

Cooperation Within Belarusian Civil Society: Will You (N)ever Walk Alone?

Monitoring 5 & Research Report (brief version)

2024

INTRODUCTION

This study is a continuation of the monitoring of the state and needs of Belarusian civil society, which BIPART has been conducting since 2020. The text analyzes the cooperation between civil society organizations (CSOs) and initiatives¹ in the second half of 2023 and the beginning of 2024. However, this timeframe is rather provisional, as the research questions generally pertain to a longer period - post-2020.

Belarusian civil society, which operates in various geographical and substantive modalities, is, on the one hand, a fairly “close-knit circle” where many are well-acquainted and interact with each other on a personal level. On the other hand, there are not many examples of both intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral institutional cooperation. According to a survey conducted by Lawtrend at the end of 2022, 43% of organizations reported affiliation with both Belarusian and international umbrella structures, 21% indicated affiliation solely with Belarusian structures, and 5% indicated affiliation only with international associations.²

Overall, we can say that there are examples and practices of institutional cooperation within Belarusian civil society on various bases. For instance, some associations have formed horizontally, based on internal demand, while others have formed vertically, under external influence. However, how functional are these associations? Why are they created? Do the reasons for their creation affect the outcomes of cooperation within the sector? Are there currently opportunities for such cooperation not only outside but also within Belarus?

In this study, we aim to answer these and other questions, with the broader **goal** of analyzing the opinions of representatives of Belarusian civil society and the expert community on what cooperation in civil society is, its existing forms and practices, and the prospects for such cooperation.

¹ In some studies, on the state and needs of civil society, the topic of cooperation within it has already been addressed. For example, this issue has been explored in the work of the Center for New Ideas (CNI) and the Centre for European Transformations (CET) https://newideas.center/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Организации_гражданского_общества_Беларуси.pdf

² Lawtrend (2022). State of Belarusian Civil Society Organizations: Survey Results <https://research.lawtrend.org>

CIVIL SOCIETY AND COOPERATION WITHIN IT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Civil society and the opportunities for collective voices are well-known and widely used concepts in social research, albeit with varying interpretations. From a theoretical perspective, we can identify at least three approaches:

- 1) Civil society, viewed as a segment of society within the neo-Tocquevillian³ tradition, is conceptualized as a domain of numerous intersecting associations and cooperation, characterized by the establishment and maintenance of horizontal connections.
- 2) Civil society as a normative and values-based sphere with shared goals and cooperation aimed at achieving them.
- 3) Civil society as a public sphere or a realm for establishing hegemony. This neo-Gramscian⁴ perspective views civil society as a space where coalitions are formed to collectively challenge cultural and other forms of entrenched dominance across various social and political institutions, including the civic sector (Edwards, 2020).

These and other theoretical approaches are applied in practice to formulate policies and strategies for engaging with civil society, both at the level of individual states and societies, and in shaping international support programs. In practical terms, the first two approaches to understanding civil society - viewed as either a network of associations and civic relations or as a sphere of values - are most commonly employed. Within them, it is believed that the activities of various associations contribute to societal well-being and help establish the foundations for a well-functioning society.

In the contemporary world, where even democratic systems (not to mention authoritarian ones) face issues with political and economic institutions, researchers argue that the diversity of actions within civil society, from emotional to material support, is a key aspect to consider. Civil society encompasses actions driven by mutual care, empathy, cultural and intellectual innovations, and civic education rooted in social values and norms that foster societal stability and social capital. Various theoretical approaches, with differing levels of awareness of these principles, guide the actions of individual actors, groups, and coalitions.

In this report, we do not analyze theoretical concepts but rather employ them to demonstrate different approaches to understanding civil society as a subject of collective action *per se*. This is important because discussions are ongoing within both the Belarusian civil society and expert community,⁵ as well as among political actors and international stakeholders engaged with Belarus, regarding its current state and what it ought to be.

Thus, among Belarusian experts and activists, there are at least two approaches to envisioning cooperation within civil society: one can be termed “horizontal” and the other

³ The term is derived from the name of the political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859).

⁴ The term is derived from the name of the political thinker Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937).

⁵ For example, the topic of defining the boundaries of civil society is discussed within the framework of the CNI/CET report. https://newideas.center/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Организации_гражданского_общества_Беларуси.pdf

“vertical”. The first approach closely resembles neo-Tocquevillian and American interpretations of civil society, focusing on grassroots initiatives, local issues, charity, and so forth. Accordingly, an ideal way of uniting into an association under this approach would be grassroots-driven. In contrast, the second approach aligns conceptually with a neo-Gramscian perspective (even if not consciously following it). Within this approach, the emphasis is on top-down efforts to create and promote structures, including coalition and cluster formations, aimed at the deliberate construction and operation of civil society.

The topic of intra-sectoral cooperation, where civil society organizations unite for collective action, intersects with these approaches both in discussions and practical applications. This includes defining priorities in support programs and implementing corresponding projects.

BELARUSIAN CIVIL SOCIETY IN EARLY 2024: OVERVIEW

As of early 2024, Belarusian civil society is geographically divided: some initiatives, organizations, and activists operate within Belarus, while others are based abroad. There are also organizations that continue to function in a split, mix mode, with leaders and/or part of their activists both inside and outside the country. Many individuals associated with Belarusian civil society remain in detention and are recognized as political prisoners, with repression playing a defining role for society and activists within the country.

It is crucial to recognize the increasing trend of co-optation in Belarus, where the state aims to subordinate and integrate civil society into political processes as a tool. Similar to other authoritarian regimes, the Belarusian government permits the existence of a controlled third sector that provides specific services while actively preventing its engagement in democratic agendas (Huang, 2018). As a result, civil society continues to exist but is restricted to offering social and other services perceived by authorities as apolitical (Plantan, 2022). Following mass and ongoing repression against civil society in Belarus, and the formal elimination of most civil society organizations deemed “politically unreliable” by the authorities, there is a growing trend towards co-optation and solidification of an “approved” civil society sector. However, there still exist more autonomous initiatives and organizations that operate in limited and covert capacities, which have not been co-opted by the authorities.

In this context, it is natural that organizations, initiatives, and individuals inside Belarus who continue their autonomous and horizontal activities do so in a non-public manner. Meanwhile, Belarusian organizations abroad have slightly more opportunities and space to make public statements. Currently, we can observe that Belarusian civil society and its activities have taken on a transnational character, operating partly beyond borders. However, it's crucial to note that repression from the Belarusian state has also adopted a transnational dimension. Similar to other authoritarian regimes, these repressive measures include propaganda and discrediting of exiled activists, efforts to sever their ties within Belarusian society, the use of legal tools for prosecution, and pressure on the relatives and close associates of those who have left (Michaelsen, 2021).

In Belarusian civil society, several **dividing lines** persist. Beyond the geographical divide between those who have “left” and “remained”, as well as “split” organizations where leaders or activists are abroad while others remain in the country, there are divisions between “old” and “new” organizations and initiatives based on their period of emergence -- before or after the 2020 political crisis⁶. Additionally, there are organizations formed within Belarus and those established abroad (diasporic). Belarusian organizations and initiatives also vary in their degree of public visibility. Moreover, a relatively new development is the emergence of a “non-civic” segment within civil society and the opposition, which accepts and advocates for political change in Belarus through coercive and violent methods.

It is important to note that these and other dividing lines provoke numerous discussions, public statements by opinion leaders, diverse assessments by Belarusian experts and civic activists. These discussions fully reflect various positions inherent in representatives of “horizontal” and “vertical” approaches, ranging from quite radical to more moderate. Some advocate for incorporating into civil society initiatives that support ideas of violent takeover of power. It’s also possible to say that supporters of the “vertical” approach are more organized and consolidated in promoting their ideas. Additionally, within general discussions, visionary approaches to what civil society “should be”⁷ and searches for a “third way” for Belarusian society as a whole are voiced⁸. There are projects aimed at reforms and visions for the future of the New Belarus⁹, as well as roadmaps to support civil society developed with the participation of various organizations, initiatives, and experts.

The situation of repression and the lack of visible prospects for improvement in the country have sparked numerous debates and discussions among the active members of Belarusian society. These discussions involve strong assessments and radical positions not only on political and civil issues but also on ethical and even personal matters. While these debates, which are often highly emotional, are mainly carried out publicly by individuals outside the country, those within Belarus also engage in them at a more private level.

Numerous debates in the public or semi-public online sphere provide an important context for analyzing the opinions voiced during our interviews. In many cases, these discussions feature not only radically opposing assessments but also asynchronous debates with opponents. It is also crucial to note that most assessments and opinions during the interviews primarily pertained to the situation of civil society abroad; discussions on cooperation within Belarus were predictably fewer.

⁶ BIPART (2023). Is everything new well forgotten old? Situation overview of the Belarusian civil society initiatives that emerged after 2020. (Monitoring: July - December 2022) https://bipart.eu/picture/library/cso_needs_monitoring_3.pdf

⁷ Anton Radnianski (2023). How to Navigate the Civil Sector into the Future. Taxonomy of Survival <https://www.ideasbank.vision/articles/belarusian-taxonomy>

⁸ Ryhor Astapenia (2024). What Belarus do Belarusians Want? <https://en.belaruspolls.org/narratives-2>

⁹ For example, «Ideas Bank» <https://www.ideasbank.vision/en>, drafting the Constitution of New Belarus <https://narodnaja.com/constitution>, etc.

RESEARCH METHODS

As part of the study conducted from February 26 to March 15, 2024, we conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with representatives of the expert community and civil society organizations, who have experience in intra-sectoral cooperation.

The sample for interviews was selected based on the sectors of activity within civil society organizations, information available on cooperation within the sector, and the “snowball sampling” method, which involved receiving recommendations on interviewees from experts engaged in projects of supporting and developing of Belarusian civil society. Additionally, the authors employed participant observation, as they themselves are involved to some extent in these interaction processes. It is essential to acknowledge that the sample of this study is not representative. Nevertheless, drawing conclusions on the topic under study is feasible based on the collected primary data.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

General assessments of cooperation within Belarusian civil society

The level of cooperation in civil society was evaluated across a broad spectrum of scores, ranging from “insufficient” and “decreasing” to “very high” and “intensive”. Quantitatively, most respondents expressed positive assessments, voiced however either by organizations themselves - various associations uniting other entities and participating in diverse coalitions - or by proponents advocating for necessary political-level cooperation. An important perspective suggests that cooperation is deemed “adequate” in volume and even increasing compared to pre-2020 levels, although with a reducing number of individuals within these interacting organizations. In practice, this often results in a strengthening of cooperation among the people who continue to be part of CSOs rather than between the organizations themselves.

In several interviews, it was argued that due to the decline of the protest mobilization wave of 2020, currently civil society organizations are more focused on their own missions and projects rather than on interacting with each other. Unlike the situation before 2020, when there were platforms within Belarus for communication, information exchange, and cooperation among organizations and their representatives, such communication infrastructure is now lacking. The situation is compounded by the previously noted issue of non-publicity of CSO activities¹⁰, as they often do not disclose information about their projects due to security risks, including information related to cooperation within the civil

¹⁰ Chulitskaya T., Rabava N. “Between Survival and Hibernation”: A Review of Civil Society in the Regions of Belarus in the First Half of 2023. BIPART, 2023.
https://bipart.eu/picture/library/local_csos_in_belarus_rus_full.pdf

society. However, it was mentioned positively that Belarusian organizations are ready to cooperate and collaborate in cases involving high public interests and agendas.

Interaction, partnerships, and other forms of alliances among organizations, initiatives, and activists **abroad** were predominantly discussed. That is, **geographical location** was viewed as a factor determining the very possibility of cooperation. They emphasized that *“partnerships and cooperation increase after relocation”*. Organizations based abroad or initially established there were perceived to be more willing to engage in collaborations with others. There were opinions suggesting that relocated or diasporic organizations tend to adopt a more relaxed stance towards security issues, given the potential labeling of their activities as “extremism” and “terrorism” by Belarusian authorities. Consequently, such organizations operate more openly, including in their efforts to establish and participate in various coalitions.

Sometimes, there is a horizontal demand for cooperation, but this is largely driven by **common challenges** in the country where the organization has relocated. It also stems from **the need to advocate for and promote common interests**, and to address issues at the governmental or local self-government levels in the host countries. Another reason for Belarusian organizations abroad to collaborate is **the desire to optimize costs**, such as by utilizing shared platforms or shared physical spaces like coworking environments.

There was also an opinion that there is a greater tendency towards forming coalitions and finding a “common value denominator” among the “old” organizations, i.e., those established before 2020. However, some interviewees noted that they interact exclusively with other organizations within their own sector and lack collaboration with those operating in different spheres. The problem persists with cooperation between “old” and “new” organizations, where the latter are often excluded or included only to a limited extent in coalitions consisting of “old” organizations due to security concerns or lack of trust.

The impact of the events of 2020 and the political crisis on cooperation practices

In the study, we asked whether the events of 2020 and the subsequent political crisis influenced the intensity and forms of cooperation within Belarusian civil society. Various opinions were expressed on this matter. They ranged from the radical assertion that *“there has been a collapse of almost all regular forms of communication in the sector”* to the opposite, highly positive statements from proponents of the “vertical” approach, suggesting that cooperation among Belarusian organizations forced to relocate abroad have not only increased compared to pre-2020 levels but have also improved quantitatively and qualitatively. Moreover, within the sector itself, there has been a demand for unity and collaboration.

Moreover, it was noted that specific sectors of civil society have seen increased cooperation or efforts to increase it. This includes Belarusian organizations that have relocated or were originally established in countries such as Poland, Lithuania, and Georgia. In these countries, grassroots and horizontal collaborations are occurring as organizations face common

challenges and the need to overcome them. Representatives of such organizations confirmed increased cooperation in their interviews.

The political crisis has influenced the nature of public activities of CSOs. For instance, cooperation within previously existing common platforms and joint civil society events (forums, conferences, etc.) have become less public. Some platforms have disappeared altogether, and events have ceased to be held. Several interviewees highlighted a **lack of platforms** for communication in the sector where prospects for collaborative CSO activities could be discussed. Collaboration rates have decreased partly due to reduced trust within the sector.

Existing forms and types of cooperation in civil society

During the interviews, we explored opinions regarding the forms and types of cooperation that exist within Belarusian civil society. Summarizing the findings based on criteria of **level** and **content**, we can categorize the forms and types of **cooperation** as follows:

1. **Systemic cooperation with external entities at the international level** through Belarusian organizations joining international associations and/or platforms, as well as uniting in national coalitions for systematic international work.
2. **Broad movement.** It involves cooperation between organizations across different sectors or within the same sector based on shared values and views on joint activities. For example, cooperation among environmental, human rights, and other organizations working within the same sphere.
3. **Institutional collaboration.** This entails establishing associations or other joint institutional entities (umbrella organizations, coalitions, assemblies, councils, etc.). For example, associations that bring together organizations from a specific sector.
4. **Collaborative activities (partnerships).** This includes implementing joint projects and activities, thereby creating consortia or other forms of coalitions and networks.
5. **Situational cooperation.** This refers to interactions within the framework of conferences, discussions, meetings, and similar events. For example, communications at recurring events or platforms.
6. **Communicative cooperation.** This involves interactions within information networks and various communication online platforms, such as chats and messengers.
7. **Practical cooperation** and cost-sharing for services. Some organizations and initiatives abroad make choices, for instance, to physically work in the same space or office, or to share expenses for necessary services like accounting. Through this cooperation, they minimize their costs.

It was noted that within the sector, there is still awareness of the “old” associations, although some of them are currently inactive in terms of public activities. However, there was also a radically opposite view expressed that all civil society associations, coalitions,

and unions that existed before 2020 have either ceased to exist or (with few exceptions) exist only formally, with new associations taking their place.

It's important to note that most interviewees expressed strong opinions and assessments regarding cooperation within Belarusian civil society and forms of such cooperation. However, **the very concept of cooperation in the civil society was understood differently.** Examples included networks comprising either individual activists or activists from organizations that have ceased operations, as well as networks where there is both institutional membership of organizations and initiatives, and membership of individual persons. In some cases, networks presented as organizational alliances largely consist of the same individuals.

Assessments of types and forms of intra-sectoral cooperation

When interviewees were asked to discuss which existing (or potential) form of cooperation seems most suitable for Belarusian civil society, they often cited forms such as “**partnership**” and “**coalition**” above others. These involve organizations within the sector coming together to tackle both broad and specific practical challenges. Partnerships are seen as straightforward to join and exit if collaborative efforts do not materialize for any reason.

Coalitions are also seen as convenient forms of cooperation because organizations within them have equal voting rights and mechanisms for making joint decisions. The key to their existence and inclusion in coalitions is a matter of trust.

From the perspective of diaspora organizations in one country, there was an idea that in the future, in addition to joint partnership activities, there is a request to establish an association of Belarusian organizations (in this country). This association would unite and advocate for Belarusian interests at the level of government and administration in their host country.

According to a broader approach, the most appropriate form of cooperation should be determined by the specific needs of civil society organizations. The primary goal of such cooperation should be to develop infrastructure for advancing public interests. However, there was also criticism suggesting that while Belarusian organizations abroad collaborate effectively on projects, this cooperation fails to evolve into more sustainable formats due to the lack of clear and understandable planning horizons among these organizations. The planning horizon for joint activities should be determined by the question of returning to Belarus and resuming activities there. Nevertheless, some organizations do not view the issue of returning to Belarus as relevant, preferring instead to see themselves as implementers of support programs.

Assessment of the demand for cooperation within the Belarusian civil society

During the study, we asked interviewees to assess the demand for cooperation within the Belarusian civil society. The responses varied widely in their assessments.

On the one hand, some representatives of CSOs highlighted a **strong internal and substantive demand for cooperation**. They cited examples of how cooperation between organizations and initiatives were renewed or even restructured (in various forms) after 2020. Newly formed or restructured coalitions initially developed shared ideas, concepts, and goals for their areas of activity and then utilized available resources to achieve them. This cooperation also served a therapeutic role for activists, providing them with a platform to share their challenges, fears, doubts, and more.

Diaspora and relocated Belarusian organizations also spoke about the existence of an internal demand for cooperation. However, in their case, a more pragmatic reason was voiced again - the necessity for advocacy and promotion of organizational interests in their host countries, as well as the implementation of joint activities.

Interestingly, “new” organizations were reported to express a demand to participate in existing coalitions of “old” organizations.

The most definitive statement regarding the existence of a demand for cooperation within the Belarusian civil society (in its overseas part) comes from proponents of the “vertical” approach. In support of their position, they cited needs’ assessments in certain sectors:

On the other hand, it was mentioned that the demand for such cooperation is rather **practical in nature** than substantive. Within this framework, cooperation arises and exists to achieve specific joint tasks, projects, and activities. This allows attracting more resources and improving outcomes, such as expanding access or increasing the outreach of the target audience. This practical aspect of cooperation was recognized by all interviewees.

It was noted that cooperation within civil society is, on one hand, a labor-intensive process requiring significant resources and efforts. On the other hand, organizations tend to show interest in forming coalitions when they themselves are in a more stable position, and their primary resource needs for existence and activities are satisfied. Otherwise, CSOs interact more to satisfy these primary needs through coalitions with more successful actors.

A more pessimistic assessment of the demand for cooperation was that from the organizations themselves it is rather low, and the assertion that it exists is more of a desired outcome presented by proponents of the “vertical” approach as reality.

Assessment of intra-sectoral cooperation experience: its impact on organizations and their activities

Continuing the discussion on cooperation within civil society, we asked our interviewees to evaluate their own experience participating in the creation or operation of various alliances and its impact on organizations. These evaluations were mostly positive, although in some cases, they mentioned past negative experiences, such as organizations leaving alliances or when alliances were ineffective.

However, the vast majority of interviewees highlighted that their experience with intra-sectoral cooperation helped them find partners, establish and develop networks and relationships with other organizations, and implement joint projects and activities, including large-scale projects that their organization couldn't handle alone. Collaborating with other sector organizations allows them to reach a broader audience and attract volunteers to their activities, support each other, enhance the quality of their products and activities, and more. Participation in grassroots-initiated coalitions by the organizations themselves contributed to building trust and readiness for further collaboration, initiating and jointly implementing projects, and, more broadly, 'learning democracy'. In this context, organizations learn and gain experience in collaborative efforts for more effective implementation of their own missions.

Intra-sectoral cooperation within Belarus

Responses regarding cooperation of CSOs within Belarus, like others in our study, varied significantly. The criterion in this case was the factor of cooperation with the part of civil society that is located abroad. Summarizing the assessments, we can identify the following positions:

1. Inside Belarus, there is **minimal cooperation** between organizations, yet it occurs (and should occur) separately from the part of civil society that has left Belarus.

Cooperation within the country occurs more between people rather than organizations. For example, new organizations can be formed based on dissolved ones, consisting of their former members. However, they also expressed doubts about how feasible it is not just to interact, but for multiple organizations to jointly implement projects in Belarus. Cooperation with the part of civil society that has left the country is seen as a factor that increases risks for organizations within the country.

Overall, they describe development of the organizational part of civil society in the country as reinforcing trends of (post-)Soviet corporatism or co-optation, where the state allows organizations of certain orientations to exist but determines their nature and configuration. In this context, organizations within the country are becoming increasingly dependent on the authorities and are likely to interact within formats defined by the state.

2. Intra-sectoral cooperation is relevant for organizations in Belarus that operate in a divided format with leaders outside the country and activities within Belarus.

In this approach, the discussions focused more on individuals rather than organizations (although several interviewees mentioned coalitions of organizations that still seem to operate in Belarus).

3. The topic of cooperation and coalition building is not relevant at all to the part of civil society located in Belarus due to repression and other primary survival-related issues.
4. Intra-sectoral cooperation in Belarus is possible between activists and organizations, involving joint initiatives aimed at implementing various collaborative activities. In some cases, these activities may include joint projects, such as those in cultural spheres or initiatives aimed at mutual support (for example, addressing issues related to professional burnout).

All assessments converge on the point that due to security concerns, there is very little information about (potential) cooperation between organizations and initiatives in Belarus.

CONCLUSIONS

The topic of cooperation within Belarusian civil society, its goals, and formats, as demonstrated by the results of this study, triggers numerous debates and provokes diverse assessments. This is likely due to a broader substantive divergence in the vision of what civil society is in general, and what it should be in the case of Belarus, taking into account all existing dividing lines.

We can tentatively argue that today, the most prominently voiced position in the public sphere¹¹ advocates for Belarusian civil society to function more as a political entity with a defined structure, leadership, and the goal. Intra-sectoral cooperation (in various forms) is structured into specific hierarchies and serves as a tool for constructing civil society. Within this research, we provisionally identified such organizations and activists as proponents of the “vertical” approach. It should be noted that the position of proponents of this approach was most clearly articulated and reproduced in the interviews conducted.

In parallel to this, there exists a vision of civil society (and its associations) as a space for the activities of various organizations and initiatives whose work is directed towards realizing their missions and engaging with target groups. This approach is conditionally classified as “horizontal”. Within the “horizontal” approach, civil society is seen as a sector of public life divided into different areas of activity. Cooperation in the civil society is viewed as an opportunity for achieving missions, enhancing operational efficiency, practically expanding access to resources and target audiences, among other benefits. There are also positions and opinions that to varying degrees combine the two approaches described above in their vision of civil society.

Substantive differences between proponents of “horizontal” and “vertical” approaches to organized civil society give rise to substantial conflicts, but they are unlikely to have a single, definitive “correct” solution. Therefore, it appears important, on the one hand, to acknowledge these existing differences, as they influence the activities of organizations and civil society initiatives. On the other hand, it is crucial for Belarusian civil society actors and democratic politicians to recognize and consider these diverse perspectives and strive to find consensus positions, or at least avoid categorically judging the positions of their opponents.

Our research shows that, overall, Belarusian civil society organizations can and want to interact with each other. However, when organizations are asked about their needs, there is no direct request for cooperation or creation of umbrella structures. Requests for forming coalitions emerge in surveys specifically asking about this. Organizations themselves initiate various forms of alliances (associations, councils, consortia, partnerships, etc.) as important

¹¹ When discussing the public sphere in this context, we refer to the space occupied by the pro-democratic segment of Belarusian society, including independent media, internet platforms, and similar entities. This also encompasses cooperation at the level of international political and donor structures.

and beneficial experiences. The topic of intra-sectoral cooperation is primarily relevant for the segment of civil society operating outside Belarus. Within Belarus itself, there is limited space and opportunity for practical alliances or discussions on this topic.

A conceptually challenging aspect related to cooperation in the civil society is the substitution observed in interviews, where instead of discussing cooperation between organizations, there is often talk of networked cooperation among individual activists. This substitution of concepts can influence understanding and assessment of the state of cooperation in the civil society.

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