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Violence in Civil Society

Insights from the CSI databases

Anaël Labigne and Anne Nassauer¹

Introduction

Even though no society, region or culture is free of violence (Imbusch 2002), violence is rarely used by civil society actors, as several empirical studies point out (Tilly & Tarrow 2007; Fillieule & Jobard 1998; Collins 2008). Nevertheless, violence emerges in civil society from time to time. This chapter addresses the role of violence in civil society based on the insights from different CSI countries by asking in which ways civil society actors make use of violence. The aim of the chapter is to analyze and categorize empirical examples of violence in civil society, in order to see in which ways the uses of violence and civil society groups themselves differ. This will lead us to a discussion of the concept of violence and of the value-related dimension of civil society more generally.

Using the two existing CSI datasets from the 2003–2006 and 2008–2011 phases of the project, including both quantitative and qualitative data, we seek to find out more about how violence emerges in civil society, what groups use violence and what differences are visible in the way that violence is used by civil society actors. Narrowing down the analysis with the help of concrete examples will help us not only to obtain a fundamental understanding of how and why violence appears within civil society, but to advance the conceptual clarification. This research interest relates to the broader themes which an empirical and comparative project such as the CSI has to discuss: asking what civil society looks like, and whether civil society is a society that is civil is tantamount to asking in what context it is not. Therefore, a first crucial step is to conceptualize and illustrate the phenomenon of violence in civil society.

The chapter proceeds as follows: first, relevant concepts and categories will be discussed as well as their implications for the analysis and for comparisons of civil society actions. We argue that it is crucial to differentiate between civil society groups in order to understand violence occurring in this arena. Moreover, we underline the usefulness of a narrow concept of violence, as empirical examples of the CSI database show that the instances of violence

used by civil society can hardly be subsumed under one label. Second, we will draw on the CSI quantitative and qualitative data to examine the perceived prevalence of violence within civil society. In this inductive process, examples taken from the CSI Analytical Country Reports will allow us to establish three categories of violence used by civil society actors to structure the different forms of and reasons for violence systematically: reformist violence, demarcation violence and non-political violence. In the last part of this chapter, we will analyze the different forms of violence and state implications for further research.²

Concepts and categories

The terms civil society and violence are used to describe very different research objects and are usually not used in combination. Civil society is a commonly used concept, which is however diversely defined in the social sciences.³ Since a remarkable number of different kinds of violence exist (Collins 2008: 463), violence is a very diffuse and complex phenomenon. Thus, this section aims to clarify the two concepts. We will first specify the definition of civil society with reference to the CSI and subsequently discuss the concept of violence in more depth.

For the purpose of the CSI research, CIVICUS provided a working definition of civil society. This definition changed slightly between the two phases of survey and field research, from ‘the arena in society between the state, market and family where citizens advance their common interests’ to ‘the arena – outside of the family, the state, and the market – which is created by individual and collective actions, organizations and institutions to advance shared interests’ (Mati, Silva and Anderson 2010: 17). This change is said to have the aim of emphasizing the role of the actors in creating a space for civil society, which is often assumed to already exist, but which ‘does not exist on its own’ (*Ibid.*: 19). Obviously this working definition has fuzzy boundaries and needs to prove its value through the empirical research process. The strength of this working concept is that the collected CSI data are rich and diverse. Different actors with different goals are surveyed and it is not decided *ex ante* which actors and groups are surveyed and which ones are not. In other words, this working concept of civil society is general enough to capture complexity and paradoxes, as the aspect of violence in civil society shows.

Turning to the definition of violence in civil society, we will limit ourselves to physical violence. This form of violence might be incited or encouraged by perceived structural or symbolic violence. However, we claim that physical violence is particularly interesting as it more strongly contradicts usual civil behaviour than other forms of violence. Moreover, we assume the inhibition threshold for using physical violence to be higher than the inhibition threshold

for using other forms of violence, such as psychological violence. The CSI defines violence as ‘damage to property or personal violence’. Yet, we further specify violence as an action demolishing or destroying objects or causing physical injury or death to another person. We will not include examples like graffiti spraying or street blockades, mentioned in some CSI country reports in the context of violent action, but only actual damage of objects. While we include violence against persons as well as violence against objects, we nevertheless assume that the inhibition threshold to use violence against persons and the harm done by this sort of violence is much higher.

According to Imbusch (2002) different types and dimensions of violence can be classified. Types – i.e. the forms of appearance of violence – can be individual, collective or state violence. As dimensions of violence we can differentiate between metaphorical violence (no real execution of violence, but a vivid description of a phenomenon), direct physical violence (which we refer to in this chapter), institutional violence (such as enduring power relations), structural violence (e.g. suppression or poverty), cultural violence (the cultural and not clearly visible aspects of structural violence, e.g. language, ideology or narratives that justify structural violence), symbolic violence (violence in language and symbols that helps to mask existing power relations, e.g. gender) and ritualized violence (e.g. boxing). We contend that Imbusch’s insights on these dimensions and types relevant for violence in civil society can be combined into one model illustrated in Figure 7.1.⁴ As violence as a concept tends to be used for very different social phenomena, this classification allows us to specify further the forms of violence used by civil society and to establish

Figure 7.1 Types and dimensions of violence⁵

categories of civil society groups using violence. Since we aim to place violence in civil society in the broader context of analyzing violence, we include all types of violence mentioned by Imbusch in the figure to give a comprehensive overview of different forms of violence (for a detailed discussion of types and dimensions, see Imbusch 2002). In the next section, we will then discuss how violence in civil society can be conceptualized and differentiated further.

Figure 7.1 shows that two forms of collective violence must be distinguished for our purpose, namely institutional violence and non-institutional violence. The latter category refers to violence used by civil society actors, but often occurs in the interplay with institutional violence, normally carried out by state actors. Violence by civil society groups is hence included in the highlighted box ‘collective violence, non-institutional’. While the use of force by the state is generally considered legitimate to protect the general public interest and to maintain internal and external security (Grimm 2002: 1,298), use of violence by non-state actors is defined as illegitimate and therefore punished by the state (Hellmann 1998). Both collective non-institutional violence and state violence are always public in some way (Heitmeyer & Hagan 2002). This chapter therefore analyzes violence in civil society, i.e. ‘collective violence, non-institutional’, which is carried out by a group, pursuing political or non-political goals, directed towards the state, another group or an individual, and generally defined as illegal in the given legal environment.⁶

Collective violence of civil society actors

The CSI

The data we use to analyze violence in civil society and to build the three categories of collective physical violence are drawn from the two main phases of CSI research. From 2003 to 2006 and from 2008 to 2011, research teams based in each participating country, coordinated by CIVICUS, undertook an assessment of their civil society, including quantitative and qualitative analysis of perceptions of the use of violence by civil society groups, as articulated, in some countries, through media reviews and interviews with a variety of stakeholders. While the first CSI phase used four dimensions to map civil society (Structure, Environment, Impact and Values), the methodology used for the 2008–2011 phase examines Civic Engagement, Level of Organization, Practice of Values, Perceived Impact and the External Environment, as discussed in Chapter 2. The values dimension used in the 2003–2006 phase and the practice of values dimension used in the 2008–2011 phase are investigated for both datasets. Within this category we evaluate the indicator of perceived non-violence from the 2008–2011 Organizational Survey. We use the country reports from the first phase where the local research teams answered the following question

(indicator 3.4.1 in the 2003–2006 phase): How widespread is the use of violent means (such as damage to property or personal violence) among civil society actors to express their interests in the public sphere?

Hence, our investigation builds on an inductive approach from empirical evidence to theory frames. Based on the data, a conceptual discussion of violence and its relevance for civil society research is made.

Violence in civil society

Two questions from the 2008–2011 CSI Organizational Survey are particularly relevant to our research questions: (1) Are there any forces within civil society that use violence (aggression, hostility, brutality and/or fighting) to express their interests?; (2) If yes, how would the respondent describe the forces within civil society that use violence (aggression, hostility, brutality and/or fighting) to express their interests? Are they: significant mass-based groups, isolated groups regularly using violence, isolated groups occasionally resorting to violence, or is the use of violence by civil society groups extremely rare?

The first finding based on the 2008–2011 phase of the CSI⁷ is that the phenomenon of violence in civil society is an ambiguous issue, as shown by the respondent pattern: out of 4,117 interviewees in the Organizational Surveys conducted in the twenty-five countries examined for this volume, 79 per cent answered the question about whether there are any forces within civil society that use violence (aggression, hostility and/or fighting) to express their interests. Out of those, 62 per cent answered that there were such forces, and 31 per cent that there were not, while 7 per cent answered ‘don’t know’. Hence this is not a clear-cut issue.

Furthermore, within individual countries there is also a lot of disagreement on that single question.⁸ Interestingly, exceptions are found in some of the Latin American cases – Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela – where about 90 per cent of the Organizational Survey interviewees agree that there are forces within civil society that use violence.⁹ Otherwise, much heterogeneity is found.¹⁰

The meanings associated with the term ‘civil society’ seem to be diverse at the respondents’ level; therefore, as the term itself is part of the question posed, we find ambiguity in the response pattern. The response patterns of the survey at the individual country level indicate that there is – as measured by a single question – no clear agreement as to whether there are forces within civil society that use violence to express their interests. One possibility is that respondents who do not think there are such forces have the more professionalized, service-providing NGO type in mind, while others responding that there are violent forces may associate the diversity of movements struggling for recognition with the notion of ‘civil society’; however there was no scope to further explore this during the interviews.

Additionally, one has to consider that this survey took place in different countries and the respondents work in very different organizational contexts. The largest group of respondents was formed by people working in NGOs, civic groups, human rights organizations, health groups and social service providers, who together form about 30 per cent of the sample. The rest of the interviewees worked in diverse organizations, which ranged from village committees and religious groups to labour unions and others. This is another potential reason for the heterogeneity found in the response patterns investigated below.

What can be said is that throughout all these different national, regional and organizational settings, groups within civil society are perceived at least to a certain extent to use a range of means of action, including violent ones. When those who answered that violence within civil society exists were asked further how to describe violent forces (see Figure 7.2), more respondents chose the category that these are ‘isolated groups occasionally resorting to violence’ than any other.

The distribution shown in Figure 7.2 varies across the respondent’s organizational working background. Further analysis reveals groups with observable differences from the reported averages. These are respondents from the broader NGO sector, from political parties, youth groups, and traders’ associations, who state more often than others that the use of violence is extremely rare, and those from ethnic-based community groups, who perceive violence in civil society more often than the average, and see it as caused by significant mass-based groups.¹¹ In that sense, the data indicate that the organizational field the respondents work in indeed matters for their perception of violence in civil society.¹²

Figure 7.2 Perceived violence in civil society according to CSI Organizational Survey

However, the focus of this chapter is not to analyze factors to explain this variation statistically, but to ask what empirical reality is to be found behind these statements. Therefore we aim at a conceptual clarification of violence in civil society with reference to empirical examples available within the country reports from the 2003–2006 and 2008–2011 phases of the CSI.

Three categories of violence

After clustering the data from the CSI country reports, we detected three categories of non-institutional violence that we propose to exemplify, illustrate and analyze: reformist violence, demarcation violence and non-political violence.

Non-institutional violence, one of the two forms of collective violence presented in Figure 7.1, includes violence by civil society actors. The examples of civil society groups captured in the CSI database coincide with all of the attributes shown in Figure 7.1 except one: ‘why it is used’, i.e. the actual goals a group aims to achieve through its actions, and not the group’s motives to act or to use violence. Therefore, we have developed categories based on this distinguishing attribute. This does not mean that we claim that the goals of a certain group automatically tell us something about the actual reasons why the group uses violence. Explanations and justifications by groups themselves or by observers, as well as scientific explanations of this phenomenon, are broad. Nevertheless, a distinction of groups by their goals is a first step in categorizing and analyzing differences in violence used by civil society.

Figure 7.3 illustrates the categories we developed, extending the ‘collective violence (non-institutional)’ box from Figure 7.1.

Reformist violence

Violence in the first category is used by groups such as social movements with reformative goals (Tilly & Tarrow 2007). These groups do not usually plan

Figure 7.3 Three categories of violence in civil society

to use violence, and violence is usually used in self-defence, due to perceived danger to body and freedom, or as a sort of last resort. The aim of the actors involved in violence is to change and reform society. Violence is generally not perceived as a way of achieving this goal, but rather as a seldom occurring by-product of interaction with state forces or other groups (Tilly & Tarrow 2007; Fillieule & Jobard 1998; Stott & Reicher 1998; Marx 1972). Thus violence in this category is reactive, collective and public in some way (Imbusch 2002: 44).

Like the other two categories, the 'reformist violence' category is built on the CSI country reports from the two phases. The country report on Bolivia for example shows protests taking the form of road blocks and marches leading to public disorder on the country's main road network (Center for Peasant Research and Development 2006). In the case of Bolivia, these political actions are generally peaceful unless the police intervene to use violence to disperse crowds and restore public order. Another example is violence at street demonstrations organized by anti-globalization groups in Chile. University students, unions, indigenous associations and political parties were involved in these demonstrations, and some protests were reported to have resorted to violent actions, with road blocks, broken billboards on the streets and physical aggression towards the police (Fundación Soles 2006).

A further example of this type of violence can be found in the Hong Kong report which mentions 'indigenous' groups, namely descendents of the Chinese community who had been living in Hong Kong well before the arrival of the British colonialists. On several occasions in the 1990s, violence by indigenous groups flared up during their otherwise peaceful campaigns against proposed legislation that threatened their traditional privileges (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Civil Society Index Research Team 2006).

Although civil society actions in Mongolia have generally been peaceful, the researchers report a trend of escalating violence as citizens begin to use violence as a sort of 'last resort' (Center for Citizens' Alliance 2005). For example in the context of workers' riots, members of the AriunSubarga movement were reported to have protested violently against the Mongol Gazar mining company's camp and to have broken windows of their bulldozers by throwing stones. The group has reformatory goals, since working conditions are at the heart of the conflict.

Another prime example is reported for Vietnam where the fight against land speculation led to protests from those who lost their land or felt under-compensated. The research team reported one of the better-known cases which took place in December 2004 when 400 people clashed with security guards at an opening ceremony for a new golf course built with foreign funds in a province near Hanoi. The protesters were dissatisfied with the compensation they had received for the expropriated land (Vietnam Institute of Development Studies 2006).

Opposition organizations were also mentioned in the Nicaraguan report, as resorting to traditional forms of complaints such as road blockages when

the means of dialogue have been exhausted. Student groups from national universities were reported to use violence in this context, for example, in their protests against the restrictions set by Sandinista student leaders on the electoral competition of new groups. Again, infrequent incidents of violence were reported to occur due to the clash between the party in power and protests of opposing groups (Nicaraguan Network for Democracy and Local Development 2011).

Demarcation violence

The second category focuses on civil society groups which pursue what we refer to as demarcation goals. In this category, violence is used for political purposes that are more radical than those expressed by the group above. In such cases, violence is often perceived to be caused by 'us-them' boundaries, created by narratives based upon race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation (see *inter alia* Rydgren 2007; Lamont & Molnár 2002). These symbolic boundaries positively evaluate one's own group in contrast to 'the other', to differentiate oneself and create a shared group identity (Lamont & Molnár 2002). Stereotyping 'the other' by stressing the boundaries between the groups, as well as analogisms and specific narratives, can contribute to the escalation of ethnic conflict (see Rydgren 2007; Lamont & Molnár 2002). The radical change pursued by civil society groups in this category is the main point of distinction from the first category. Violence used by these groups is planned rather than reactive, mostly public or semi-public, and has a political motivation of fighting against the state or against another social group.

The research team for Azerbaijan mentioned the mainly ethno-separatist movements and organizations such as Sadval and some radical religious groupings, in particular armed Vahhabite groups that resort to violent means (International Centre for Social Research 2007). As Valiyev (2005) argues, continuing poverty, as well as a high number of refugees within the country, created a ground for radical organizations to recruit members and enhanced the likelihood of finding sympathizers within a variety of groups which were unsatisfied with the status quo.

The most illustrative example for demarcation violence mentioned in the Serbian country report was the Obraz, a fascist organization, which started off as an openly anti-Semitic movement (Byford 2002: 44). Here the narrative of race and ethnicity seems to be the central one (Research and Analytical Center ARGUMENT 2006).

The Indian CSI report also included examples of demarcation violence with reference to radical groups like the Naxalite groups and militant Maoist groups. They are reported to be driven by radical ideologies with the goal of overthrowing the political system, for which they justify violent means (Centre for Youth and Social Development 2006).

Comparable groups exist in Indonesia. Its country report mentioned community groups, such as the Front Pembela Islam, which is reported to have a paramilitary wing called Laskar Pembela Islam (YAPPIKA, Indonesian Civil Society Alliance for Democracy 2006). Again, this chapter does not analyze to a full extent the justifications for the use of violent means, which are complex and beyond the scope of this chapter. For this case, the discussion would need to include this organization's critique and accusation that the Indonesian police service does not uphold laws on gambling and prostitution. Here, as in the country reports mentioned before, other civil society groups firmly reject and denounce the use of violence by such radical groups (Suryaningati *et al.* 2003).

Non-political violence

The third category refers to violence which is not politically motivated. It might be related to criminal action, such as mafia or gang activities, but it also includes hooliganism. Groups belonging to these categories can be part of an underground economy, as in the case of mafia groups, or they can have loose ties to groups with political aims, as some hooligan groups do. However, the groups in this category cannot be said to be in the position of promoting political claims, in the course of which violence occasionally emerges (as in the first category), or to using violence as a strategy for a radical political change (as in the second category). Violence in this category can be planned or unplanned, be used against groups or individuals, and has a much stronger connotation of a direct advantage deriving for the group.

Whether or not this third category can actually be located within civil society opens up a wide discussion depending on the underlying civil society concept applied. Rather than discussing in abstract terms what groups should rightly be considered under the umbrella term of civil society, we will in the following see the extent to which the use of violence described in this third category differs from the other two categories.

Which social action constitutes a political act and which social action does not is always contested. Examples of this third category of violence are less frequent in the CSI reports. Violence based on individualistic pragmatism and profit-making through illegal action, as for example within drug rings, is indeed not the main focus of the CSI research. Organized prostitution and the trafficking of women as well as related violence amongst criminal groups are mentioned only in few country reports. However, hooligan groups, street gangs and mafia groups are mentioned more often as examples of violence in civil society. By taking a closer look at this third category of violence, we will illustrate what constitutes the essential aspects of this type of collective violence.

In the 2003–2006 CSI country reports for Cyprus (South) (Intercollege and the Management Centre of the Mediterranean 2005), Greece (Access2democracy 2006), and Uruguay (Institute for Communication and Development 2006),

research teams felt that football violence was significant enough to be mentioned in their reports. Another example of non-political violence is crime committed by organized gangs in rural areas, as reported in the Chinese survey or those reported in the 2011 Mexican report with reference to organized drug trafficking. Following the general trend outlined above, the Mexican report also stated that CSO representatives considered the violent forces within civil society to be isolated groups that use violence occasionally. However, only 12.9 per cent of those surveyed stated that the use of violence by civil society groups was extremely unusual. The national research team concluded that these data reflected the growing perception of insecurity experienced in Mexico, which has become stronger in recent years. They noted that while there are several causes for this phenomenon, insecurity is frequently associated with the existence of organized crime groups, mainly linked to drug trafficking, and they argued 'that these groups should not be deemed part of civil society, since they are clearly organizations immersed in illegal acts' and that their presence does indeed impact the perception of violence in Mexican society (Mexican Centre for Philanthropy, Citizens' Initiative for the Promotion of a Culture of Dialogue and Social Administration and Cooperation 2011).

Some hooligan groups are loosely connected to political parties, or promote vague political claims. In Montenegro, the most vivid example refers to the criminal act of football fans named 'Barbarians'. According to reports, on 19 November 2004, part of this group tried to attack a spokesperson from the homosexual community of Serbia (Center for Development of Non-governmental Organisations 2006). Gangs of sports supporters such as Los de Abajos (The Underdogs), and La Garra Blanca (White Claw) known in Chile are also connected to political groups. The gang Los de Abajos was born in the Pinochet dictatorship and promotes left-wing political ideas (Fundación Soles 2006). While in some groups political ideas go along with hooligan groups or gangs, the main aim of their actions is usually not a political change or reform (see Buford 1993), and thus we consider them to be non-political rather than reformist.

Understanding violence in civil society

Now that we have established three analytical categories of violence used in civil society, we will be able to address the following questions: To what extent do civil society groups use violence? If and how does violence in civil society differ? Can the third category of non-political violence in practice be accommodated within the underlying conceptualization of civil society? What are the causes for violence in civil society? And what can we conclude from the empirical examples of violence used by civil society actors and by the categories established on this basis?

With regard to the first question, it should be emphasized again that violence in civil society is rare. Furthermore, it should be noted that for the purposes of this analysis, this chapter refers to physical violence against objects as well as to physical violence against persons, even with the proviso that they are neither equally harmful, nor equally normatively charged. However, showing which groups use physical violence against persons or objects and in which contexts also helps us identify the different forms of violence used by different civil society groups.

Several CSI country reports state that violence in civil society is not an issue in their context. All sixteen CSI country reports that included concrete examples of violence show that, when violence is used by civil society actors, it is more commonly used against objects than against persons.

Secondly, violence in civil society, as conceptualized by the CSI methodology, differs significantly. The groups in the reformist violence category tend to use violence against objects rather than against persons.¹³ The groups in the other two categories use violence against both objects and persons. In the reformist violence category, violence against persons mainly emerges in interactions with state forces, since these groups have political claims that address their political system or parts of the system. Violence in the demarcation violence category can address the state, but it also addresses other collective actors that have a certain societal function or position more frequently than groups in the first category. Violence used by groups in the non-political violence category mainly addresses non-state actors, such as other non-political groups or individuals.

Third, we argue that the category of non-political violence can hardly be considered a part of civil society. Additionally, as discussed below, the demarcation violence category is also inherently contested, depending on the underlying conceptualization of civil society. From the first phase on, CSI methodologists stated explicitly 'that civil society includes both civil as well as uncivil, peaceful as well as violent actors; the CSI does not exclude any form of collective citizen action on the basis of its uncivil content. On the contrary, it seeks to reflect the (potentially uncivil) reality of civil society, rather than an ideal version of what we want civil society to look like' (CIVICUS 2006: 1). This is emphasized to the same extent for the second CSI phase. The CSI builds on a normative-free and functional definition of civil society (Mati, Silva & Anderson 2010: 20). On the one hand, this broad definition of civil society enables an analysis such as this one at hand and proves to be an explicit choice given CIVICUS's aim in the CSI of collecting all kinds of information relevant to policy. On the other hand, we have highlighted cases in which uncivil means group together to uncivil ends, which are problematic to include under the umbrella term of civil society. When thinking about these difficult cases, the categories of reformist, demarcation and non-political violence are thought of as a tool for analytical differentiation. At the same time, when we speak about violence, we must question the usefulness of including in the analysis civil society groups that do not pursue some political goal.

Fourth, research results on the causes of violence are diverse and controversial. In this chapter the discussion on the general causes of violence is not elaborated in detail, but an analysis of the different forms of violence existing in civil society gives some insight into why violence emerges in civil society and impetus for further analysis. Violence in all three categories is *inter alia* considered to be caused by struggles over social ranks (Gould 2003), by narratives creating religious, ethnic or racial ‘us and them’ boundaries (Rydgren 2007; Lamont & Molnár 2002), by psychological discontent, such as that arising from relative deprivation, or structural factors (Gurr 1972; Graham & Gurr 1969). Further, resource mobilization and the political opportunity structure are assumed to offer causes for violent action (Tilly & Tarrow 2007; McAdam, Tilly & Tarrow 2001), as well as specific emotional sequences (Collins 2008; Klusemann 2009). We assume micro-interaction sequences to be of crucial importance for causing the unplanned forms of reformist violence emerging within some social movement actions of the first category (Nassauer 2010a). This means that even if violence is not *a priori* intended in social movements, it can emerge due to specific interaction sequences, which allow for actors to overcome their inhibition threshold for violence. Actors interpret their situation and the actions of the other in a specific, often threatening, way and therefore use violence (for a detailed discussion see Nassauer 2010b). In the third category established here, by definition of the category, the profit-making or gain aspect is more important in causing violence, since no public achievement for society is claimed by these groups.

Conclusion

In this chapter we categorized forms of violence in civil society in order to approach the phenomenon of violence in civil society from a new angle. By establishing three categories of violence in civil society, this chapter has shown that civil society as reflected by the CSI methodology includes a very broad sphere of actors, which can hardly be labelled as acting in one ‘arena’. By referring to reformist, demarcation and non-political violence, the use of violence reported within the CSI countries can be better understood and differentiated.

Violence used by civil society actors is very diverse. We argued that it is not proven that actors which fall into the third category, of employing non-political violence, should be included in the general definition of civil society. Additionally, it is useful to carefully distinguish between violence against objects and violence against persons, since damaging a store window and committing a lethal attack on a person have very different consequences and thus offer very different dimensions of being ‘uncivil’.

With reference to specific cases, we aimed to show that the complex discussion about an empirical mapping of violence in civil society is fruitful.¹⁴

Providing the necessary empirical material for these discussions is a unique contribution of the CSI network.

If violence in civil society occurs at all, we argue that the classical form of civil society is represented within the reformist violence category, which mainly refers to social movements having reformative goals. These groups are indeed peaceful to a large degree, and we can assume that they often have a high inhibition threshold to use violence and thus only do so after specific interaction sequences with state forces (see Nassauer 2010a). In general, civil society uses civil means to express their claims. It takes a lot for violence to emerge (Collins 2008). By showing what violence used by civil society groups looks like, we saw how civil society groups differ: from generally peaceful social justice groups, to revolutionary paramilitary wings.

We put these categories up for further discussion and suggest that further research on their differences and similarities is needed. Additionally, further research on the normative aspects of civil society, which were mostly left out in this chapter, are important fields of future empirical investigation. Examples of the demarcation violence category, such as the violence used by the Serbian fascist group Obraz, made the potential and case-specific problems of a broad and very inclusive civil society definition more explicit: strongly hierarchical organized groups with quite fixed goals are far from the typical civic ideals of democracy and tolerance.¹⁵

The analytical and basic categories of reformist, demarcation and non-political violence established and exemplified in this article contribute to a differentiated analysis of violence in civil society, especially for research projects such as the CSI, which maps and measures phenomena inherently prone to contextual diversity. For future phases of the CSI, it should be considered whether these categories might be helpful to research violence in civil society. For future country reports and case descriptions, this would, for example, imply a challenge not only to describe the actions of violent groups, but also to investigate and try to better understand the goals of any group within the larger civil society arena using such drastic means as violence.

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