The book “Sociology of the Partnership World” by the French sociologist Simone Cotin-Marx gives a broad overview of civil partnerships, highlighting the key processes in a more substantive discussion of the power of the partnership world as a whole. Civil partnership is often determined through few more or less precise differences. It differs from the state and the market in its specific qualities. According to Held, “civil partnership retains its specific character because it consists of areas of social life outside the direct control of the state.” The development of civil partnership in the transition countries is conditioned by the withdrawal of the state from the public space, while providing space for the development of civil partnership entities. In other words, the relationship between the state and the civil partnership has a dialectical nature, because although they can be complementary and supportive, there is a potentially embedded conflict between them, which originates primarily from the innate expansionist tendencies of each state apparatus. On the other hand, market logic creates norms and standardizes the partner offer. The market specifics are aimed at privatization of the commercial parts of public services and public enterprises, increasing of the role of associations as well as weakening of the relations in the remaining parts of public sector by connecting a number of small independent entities through horizontal cooperation and coordination. In this context, associations are increasingly competing, facing uncertainty regarding public authorities, both in terms of their strategies and in terms of their funding.

Referring to the originality of the partner world, dilemmas arise: – Are associations really places of politicization, democracy, and its learning? – Are associations a place of solidarity where labor is renewed, or are a space for creating new jobs with their potentials and resources? – In a word, are they the iron of social change?

In such a connotation that connects civil partnership with the idea of counter-power, it should not be equated with either the Government or its administration. As different from the state, civil partnership could be confused with the broader sphere of politics. Today, civil society is credited with significant values, for example as a potential reservoir of political elites or as a facilitator of public regulating. The interest in civil partnership today is part of the reassessment of the rela-

1 Macedonian translation was used. The translation was made by Ilo Trajkovski, full professor at the Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje at the Institute of Sociology.
tions between the citizen and the state, of the political power of the common man. In this context, supporters of social sciences on one hand respond positively, accepting a Tocqueville perspective emphasizing the benefits of partnership, and on the other hand, wanting to understand the reality of the partner world, distance themselves from the speech of its advocates and promoters. Here are the questions about what is the partner world?, Which / What are its changes?

Structured into five separate logical and circular wholes, this book analyzes the French partner world, that is, its development, the evolution of public financing, the relationship between public authorities and associations, the engagement of volunteers, associations as part of the world of labor, opening the great scientific and the political questions and answers that the social sciences give them.

The first chapter, “History of the French Partner World”, offers a panoramic overview of the partner world, analyzing the merger as a political idea. The author pays special attention to the legal framework by making a comparative analysis of changes in the way of association. Starting with the Chapelle Law, which provided for a ban on joining through the development of the social question and the labor movement, to the beginning of new ways of partnering practices, which became relevant in the 1970s, largely driven by social change. In his detailed elaboration of the historical aspects, the author concludes that associations tend to be organized in an identical way with public authorities, i.e. they reproduce the ways of organization of public administration.

In the second chapter of the book “Panorama and the evolution of the French partner world”, the questions elaborated in detail are: What does the partner world look like today?, What is the main dynamics that takes place in it? How it changes? – The answers to these questions Cotin-Marx seeks mainly based on the analysis of statistician Vivienne Chernog, author of the inevitable book, “The French Shared Landscape”, which provides a quantified panorama of the French partner world. In this regard, an overview is given of the manner and number of registered associations, the partnership form and the diversity of social needs for association. In this way are formed main partner sectors qualified as sectors where activities of associations are managed by economic services and local development.

Through an analysis of the main partner sectors, the author concludes that most associations operate with a smaller number of volunteers who are involved in all areas and activities and as such associations become a place of employment for many young people. As a result, various networks and federations are formed playing an integrative role in fostering positive social changes. Another aspect that also deserves special attention is the evolution of public financing of associations. In this regard, in the French partner world, everything is declining public financing and the transformation of methods for allocation of public resources. Relations with public authorities change according to sectors, with local collectives gaining additional importance as public partners of associations (privatization of partner resources, marketing, competition,
etc.). The privatization, marketing and competition processes are independent processes that take place parallel with the increasing role of local governments.

Relations between public authorities and associations are subject to constant change. For sociologists, a constant topic is the autonomy of the partner world, despite the growing influence of public authorities on management, structuring, political orientation of associations and the relationship between them and the market. This topic is discussed in more detail in the third chapter “Relations between associations and public authorities”. The author examines changes in the relations between associations and the public authorities and their consequences for actions and management of associations. The author shows that in France there are several sociological schools in studying of the partner world. The first sociological school covers associations outside the influence of the public sphere and the market, the second school sees associations as an instrument of public policy, while the third school, which is one of the newer schools, emphasizes the influence of public authorities on structuring associations. In his book, Kotin-Marx elaborates on these schools in particular, emphasizing their specifics. The representatives of the third sector emphasize the originality of the association as a productive organization. Partnerships are not just “enterprises” that have their own economic dimension, but associations that have their own political and democratic dimension. The simultaneous presence of volunteer and paid work as a feature of the partner companies does not invite us to study them not only as a space for production, but also as a space for critical thinking. Associations have a central place in the implementation of policies to the extent that blur the boundaries of their relations. In this regard, a political philosophy which is primarily oriented towards the authenticity of the association is characteristic, i.e. “The association is and must be at the heart of the social relationship, because it does not come down to agreement.” Their political role should be viewed independently of their economic function by studying their role as co-construction of public policies. Furthermore, associations are an instrument of public policy, and an excellent meeting place between the public and public authorities in order to loosen the closedness of administrative structures. The author points out that social science theorists are increasingly involved in theoretical discussions about the relationship between associations and public authorities. The author points out that the relationship between the state, associations and the market is the subject of numerous French and other international studies. The contractualization of the relations between the public authorities and the civil partnership stands out as a particularly influential process. In this regard, two aspects of the discussion on the consequences of contractualization stand out: the first by the management of the partner structures and the second on partner projects. By studying the development of contractualization, the author shows that this “market” logic, in the French partner world, creates norms and standardizes supply. Thus, associations are “private”
tools of public policy, used more remotely than public institutions, and governed by norms governing their conduct. Contract culture with public authorities is a new form of association management. This approach contributes to the development of standards, criteria, as well as assessments in terms of the way of financing. The privatization of the activities of public authorities changes the focus of the work of associations in terms of their value and legitimacy. A typical example is the funding of civil society organizations by the state that are ideologically and politically close to the policies of public authorities in that they become co-producers in the creation of public policies. In this regard, a number of associations position themselves “in the service of the general interest” as complementary to the state. Through the views of various authors analyzed in the book, a conclusion is reached that the agreement influences the politicization of structures and actors in the French partner world. The research of Camille Hamidi, Matilda Pett, Marie-Elena Bake, Lester Salomon, Ryan and others is especially important in this regard. In his detailed elaboration of the relations between associations and public authorities, the author analyzes the consequences of contractualization on the relations between associations. Contractualization often results in competition and conflict between the associations themselves.

The fourth chapter “The engagement of volunteers in the heart of the associations” aims to answer several questions: –Who are the volunteers?, –Why are they members of associations?, –What do they do in the associations ?, and, As a volunteer– transforms or politicizes the citizens? In this context, several approaches to defining volunteering are distinguished. The different approaches provide an answer to the heterogeneous reasons for the involvement of volunteers within the associations. The author points out that as a result of intensive social change, the partner world has experienced significant economic development and a high level of wage labor. This process results in complicating the partnership environment and diversifying the roles and tasks of the managers of the associations. To describe this phenomenon, the author cites the views of Denis Bernardo Moreau and Mathieu Heli, according to whom “the professionalization of volunteering is expressed as volunteer participation that requires more skills to perform special responsibilities”. On the other hand, the authenticity of voluntary participation can be viewed as a possible answer to social questions, because it enables the fight against the negative effects of individualism, to maintain social cohesion. This view, according to the author, leads to a number of controversies related to partner engagement and politicization, democratic vitality, political escape, and the obstacles faced by partner actors before engaging in politics.

According to Maud Simonet, the partner world is not only studied as a place for volunteer work and engagement, but it should be considered as a generator for the supply of goods and services, work and jobs. Hence, the employers’ associations become more important, i.e. the characteristics of employment and work in this sector, as well as the presence of volunteers and employees that make this world
The fifth chapter, "Associations: Worlds of Labor", analyzes the role of the state as a driving force for the expansion of wage labor in the partner world. The expansion of wage labor in the partner world is a result of the transformations of the social state. State interventions in the partner world are intensified by the process of decentralization, i.e. the transfer of competencies from central to local level. In this regard, the transformations of the relations between the state, the market, the local authorities enable the associations to participate in the expansion of paid work, its dynamics, the capacities creating of work places and their inclusion in the employment policies. Associations involved in employment policies have a significant role to play in creating employment mechanisms for young people. With the help of subsidized agreements, associations, on one hand, are placed at the heart of proactive and structured employment policies, and on the other hand, are an instrument of the state that intervenes in the partner sector for the success of public policies implemented by the state. In this chapter, the author analyzes the employment conditions, noting that “employment conditions vary depending on the sector, the size of the structure, the longevity of the association and employment in it”. In this regard, the book proposes typologies of partner companies according to which the quality of employment conditions and the relationship with public authorities are analyzed. All this calls for the employees of the associations to be analyzed as a kind of “new public service”, which is conditioned by public authorities. The author points out the consequences of the so-called contractualization that affects working conditions.

The offered thematic areas raise both scientific and political controversies. In order to understand the multidimensionality and complexity of this social universe that Kotin-Marx writes about, it is necessary to identify what separates but also what unites civic partnership. Followers of social sciences need to understand the structures that participate in the organization of the social and economic life of modern society. To study this social phenomenon, sociology must draw on the “forces” that associations make a world that is constantly influenced. The book has a clear structure and rich content and uses a language understandable and adapted to readers. It reflects the author’s way of thinking and reasoning, concentrated on sequential wholes and systematic theoretical analyzes in the field of civil partnership.

According to my beliefs, the book has its scientific, professional, and practical benefits. It shows what a book should look like, what is the role of the theoretical context, how to build a network of concepts and how to analyze qualitative material. It can be concluded that the book is a rare publication where all the listed elements are present.

Andon Damovski