

CIVIC

## Occupy Montenegro

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***How many occupation circles exist in Montenegro today? How many “occupiers” do we need to dislodge in order to become a free society? To what extent can we help ourselves, as individuals or as social actors, and to what extent can we rely on negotiations with EU to help us?***

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The largest occupation circle is the ruling oligarchy operating, as has been long established by **Robert Michels**, under the precepts of an iron law, which in these parts also acquired an *underground* expression. The ruling parties occupied the state and the political system. Moreover, if the projections of the current public opinion surveys are correct, they could take another crushing and overwhelming victory at the upcoming elections. This would finally cement a partocratic political system, which in our case would effectively contain all basic elements of a one-party system (by refusing to go to the polls alone, SDP threw away all rhetorical moves it used to give itself an aura of commitment and willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of its programme principles). In this way, the regime would boycott the necessity for development of basic foundations of a democratic system, such as a functional opposition, alternative political offers, civic values, influential and professional media, independent academic core etc.

The second circle is the opposition attitude “without alternative”, which undermines the principles of professional journalism, autonomy and credibility of all social actors who are not part of the team. There is much social benefit and civic courage in the activities that remind us of the plunders of privatization, subsidies to the First Bank, call out the names of controversial businessmen and people with close ties to both underground and the highest instances of decision making... This is truly the capital of civic Montenegro. But, this position shouldn't lead to a self-righteous denunciations of critical voices of those who warn that the opposition parties offer no programmatic proposals or principles, that we are in need of institutional solutions, lawful approaches to decision-making and a code of conduct for the journalists, etc. Namely, by referring to the higher goals one only obscures the fact that the only clear and specific offer is the desire to overthrow the current political oligarchy. The outcome is that we start to believe that all systemic problems will be swept away once these people are removed from power. However, apart from the fact that such political platforms are unrealistic, they also carry a serious in-built error and a high likelihood of turning into their opposite, as we have seen on many more powerful examples in the region.

The third circle is the one that feeds the previous two: manipulation with an underdeveloped civic awareness in Montenegro characterised by a retrograde traditionalism, patriarchy, ostentatious heroism, primitive symbolism... In other words, irrespective of our solid, but technical advances in European integration, this society remains on a much lower level of civic development, even compared to those who from various reasons have fallen behind us, especially as a consequence of the troubling events of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

If our choice is to look at Montenegro today as a confrontation between the black and white of the first two occupation circles, disregarding the third, common denominator – authoritarian conscience – we are allowing them to occupy the hard-won fundamentals of a budding civic awareness in Montenegro. Civic awareness means civic tolerance, and the attitude “without alternative” excludes tolerance and difference in approaches: it thinks of itself as an embodiment of truth and is as such equally dangerous whether it comes from the first or the second occupation circle.

Therefore, those who really want and fight for change and expect to rally other fighters for civic Montenegro against the current occupation ought to demonstrate personal capacity to accept difference, and an ability to distinguish political vision from political populism.

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