928	1.078
	Hierarchy	.945	1.058
Model 1.2	Rationalisation	.931	1.074
	Bureaucratisation	.862	1.160
	Hierarchy	.580	1.725
	Authoritarianism	.766	1.305
	Authoritarianism_x_Rationalisation	.914	1.094
	Authoritarianism_x_Bureacratisation	.881	1.136
	Authoritarianism_x_Hierarchy	.586	1.706
Model 2.1	Professionalisation	.972	1.029
	Formal Commitment	.972	1.029
Model 2.2	Professionalisation	.641	1.560
	Formal Commitment	.780	1.283
	Authoritarianism	.869	1.150
	Authoritarianism_x_Professionalisation	.655	1.526
	Authoritarianism_x_Formal Commitment	.810	1.235
Model 3.1	Bureaucratisation	.945	1.058
	Hierarchy	.945	1.058
Model 3.2	Bureaucratisation	.894	1.119
	Hierarchy	.582	1.717
	Authoritarianism	.818	1.222
	Authoritarianism_x_Bureaucratisation	.934	1.071
	Authoritarianism_x_Hierarchy	.590	1.696

Table 18 VIF and Tolerance results before any outliers removed

After the removal of influential outliers			
Model 1.1	Rationalisation	0.947	1.056
	Bureaucratisation	0.901	1.110
	Hierarchy	0.921	1.086
Model 1.2	Rationalisation	0.944	1.059
	Bureaucratisation	0.892	1.121
	Hierarchy	0.705	1.419
	Authoritarianism	0.765	1.307
	Authoritarianism_x_Rationalisation	0.923	1.084
	Authoritarianism_x_Bureacratisation	0.902	1.109
	Authoritarianism_x_Hierarchy	0.713	1.402
Model 2.1	Professionalisation	0.966	1.035
	Formal Commitment	0.966	1.035
Model 2.2	Professionalisation	0.844	1.185
	Formal Commitment	0.904	1.106
	Authoritarianism	0.940	1.064
	Authoritarianism_x_Professionalisation	0.867	1.153
	Authoritarianism_x_Formal Commitment	0.952	1.050
Model 3.1	Bureaucratisation	0.897	1.115
	Hierarchy	0.897	1.115
Model 3.2	Bureaucratisation	0.883	1.132
	Hierarchy	0.588	1.702
	Authoritarianism	0.840	1.191
	Authoritarianism_x_Bureaucratisation	0.953	1.049
	Authoritarianism_x_Hierarchy	0.608	1.645

Table 19 VIF and Tolerance results after the removal of influential outliers

Models (after the removal of overlapping outliers)	Predictors	Tolerance results	VIF results
Model 1.1	Rationalisation	0.969	1.032
	Bureaucratism	0.915	1.093
	Hierarchy	0.941	1.063
Model 1.2	Rationalisation	.931	1.074
	Bureaucratism	.862	1.160
	Hierarchy	.580	1.725
	Authoritarianism	.766	1.305
	Authoritarianism_x_Rationalisation	.914	1.094
	Authoritarianism_x_Bureaucratism	.881	1.136
	Authoritarianism_x_Hierarchy	.586	1.706
Model 2.1	Professionalisation	0.976	1.025
	Formal Commitment	0.976	1.025
Model 2.2	Professionalisation	0.843	1.187
	Formal Commitment	0.791	1.264
	Authoritarianism	0.868	1.152
	Authoritarianism_x_Professionalisation	0.867	1.153
	Authoritarianism_x_Formal Commitment	0.832	1.202
Model 3.1	Bureaucratism	0.918	1.089
	Hierarchy	0.918	1.089
Model 3.2	Bureaucratism	0.920	1.087
	Hierarchy	0.562	1.780
	Authoritarianism	0.839	1.192
	Authoritarianism_x_Bureaucratism	0.964	1.038
	Authoritarianism_x_Hierarchy	0.581	1.721

Table 20 VIF and Tolerance results after the removal of overlapping outliers

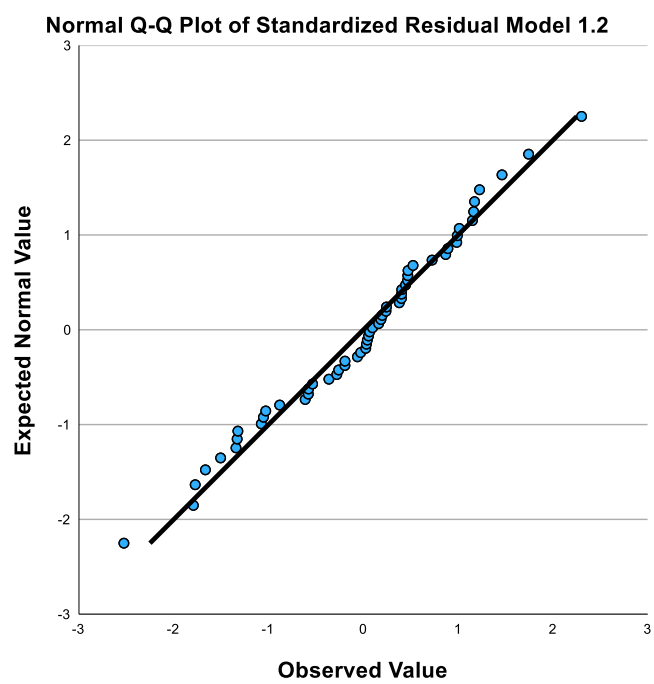
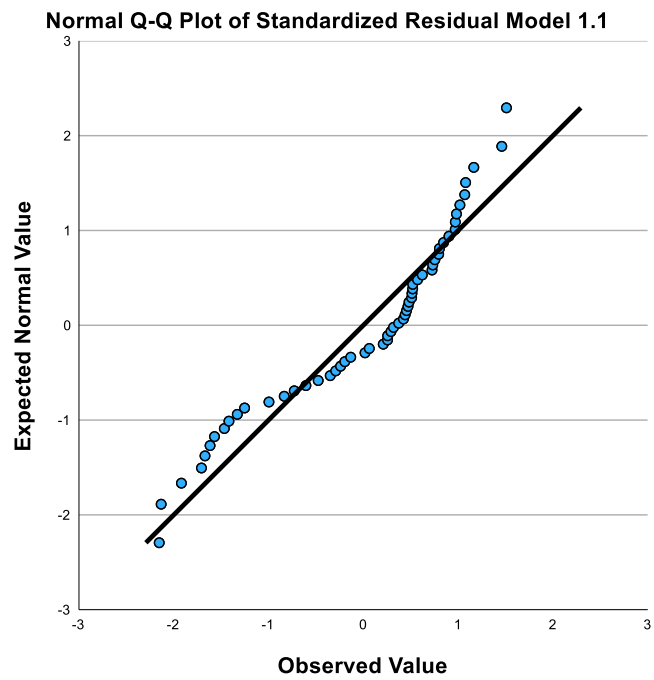


Figure 8 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 1.1 & 1.2 (original)

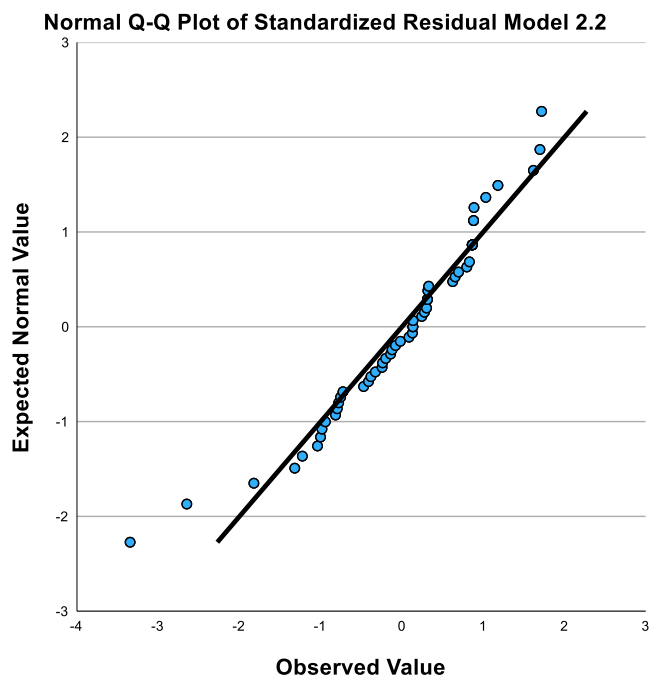
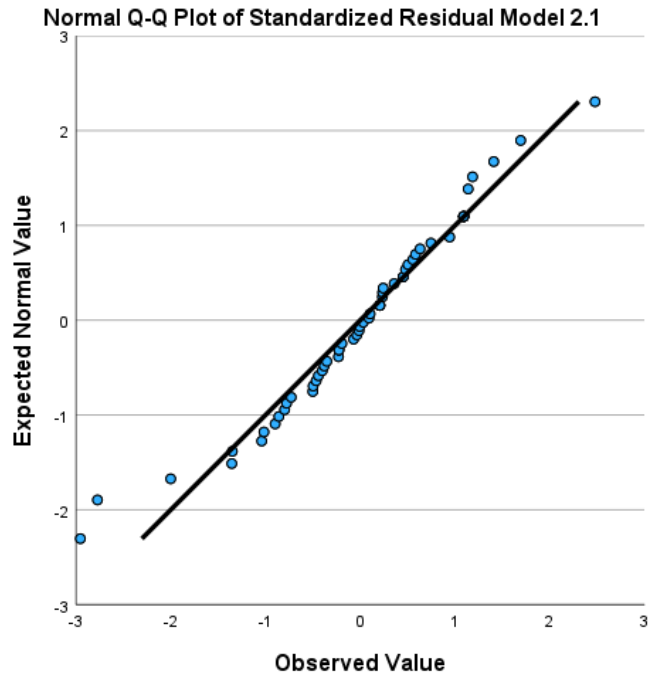


Figure 9 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 2.1 & 2.2 (original)

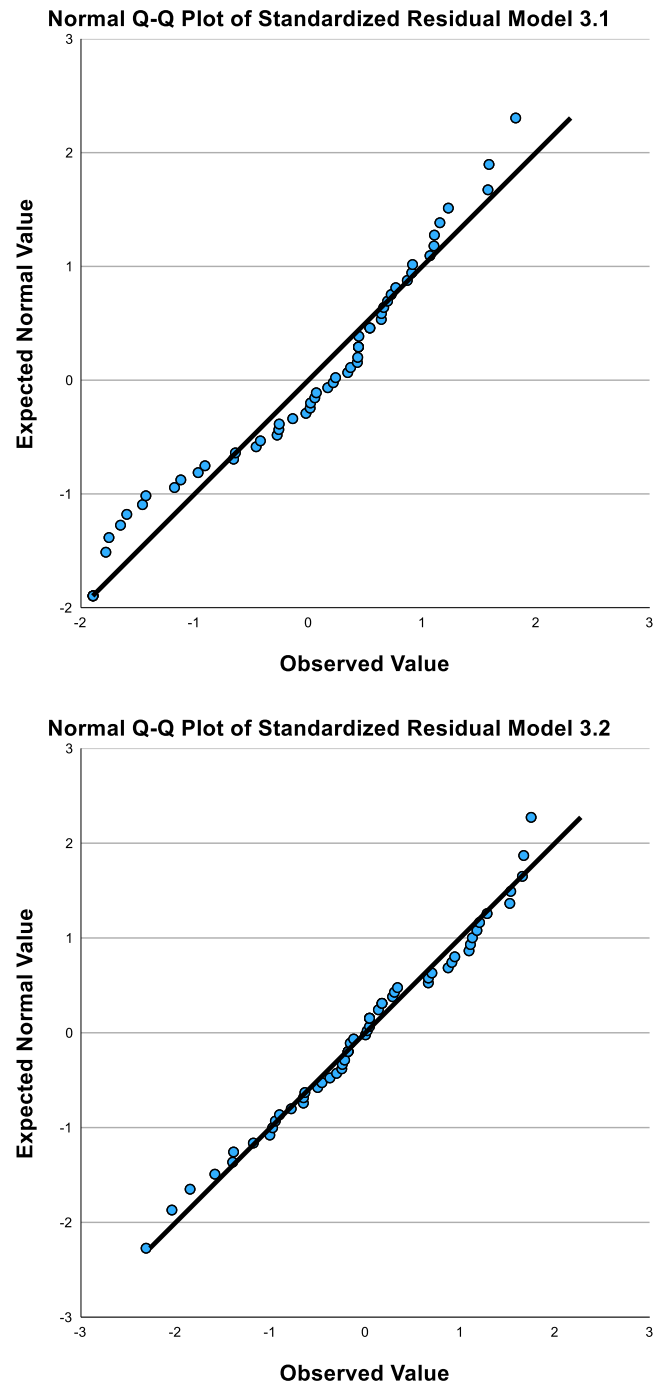
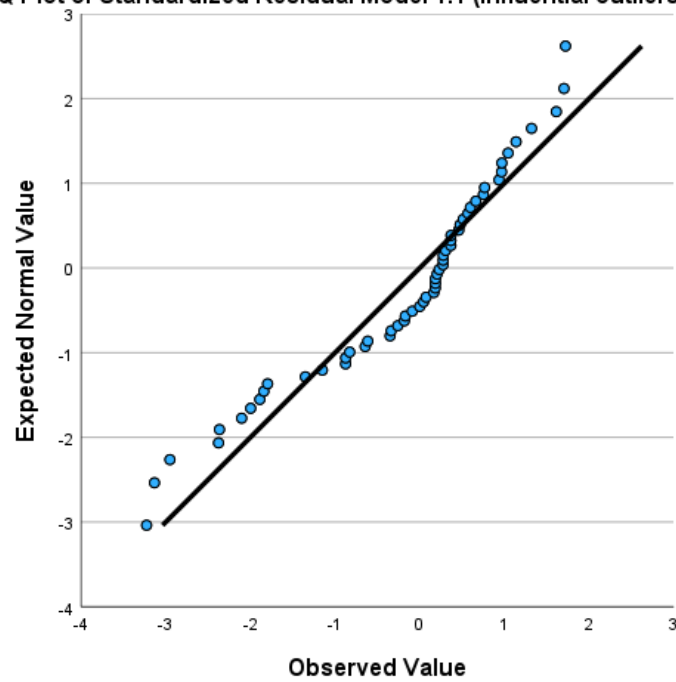


Figure 10 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 3.1 & 3.2 (original)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 1.1 (influential outliers removed)



Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 1.2 (influential outliers removed)

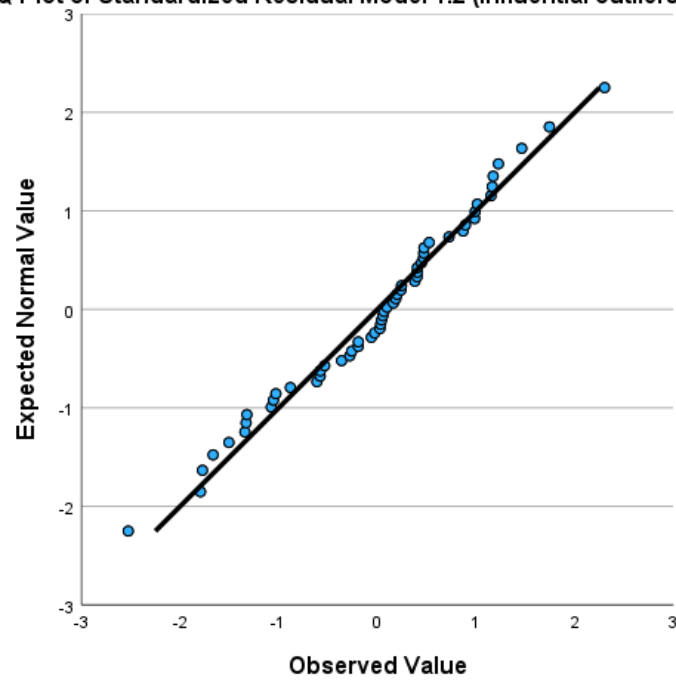
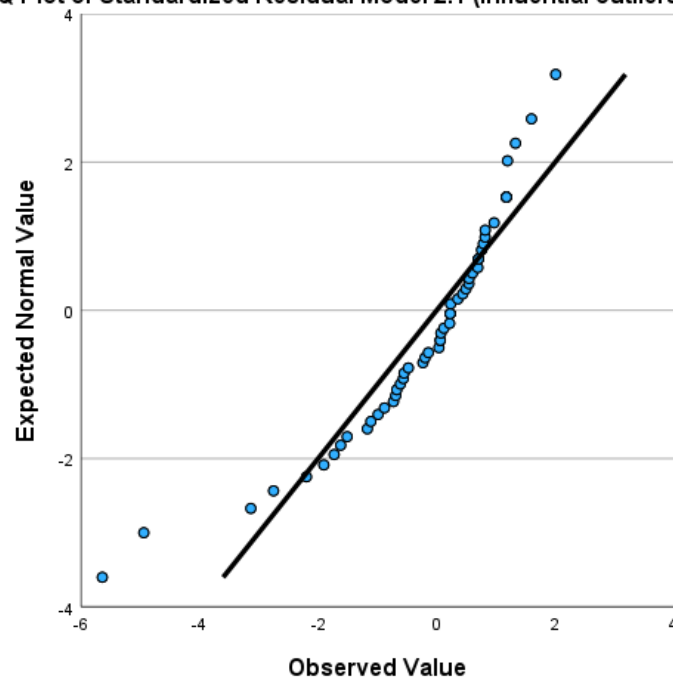


Figure 11 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 1.1 & 1.2 (influential outliers removed)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 2.1 (influential outliers removed)



Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 2.2 (influential outliers removed)

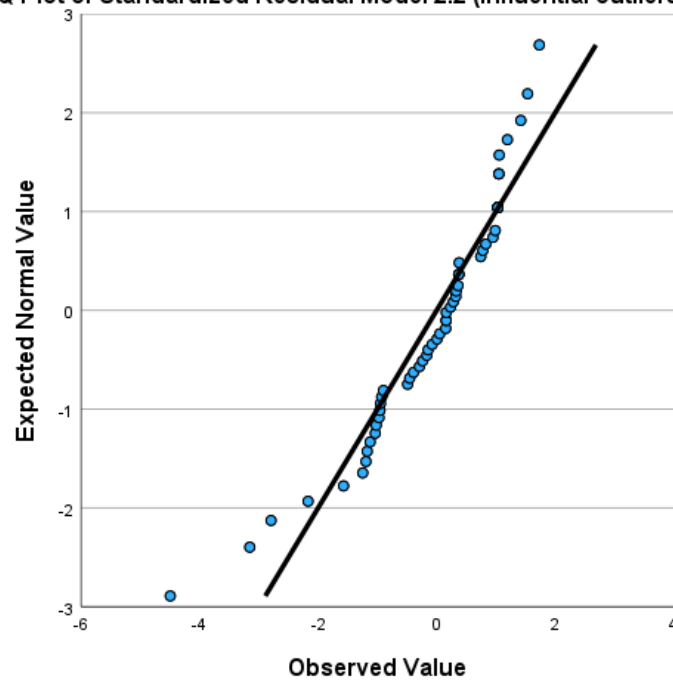
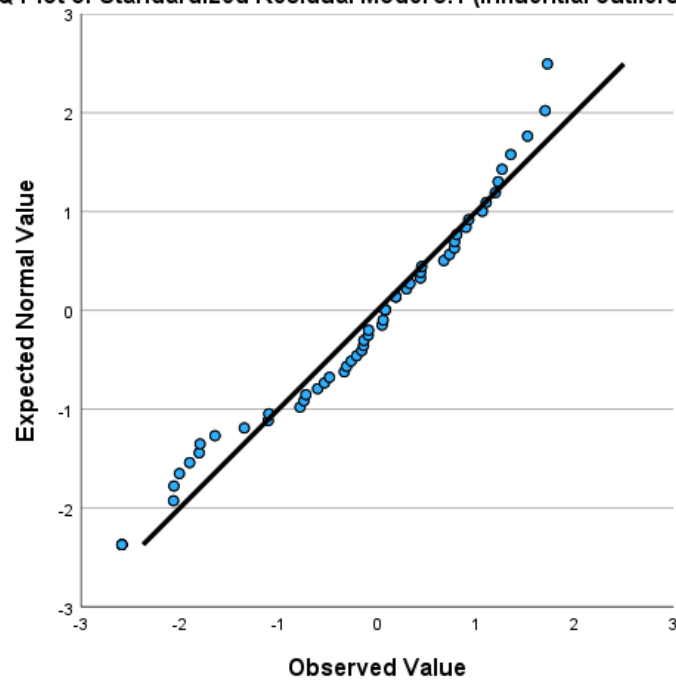


Figure 12 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 2.1 & 2.2 (influential outliers removed)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 3.1 (influential outliers removed)



Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 3.2 (influential outliers removed)

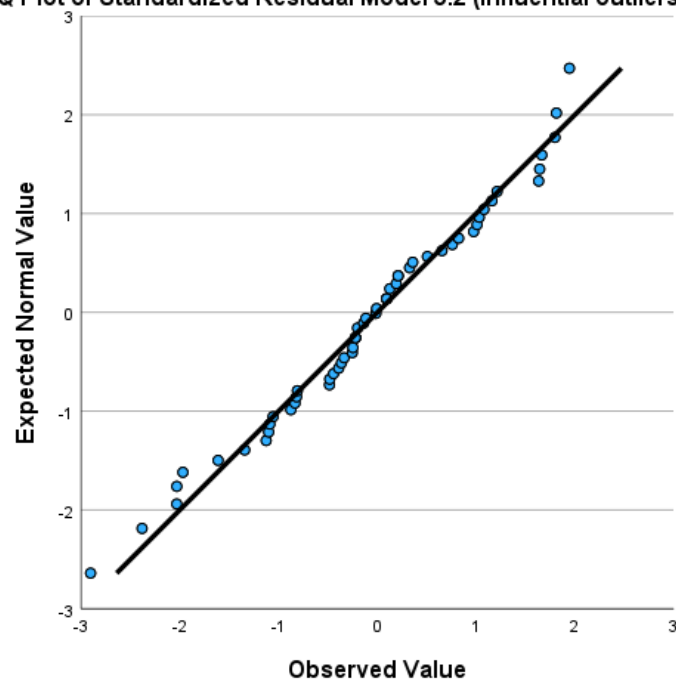
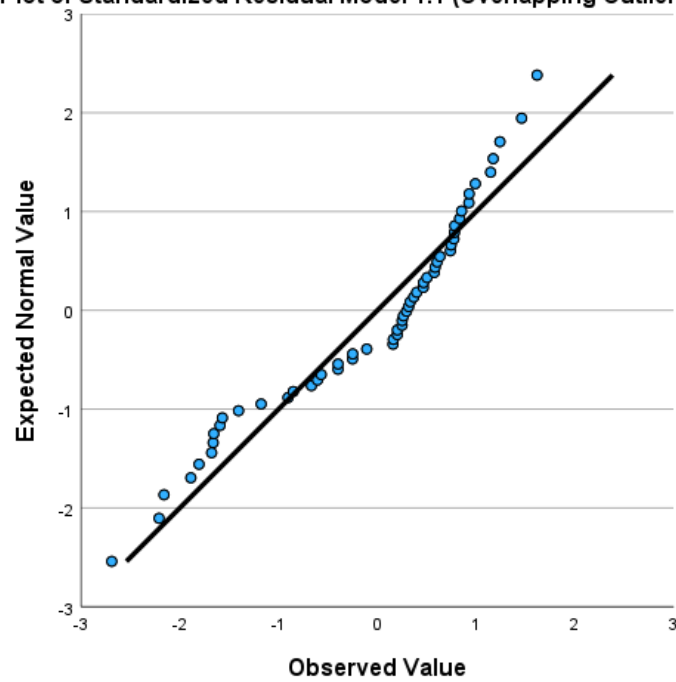


Figure 13 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 3.1 & 3.2 (influential outliers removed)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 1.1 (Overlapping Outliers Removed)



Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 1.2 (Overlapping Outliers Removed)

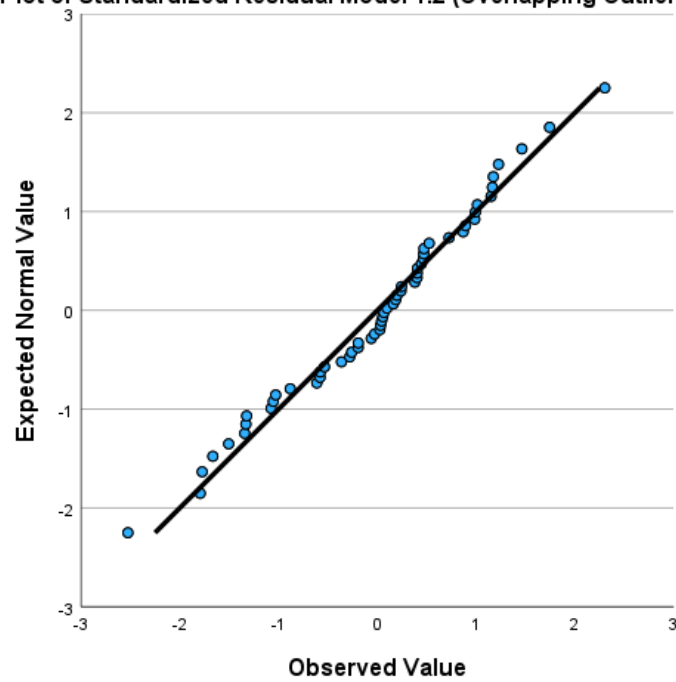
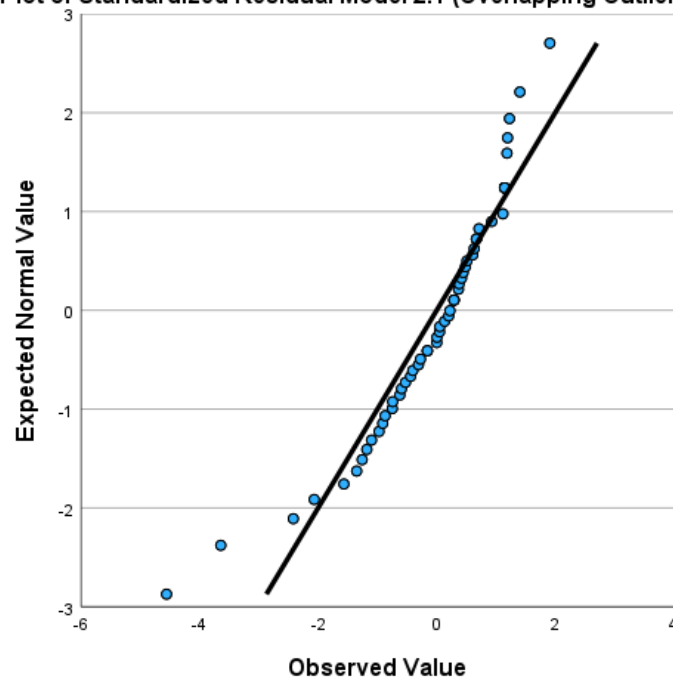


Figure 14 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 1.1 & 1.2 (overlapping outliers removed)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 2.1 (Overlapping Outliers Removed)



Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 2.2 (Overlapping Outliers Removed)

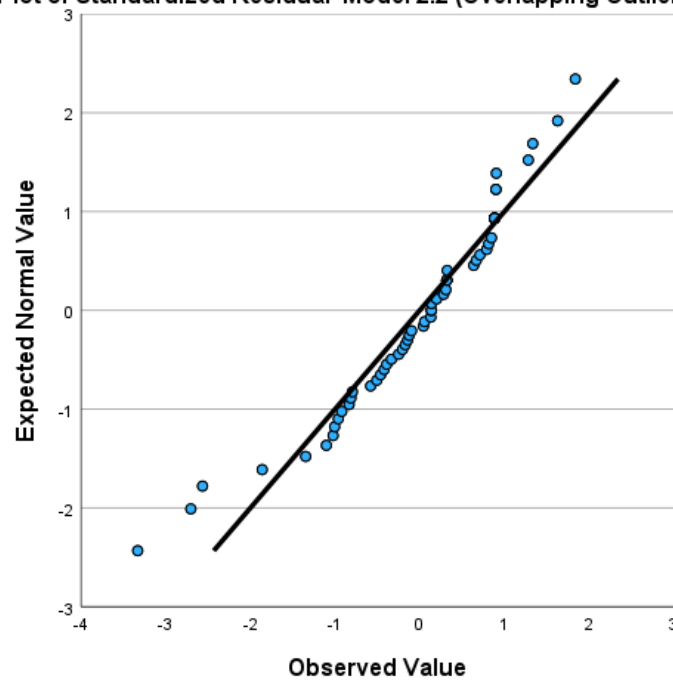
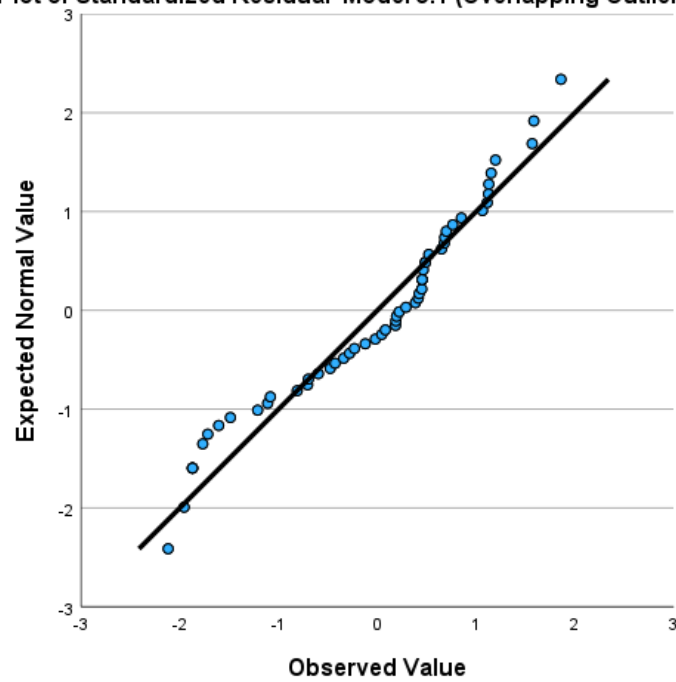


Figure 15 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 2.1 & 2.2 (overlapping outliers removed)

Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 3.1 (Overlapping Outliers Removed)



Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residual Model 3.2 (Overlapping Outliers Removed)

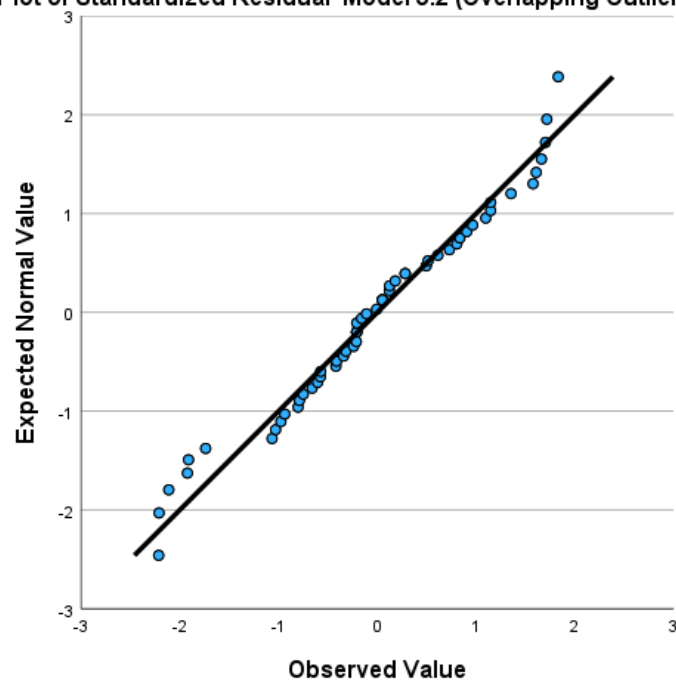


Figure 16 Normal Q-Q Plot of Standardised Residual Model 3.1 & 3.2 (overlapping outliers removed)

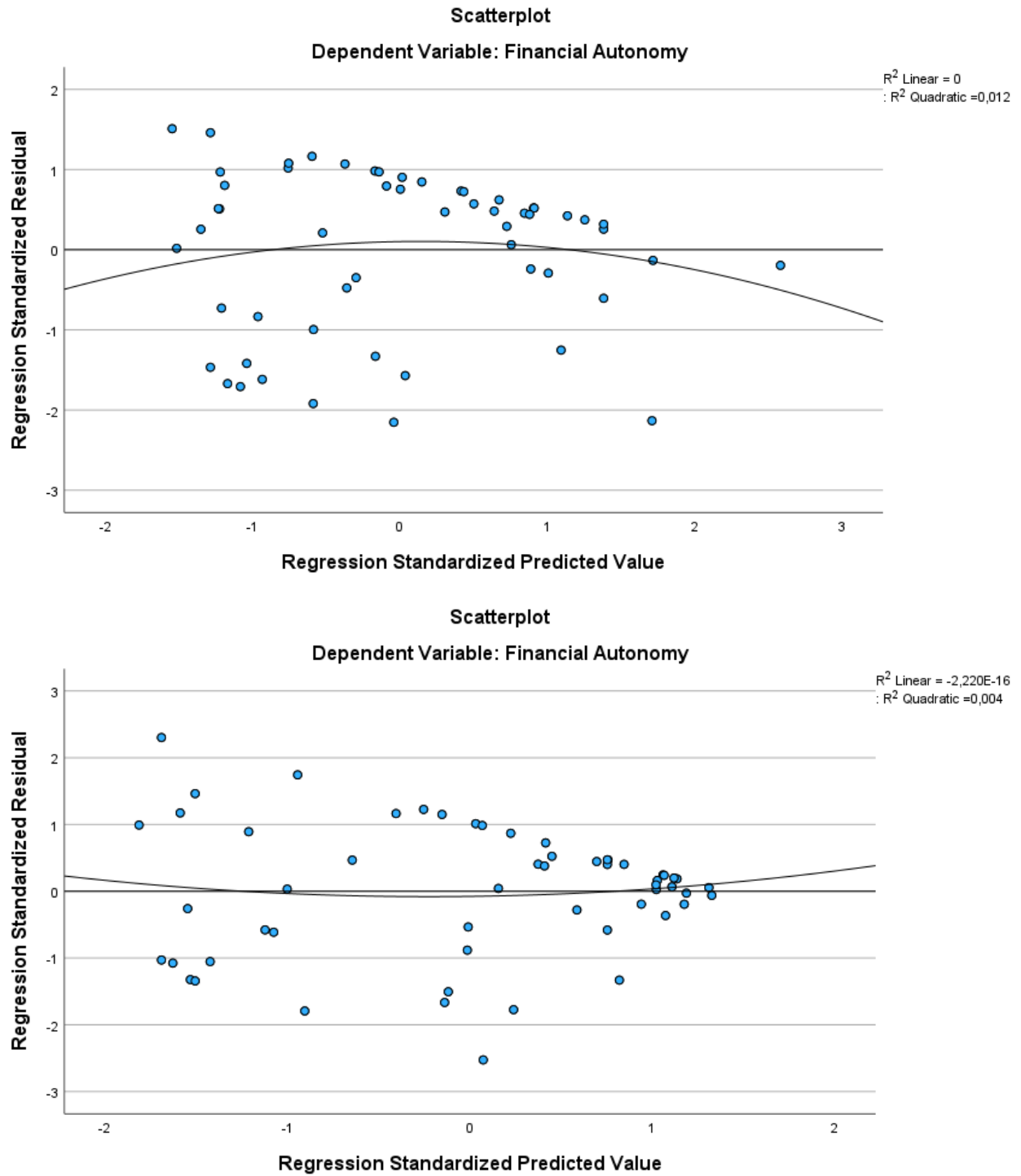


Figure 17 ZPRED vs ZRESID Plot, Model 1.1 & 1.2 (original)

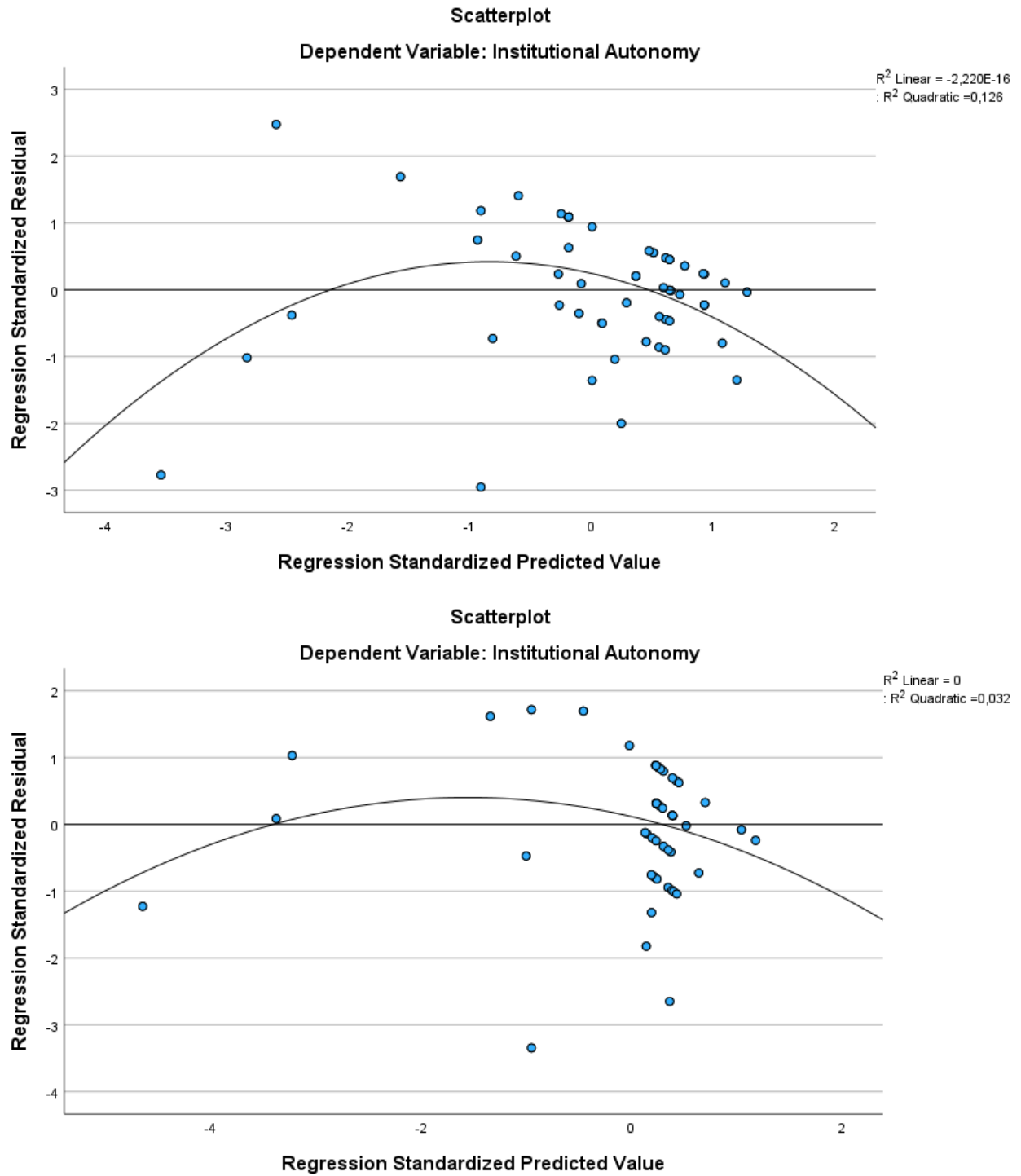


Figure 18 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 2.1 & 2.2 (original)

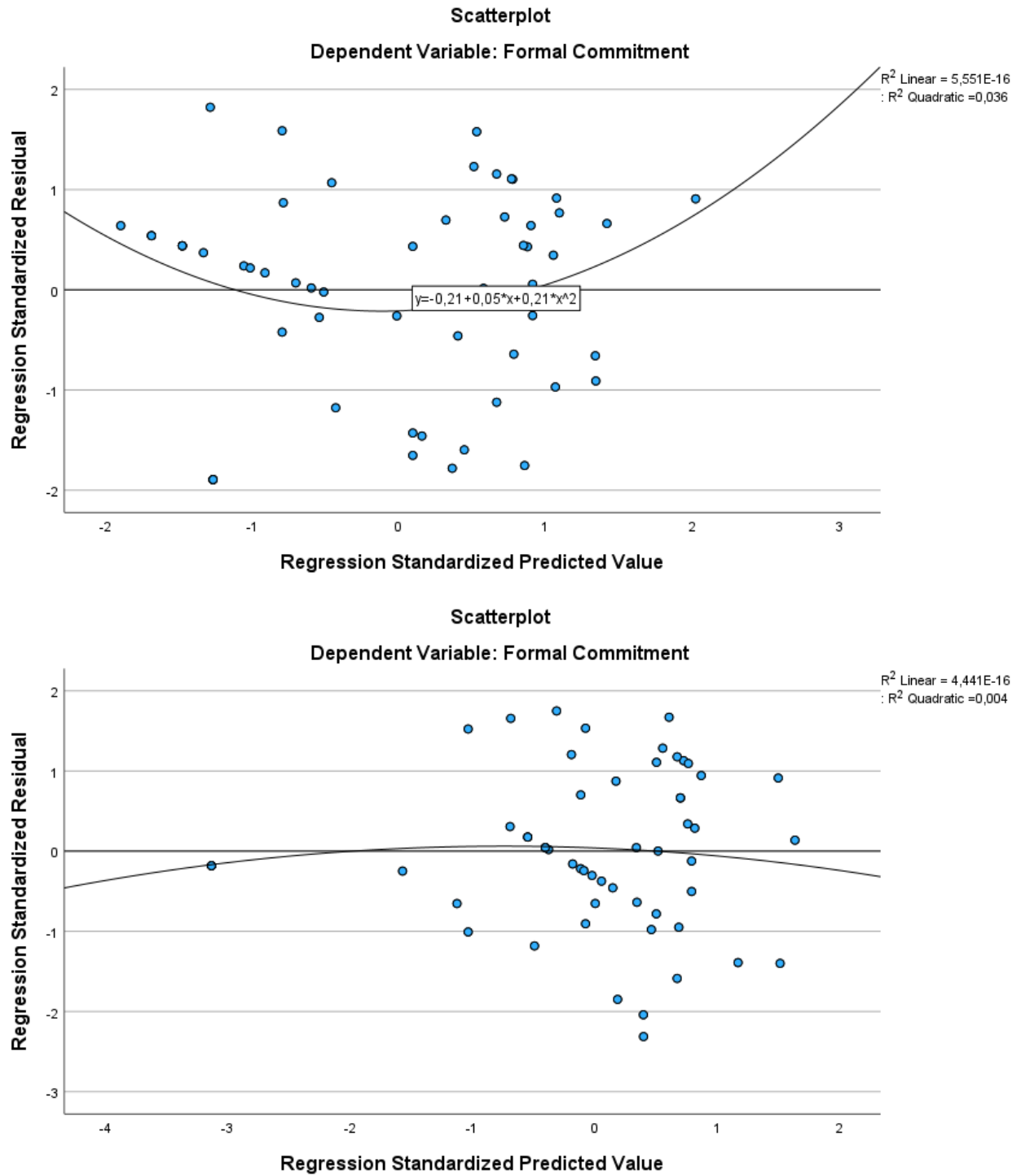


Figure 19 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 3.1 & 3.2 (original)

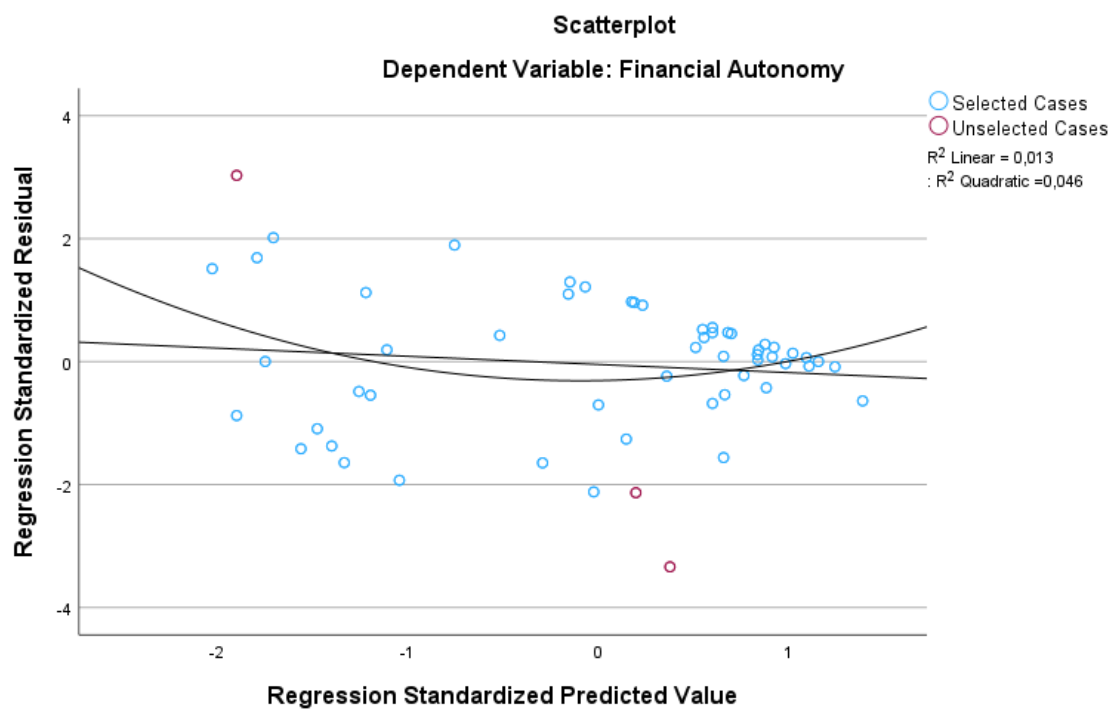
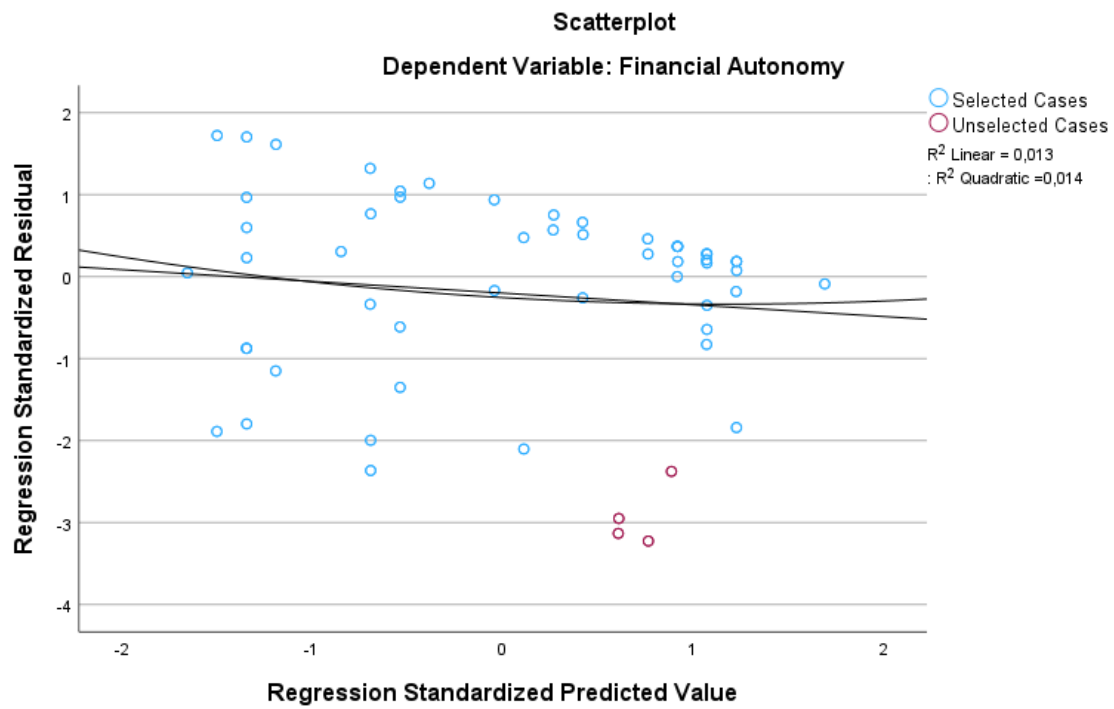


Figure 20 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 1.1 & 1.2 (influential outliers removed)

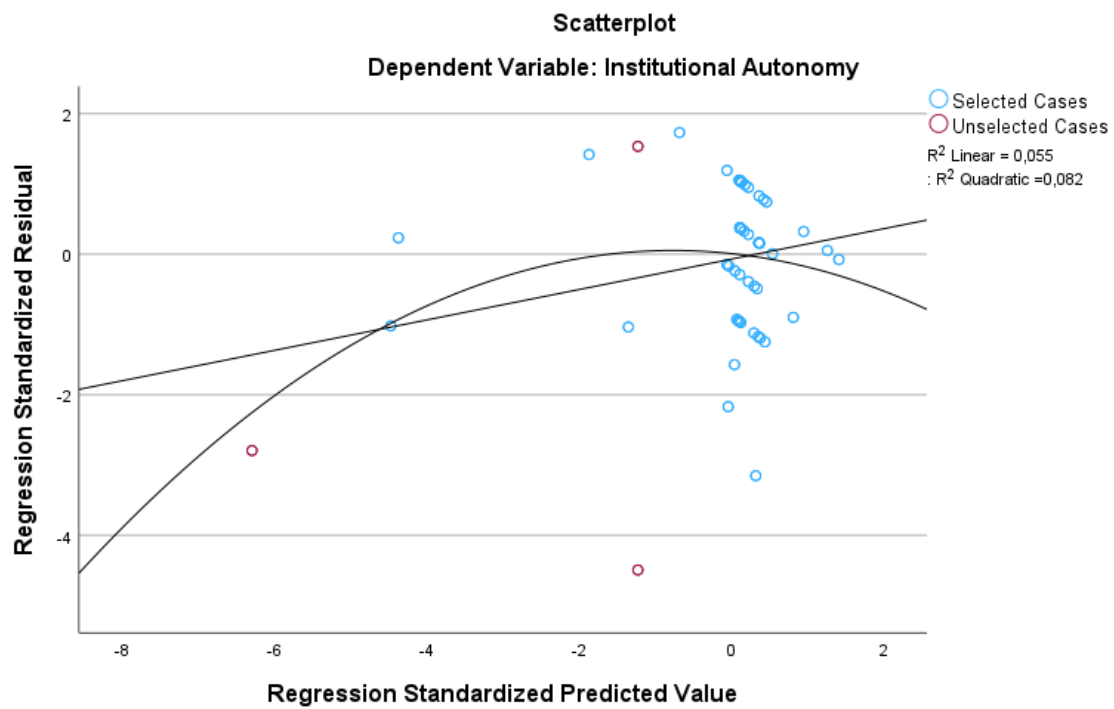
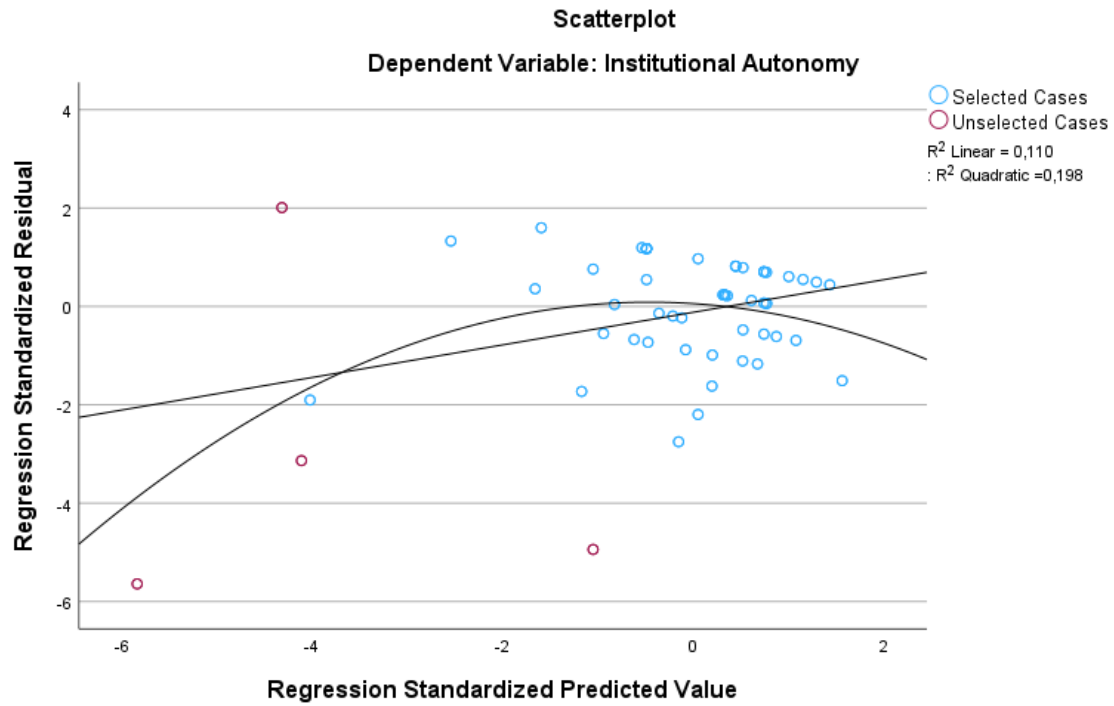


Figure 21 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 2.1 & 2.2 (influential outliers removed)

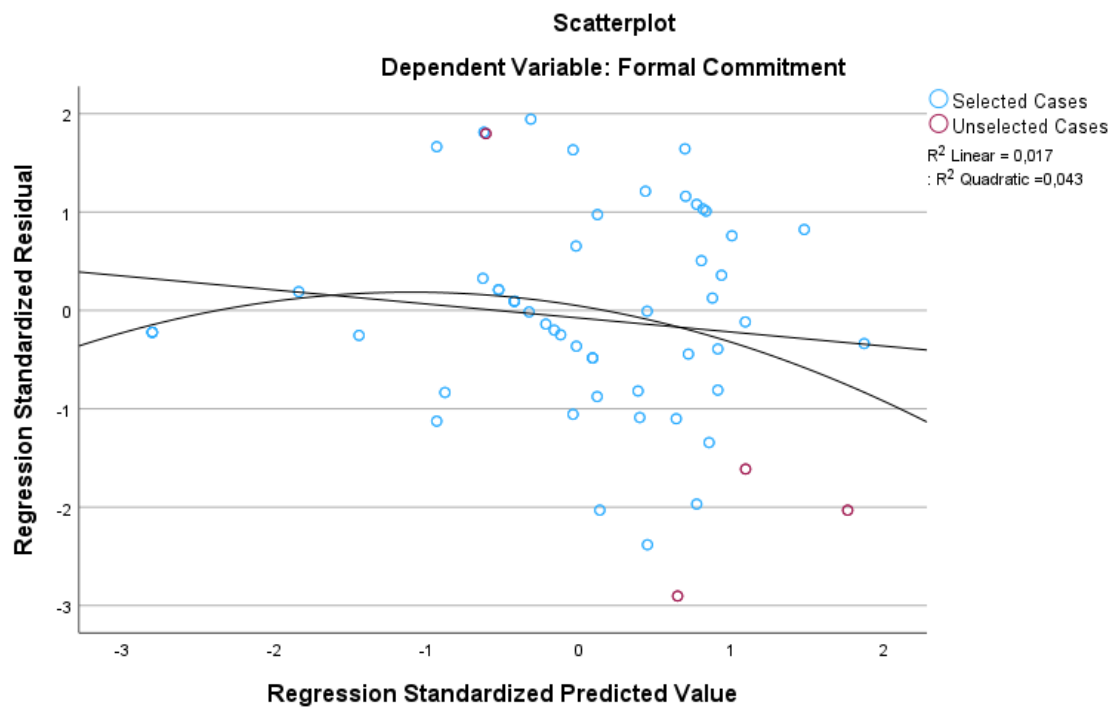
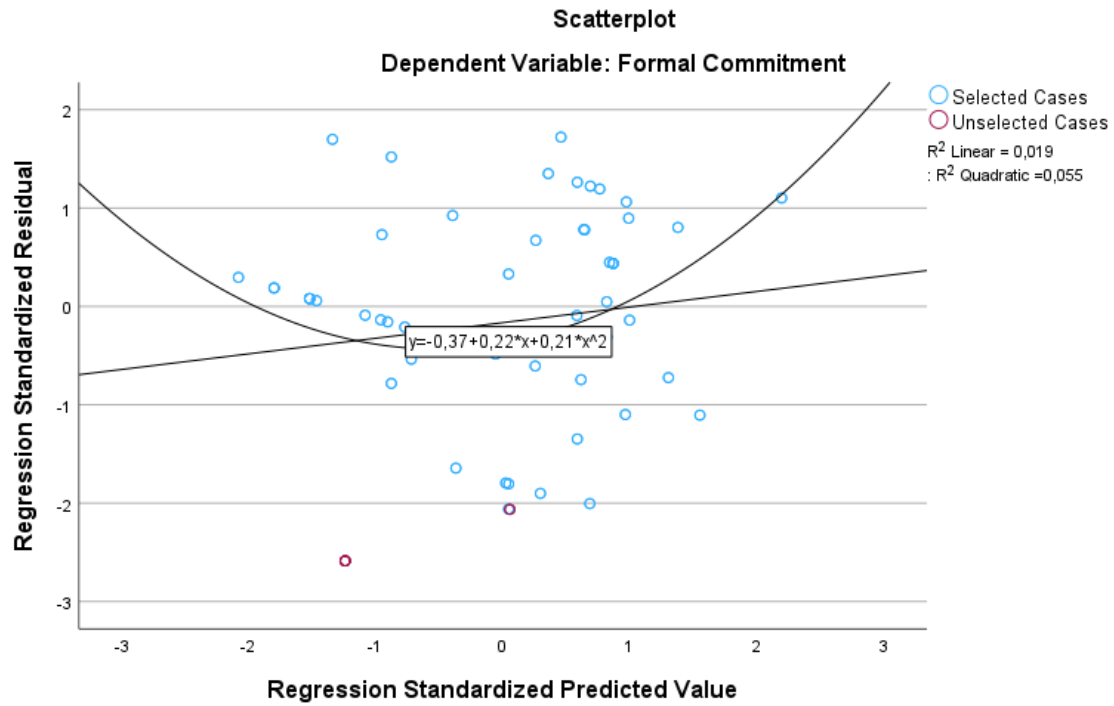


Figure 22 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 3.1 & 3.2 (influential outliers removed)

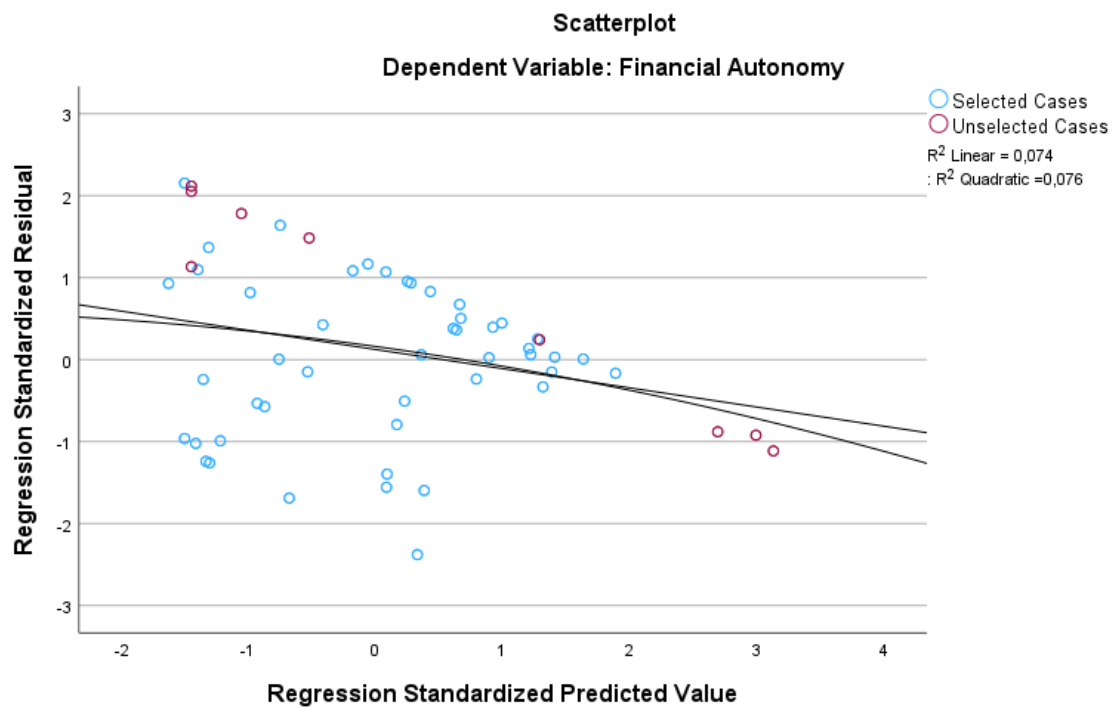
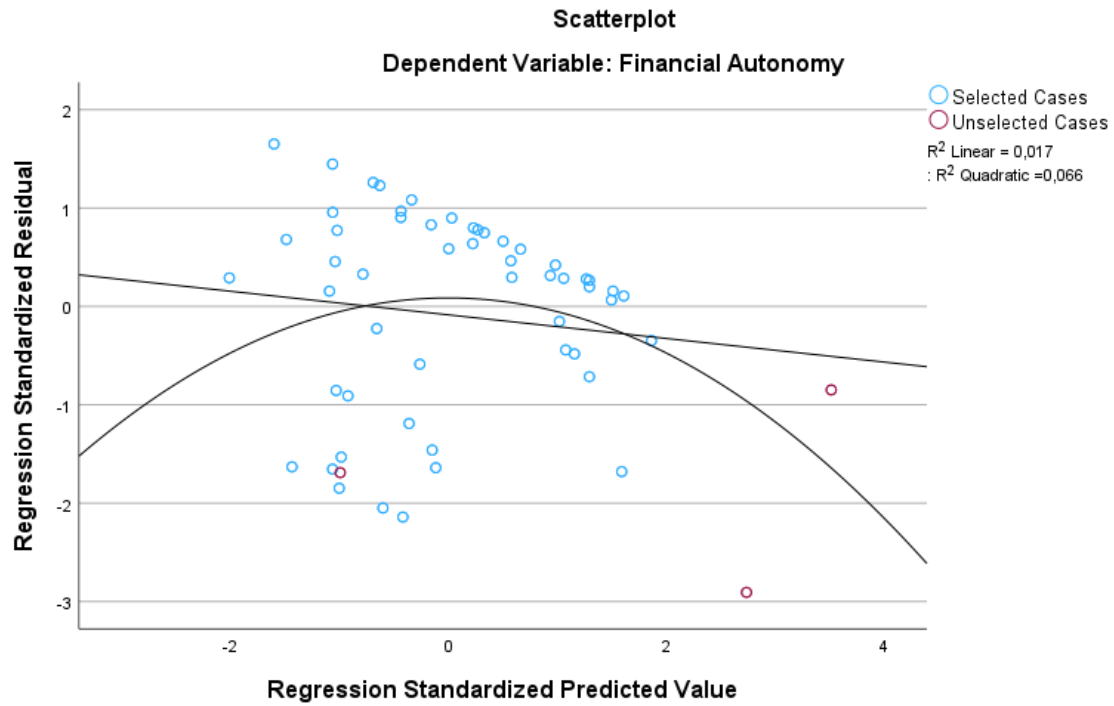


Figure 23 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 1.1 & 1.2 (overlapping outliers removed)

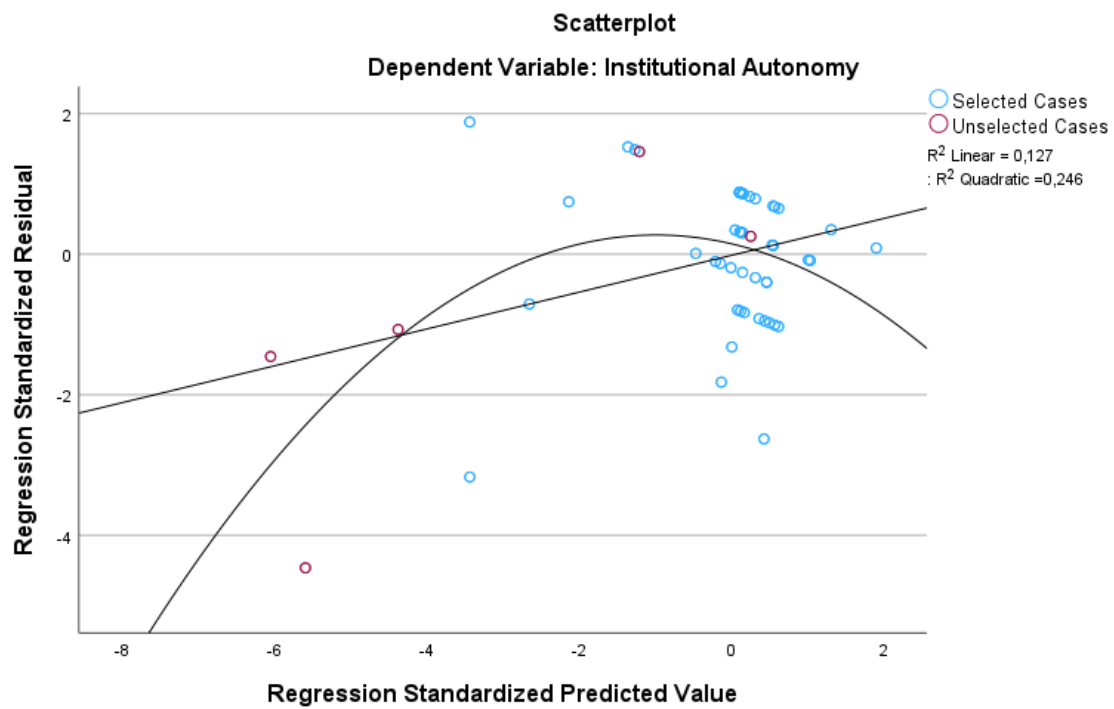
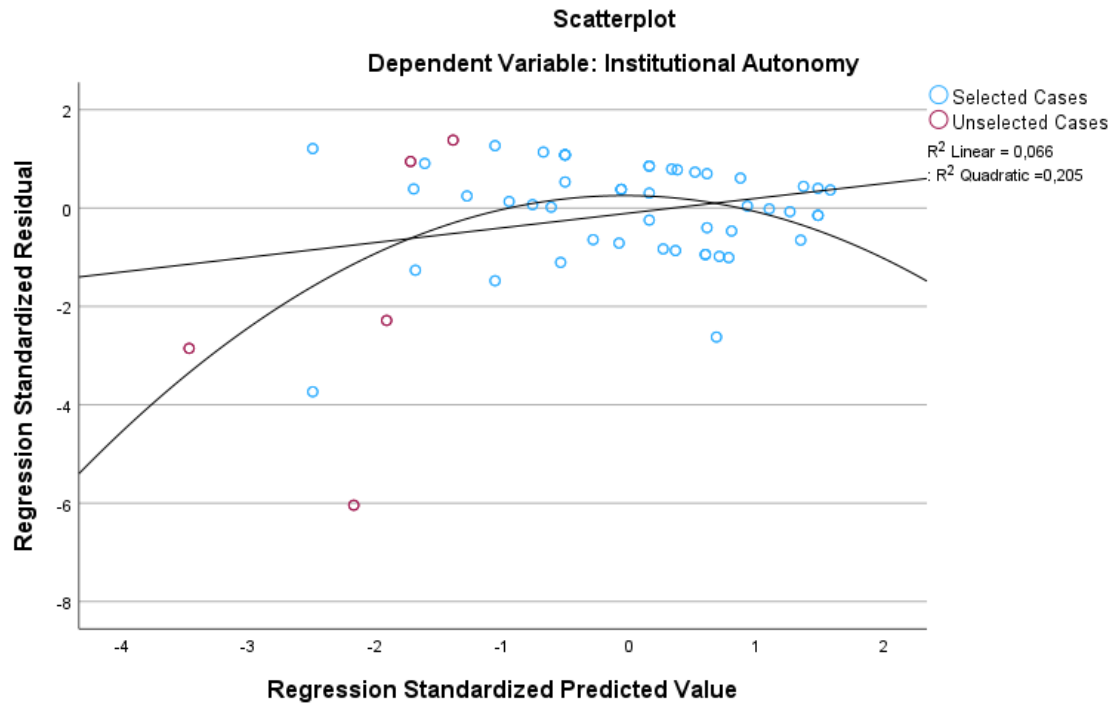


Figure 24 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 2.1 & 2.2 (overlapping outliers removed)

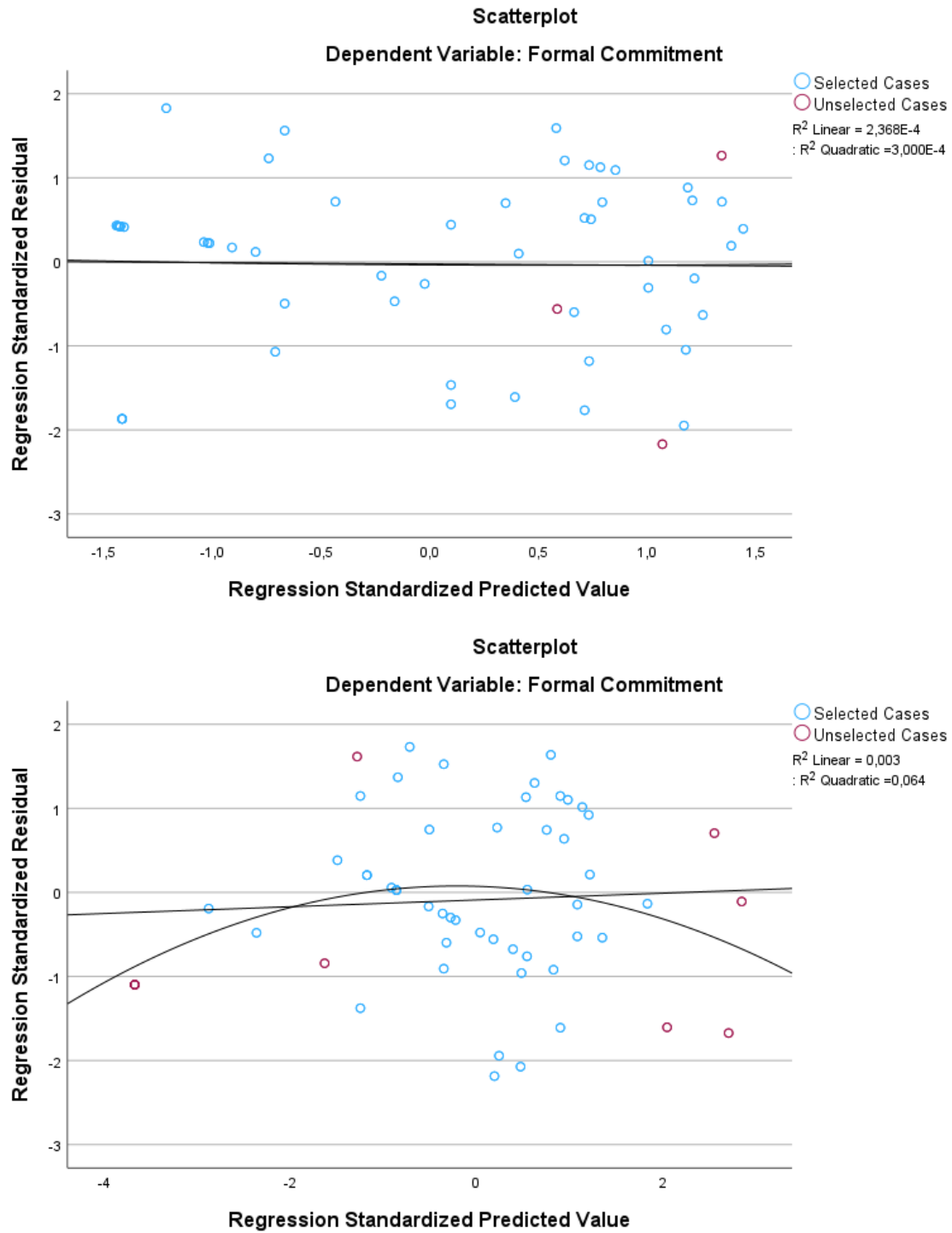


Figure 25 ZPRED vs. ZRESID Plot, Model 3.1 & 3.2 (overlapping outliers removed)

Appendix V

Mediation Analysis Model Summaries								
Outcome Variable	Model	R	R-Square (R ²)	MSE	F-statistic	df1	df2	p-value
Formal Commitment	Model 4.1: Bureaucratisation → FormCom	0.4190	0.1756	0.0506	23.4296	1	110	0.0000
Autonomy Institutional	Model 4.2: Bureaucratisation → FormCom → Autonomy_Institutional	0.2745	0.0753	7.0043	4.4407	2	109	0.0140
Formal Commitment	Model 5.1: Hierarchy → FormCom	0.2130	0.0454	0.0585	5.2286	1	110	0.0241
Autonomy Institutional	Model 5.2: Hierarchy → FormCom → AutoIns	0.2281	0.0520	7.1811	2.9899	2	109	0.0544

Table 21 Mediation Analysis Model Summaries

Test/Statistic	Ideal Range	Acceptable/ Tolerable/ Mild Range	Problematic Range
Breusch-Pagan Test	$p > 0.05$ (homoscedasticity)	$0.01 < p \leq 0.05$ (mild heteroscedasticity)	$p \leq 0.01$ (severe heteroscedasticity)
Cook's Distance	$< 4/n$ (low influence)		$> 4/n-1$ (influential data point)
Durbin-Watson Test	1.5—2.5 (no autocorrelation)	1.0—1.5 or 2.5—3.0 (mild autocorrelation)	< 1.0 or > 3.0 (significant autocorrelation)
Kurtosis	0 (normal distribution)	-1 to +1 (platykurtic or leptokurtic)	< -2 or $> +2$ (highly platykurtic or leptokurtic)
Linear R^2 (in ZPRED vs ZRESID)	Close to 0 (no linear trend)	0.1—0.3 (mild linear trend)	> 0.3 (significant linear trend)
Quadratic R^2 (in ZPRED vs ZRESID)	Close to 0 (no quadratic trend)	0.1—0.3 (mild quadratic trend)	> 0.3 (significant quadratic trend)
Shapiro-Wilk Test	$p > 0.05$ (data is normal)	-	$p < 0.05$ (data is not normal)
Skewness	0 (perfect symmetry)	-1 to +1 (slightly skewed)	< -2 or $> +2$ (highly skewed)
Tolerance	> 0.2 (low multicollinearity)	0.1—0.2 (moderate multicollinearity)	< 0.1 (high multicollinearity)
T-Statistics / p-Values for Predictors	$p < 0.05$ (statistically significant)		$p > 0.05$ (insignificant)
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	1.0—3.0 (low multicollinearity)	3.1—5.0 (moderate multicollinearity)	> 5.0 (high multicollinearity)

Table 22 Guide for interpreting some key statistics

Ich erkläre: Ich habe die vorgelegte Dissertation selbständig, ohne unerlaubte fremde Hilfe und nur mit den Hilfen angefertigt, die ich in der Dissertation angegeben habe. Alle Textstellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten Schriften entnommen sind, und alle Angaben, die auf mündlichen Auskünften beruhen, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Bei den von mir durchgeführten und in der Dissertation erwähnten Untersuchungen habe ich die Grundsätze guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis, wie sie in der 'Satzung der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis' niedergelegt sind, eingehalten.“

Murad Nasibov

Giessen,2024