1
Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about many fascinating developments in the former socialist republics. Sudden change in all spheres of life was accompanied by an information avalanche. New and old ideas and concepts, works of art and ways of living were either rediscovered from within – as, for example, alternative (*samizdat*[1]) literature and films – or brought in from the outside. Everywhere new initiatives and arrangements were coming up that had previously been unthinkable, from new schools with alternative or more advanced teaching programs to new criminal networks, from new television programs to new consumer products. Along came also a new language that was to give names, at times clumsy or misplaced, to the new reality.

My attention was attracted by so called "public organizations" (*obshchestvennie organizatsii*) that had appeared in great numbers since the end of communism. Organizations of this name existed also before 1991; they were formal branches of the Communist Party that dealt with particular social concerns, such as youth or women's issues. However, the "public organizations" of the 1990s seemed different. In some cases, new offices were being rented, equipment installed, and working conditions were more luxurious than what other public or private organizations could afford at the time. In other cases, the organizations consisted of no more than a phone, a fax, and an Internet connection in somebody's living room. Whatever the practical arrangement, the purposes and the activities of these "public organizations" remained unclear to an outsider's eye. In fact, neither their activities nor their sources of income were "public;" a kind of secretive veil was draped around the new world of these organizations. The people working in these organizations were often perceived as a new type of entrepreneur – those who know how to get "grants" to pay their own salaries.

References to "grants, funds, and projects" evoked a language that was both technically specific and mystifying because its real-world referents remained elusive. I started to explore some questions that

seemed evident but, surprisingly, had not been raised before: Why do these organizations have to register as "public organizations;" what are those "grants" they receive; how are they different from salaries or profit; who grants them and for what? Knowledge of English vocabulary was important for understanding the answers I received. However, those answers raised new questions. It turned out that the correct name of "public organizations" was "non-governmental organizations" or NGOs, that they had to be supported in the name of "civil society," and that "grants" were a part of the "assistance" that Ukraine was receiving to an unprecedented extent from various "donors" after it became officially independent in 1991. I was discovering a whole new world, in which the enchantment with the concept of "civil society" was as striking as the skepticism towards "public organizations" that I encountered in Ukraine.

The "projects" and "grants" given to Ukrainian organizations were described by the donors as the most effective means to facilitate democracy in Ukraine, to ensure that the democratic change would be truly encompassing and long-lasting, and to make Ukrainian people more democratically minded. In Ukraine, however, these initiatives were mostly perceived as a peculiar money flow that was going to a small group of people on obscure terms. These initiatives were believed to be short-term, insufficient, and ineffective. The two sides of the story clearly did not match, and yet both foreign donors and "public organizations"/NGOs were speaking about the same "projects" and accountable for the same money. The discrepancy was so obvious that both sides must have been aware of it as well. This has brought me to the main puzzle of the book: Are the donors blind or do they just not care? Are the locals wicked or just plain stupid? How is it that both sides continue to do what they are doing? What are the mechanisms that enable the meaningful functioning of a civil society assistance discourse in Ukraine despite negative outcomes and wide-spread criticisms?

This book takes seriously the theoretical assumptions of interpretative-constructivist approach. It holds that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between discursive and material realities or, to put it differently, between words and deeds. This book shows that the way Ukrainians and foreign donors talk about foreign assistance to civil society has an impact on what form foreign assistance as well as civil society supported by foreign donors take. Therefore, by looking at the language in use or discourse[2] as it is usually called in the constructivist literature, one can elicit a number of significant social and political processes and understand their nature.

I tackle these questions by making a detailed inquiry into foreign assistance to women's NGOs in Ukraine by the United States Agency

for International Development (USAID) delivered in the period from 1992 to 2009.[3] In addition to the relevance of prior personal knowledge,[4] the choice of the donor and the recipient in this research is based on their perceived mutual importance. For almost two decades, Ukraine has been one of the largest recipients of American assistance, whose significance for the U.S. has been stated on many occasions. In the 1990s, the USAID program in Ukraine was the third largest in the Agency after Egypt and Israel, and it remains one of the key recipients of American assistance today. Overall, at the time this book is going to press, the United States government has spent almost four billion in technical assistance to Ukraine. The country is particularly important for the U.S. due to its position between Russia and the EU, bordering on the NATO states and being an aspiring NATO candidate itself.[5] Even as the War on Terror and subsequent events have drastically changed the core focus of American foreign policy, Ukraine – a key link in the transportation of Russian gas to Western markets and in general an important area for Russia's revived imperialistic tendencies – remains an important country for the United States.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is different from some other foreign donors operating in Ukraine in several respects. It is a governmental agency whose vision and policy are explicitly connected to American foreign policy and security interests. Its primary goal is to sustain the national interests of the United States, whose role in world politics is fairly distinct and at times controversial compared to other states. Being a federal agency, it faces many more practical constraints in terms of accountability and programming than other types of donors, such as private foundations or (international) non-governmental organizations ((I)NGOs). In fact, some practitioners argue that these characteristics of USAID set it aside from other assistance efforts and limit the more general applicability of findings and recommendations developed about it. Such a remark would have been difficult to argue with, had the world of international assistance not been showing evidence to the contrary. Notwithstanding one's commonsensical expectation of what different political actors stand for, within the span of little more than a decade it has become increasingly difficult to tell the mission statement of USAID from that of Oxfam International or the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and, in some parts, even from that of the Royal Dutch Shell). This book, therefore, aims at eliciting those core points of "assistance rationale" that make assistance a significant political process on a global scale rather than just a set of programs implemented by a particular organization.

During my fieldwork in one Ukrainian city, I went to interview the head of a women's NGO. The NGO was based in her flat and when I entered, I discovered a living room, in which among the usual furniture and some personal things a computer and a fax machine stood. What was the meaning of those objects? They were there not as mere signs of the increasing use of modern technology by the Ukrainian population but had been purchased with a grant that was – according to the donor's definition – part of the "technical assistance to promote democracy in Ukraine." For the head of the NGO herself, these objects were an integral part of creating an NGO. Such an understanding of a computer and a fax machine in somebody's living room was not obvious. However, if officials from the donor agency that provided such "assistance" had come to visit in order to see how it "was promoting democracy in Ukraine," they would not have been surprised to see a computer and a fax machine. They would not have been expecting to find a peaceful demonstration of human rights activists in that living room as a sign of "democracy in Ukraine." To them a computer and a fax machine would have made sense.

It is these kinds of observations that lead me to argue that things do not just make sense as such; they are *made* to make sense. The goal of this book is to find out how exactly this happens with respect to foreign assistance to civil society. My core assumption is that foreign assistance to civil society cannot be seen simply as yet another imperialistic project, a means to impose American or Western hegemony onto the world. In order to understand what really makes such assistance function over extended periods of time in highly dynamic contexts, one has to adopt a more interactive model, in which the voices of both foreign and local actors are recognized. Misplaced names, foreign words, clumsy phrases, unintelligible adaptations of English words in written and spoken Russian and Ukrainian are not just alien creatures flown in by foreign guests. They are also actively employed by local actors to make sense of new and old realities, and even to create realities. Building on several theoretical premises of discourse analysis,[6] this book focuses on different meanings of foreign assistance to civil society that are created, translated or (re)enacted in different contexts where donors and aid recipients interact, directly or indirectly.

Different meanings of foreign assistance to civil society are seen as both constituted by social and political practices and at the same time constitutive of political activities in that they enable certain forms of social and political action and constrain others. In other words there would be no civil society specialists and centers within the donor agencies without the civil society discourse; at the same time, these

institutionas, once established, influence the development of civil society discourse. Institutional changes within USAID – such as the foundation of the Center for Democracy and Governance, the introduction of civil society specialist positions, and budget appropriations for the promotion of civil society and democracy – are all inconceivable without the idea that the American government has a role to play in the political transformation of the former Soviet Block and that such a transformation should entail creating and supporting civil societies in the respective countries. At the same time, such institutional and material factors can gradually transform the discourse and change its meanings. Indeed, as I show in the following chapters, the scope of the change that has occurred within civil society assistance discourse over the last two decades is striking.

This position, however, should not be seen as a reiteration of idealist arguments in the fashion of the realism/idealism debate.[7] Seeing every object constituted as an object of discourse does not imply that there is no world external to thought; it asserts instead that every object with its specificity is always constituted as such within a discourse.[8] To come back to the example I gave above, there is no doubt that with the help of donor funding NGOs buy equipment and furniture and that these items are physically present in a rented office space or private home. But whether the specificity of these objects is constructed in terms of "technical assistance," "creating open and free access through the Internet to Western concepts of civil society" or "strengthening the NGO sector"[9] depends on the particular discourse that is employed. Moreover, the particular meaning of these objects has implications for how and to what ends they can be utilized.

Just like practices, discourses are contextual; they do not exist in some kind of abstract world of ideas but only during particular moments when they are enacted by certain actors in a certain setting. One cannot think that once a discourse is established, it is merely recited whenever and wherever needed as if it were a play script. The assistance discourse does not exist just in the head of the USAID Assistance Administrator; it is (re)enacted in the daily operations of USAID, it is further taken up by various assistance-implementing partners, and it travels even further to the assistance recipients. This means that different actors interact in particular sites and in the process (re)construct the meaning of assistance.[10] In other words, this is a situated (or "sited") understanding of discourse.[11] This allows us to understand how it functions across different contexts – from Washington, DC to a small Ukrainian town – undergoing a number of transformations, but without losing its main characteristics. The empirical analysis presented in this book is based at

three core sites: (1) the U.S. Department of State and USAID headquarters in Washington, DC; (2) USAID Mission in Kiev[12] as well as other donors and implementing organizations, both American and Ukrainian; and (3) local NGOs – assistance recipients, especially women's organizations.

Ultimately, the analysis shows how exactly foreign assistance defines civil society, its activities, and its role and how the dominance of these definitions impacts the nature and scope of Ukrainian civil society. To quote Schudson, "the power of the story is not so much that there are limits to the number of plausible interpretations but that the interpretations we encounter are of it and not of some other story."[13] Or, as Hajer argued, power lies in creating the very terms with which politics is conducted.[14] In other words, however much discontent with the civil society assistance is expressed by different actors in different sites, their interactions are defined and structured by this discourse rather than by other concepts and meanings. Whether or not alternative ideas add up to change the dominant discourse or to render it meaningless remains to be investigated for each particular instance. As far as foreign assistance to civil society is concerned, this book remains moderately pessimistic. It demonstrates that the dominance of certain ideas and practices of support to civil society are more detrimental than positive for the development of a strong and vibrant civil society in Ukraine.

This book is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents a number of prominent ideas about the nature and role of civil society that were developed in different socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1970s–1980s. I leave out well-documented definitions and theories of civil society that are discussed at length elsewhere[15] and choose to "give voice" to a number of indigenous ideas about the meanings of public sphere, individual and collective activism, and the role of civil society vis-à-vis the state that are much less known to the English-speaking public. Overall, this discussion makes clear that different theories are embedded in particular circumstances of knowledge production and have to be examined within their respective contexts: Different thinkers who work with the concept of civil society do not necessarily mean the same thing by it. In the second part of Chapter 2, I show how these particular understandings of public and private spheres had an impact on dominant patterns of gender relations and on meanings attributed to them by men and women.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the rationale and practices of democracy promotion and support to civil society in the post-Cold War era, especially with respect to the formerly communist states of Eastern

Europe and the Soviet Union. I show that when translated into policy practice, ideas about how to build democracy and to increase the role of civil society are dominated by the so-called "transition paradigm" and that this paradigm is largely responsible for significant shortcomings of civil society promotion around the world. I also look specifically at the role attributed to civil society in the context of assistance programs and argue that these have contributed to refashioning civil society debate in terms of NGO creation and support, which produced a number of side-effects and unintended consequences. What is particularly striking is that after two decades of democracy and civil society assistance to the former Soviet Union, these problematic trends persist despite their recognition not only by academics but also by practitioners themselves. In Chapter 4 I look into different forms of civic activism, especially women's activism, in Ukraine both before and after 1989 and map out some tendencies with respect to NGO development, specifically.

Chapters 5 to 7 contain my case study empirical analysis, which is based on the material I collected[16] and interviews I conducted[17] during four fieldwork trips to Washington, DC, to Kiev, and to a number of Ukrainian cities over the period from June 2002 to May 2005 as well as on other more recent primary material that I gathered through on-line research. The quotations from interviews that are provided throughout this book were selected as the most illustrative "on-the-record" statements. However, my understanding and interpretation of the complex world of assistance would have been severely hampered without the many more "off-the-record" interviews and informal exchanges I conducted throughout the whole project period. My core documentary sources include strategy papers, intermediary and final reports, requests for applications (RFA), assessments, evaluations, and fact sheets by the donors, as well as various project descriptions and publications by the NGOs. As a rule, the donors have been much more willing to share their printed materials than their recipients. Unfortunately, many smaller NGOs in Ukraine proved less prolific when it came to paper work, and in many cases also less accessible for interviews. The interactions at the local NGO level have therefore been reconstructed on the basis of more fragmented data and by drawing more on informal exchanges.

Overall, the analysis is aimed at identifying and describing the main ideas and concepts that define civil society assistance discourse. Following the "sited" understanding of discourse and meaning-making, each chapter that presents the empirical analysis correspond to one of the three most significant sites of interaction – Washington, DC (Chapter 5), Kiev (Chapter 6), and local Ukrainian NGOs (Chapter 7).

The first site of interaction in Washington, DC includes the institutional settings of donor agencies and bureaus with certain procedures and modes of operation; at the same site there are also various organizations that are involved in donors' activities either through subcontracting or through providing consultancy services, such as American NGOs, think tanks, or consultancy firms. The second site of interaction is in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. This is the site at which actors from a variety of backgrounds interact with the goal of implementing civil society assistance programs. This variety of actors includes the donor's mission to the country, representatives of subcontractors and consultancy firms, local think tanks, and NGOs. In a way, Kiev is a point of mediation between the international and local discourses. The third site of interaction is dispersed through many local women's NGOs – recipients of assistance. None of the sites should be viewed as a uniform whole; rather each is defined by the complexity of interactions that take place within and across them.

In Chapter 8 I make a comparison among these three sites and discuss the stability and transformation of civil society assistance discourse across these three sites. Chapters 5 through 8 are structured according to three main questions, starting from the most general to the most specific: (1) what are the meanings of assistance, (2) what are the meanings of promoting civil society through assistance, and (3) what are the meanings of empowering women (through civil society and through assistance). By answering these questions, I show how the understanding of assistance as a top-down transfer of technical expertise has inspired the creation of particular forms of local civic activism (at the expense of others) and promoted a narrowly-defined and essentially disempowering practices of empowerment and capacity building of local civic actors.

Notes

[1] *Samizdat* is a Russian word for "self-published;" it is commonly used to refer to informal home-made publications of writers and essayists who were banned from being published in official state controlled publishing houses during socialism.

[2] Following Hajer, I define discourse as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices."[2] See Maarten Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

1995), p. 44. When forming a (seemingly) coherent whole (or a system of meaning) these ideas and concepts constitute a framework for what can be meaningfully said or done in a given context. In this sense, a discourse can become a political reality in its own right and then stand in the way of more reflexive institutional change. It is for this reason that it is vital to study how meanings are produced, function and change (or are possibly contested and subverted).

[3] Most of the fieldwork was done between 2002–2005; the analysis of more recent developments (i.e., 2006–2009) is based on primary documents only.

[4] I am a Ukrainian with some experience, even if limited, with foreign assistance projects in Ukraine, for which I acted at different moments in a volunteer and a member of staff capacities.

[5] Even though the Yanukovich-Medvedev accord on the Sevastopol Navy Base signed into law on April 29, 2010 clearly postpones NATO prospects (at least until after 2042), Ukraine remains strategically significant as a "buffer" between East and West and an important territory along the northern Black Sea coast.

[6] See for example, David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Maarten Hajer and Wytske Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievement, Challenges, Perspectives," *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7, no. 3 (2005). and especially the dialogical approach as in Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). Other relevant works that define discourse and explain its operation in politics are: Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text*, ed. R. Young (1971), Michael Billig, "Discursive, Rhetorical and Ideological Messages," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, 2001), Margaret Wetherell, "Themes in Discourse Research: The Case of Diana," in *Discourse Theory and Practice*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli: Sage Publications, 2001), Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

[7] For a summary of the argument and a critique see Derek Edwards, Malcolm Ashmore, and Jonathan Potter, "Death and Furniture: The Rhetoric, Politics, and Theology of Bottom Line Arguments against Relativism," *History of the Human Sciences* 8, no. 2 (1995).

[8] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London, New York: Verso, 1985), p. 108.

[9] The examples are taken from USAID, "Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story. Building Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States." USAID Bureau for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Office of Democracy and Governance, October 1999.

[10] Such a contextual vision of discourse follows the Wittgenstein's idea that utterances cannot be usefully understood outside of the practices in which they are (re)produced and transformed. In the words of Wittgenstein himself "the meaning of a word is its use in the language." This implies that the study of a

particular discourse only makes sense through the study of its use in a particular social, political and historical setting. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Blackwell Publishers, 2001), par. 43.

[11] In some of his work, Hajer explores possibilities of conceptualizing this dimension of discourse. His suggestion is to add a dramaturgical dimension to the analysis: Through use of such concepts as "performativity" and "performance" he conveys "the understanding that certain meanings constantly have to be reproduced, that signification must be *enacted*, and that this takes place in a particular 'setting'." See Maarten Hajer, "Rebuilding Ground Zero: The Politics of Performance," *Planning Theory & Practice* 6, no. 4 (2005): p. 448, emphasis in the original. Although I do not incorporate the dramaturgical dimension, nor do I employ concepts such as "performance", the idea of the situated "enactment" of a discourse is key to the overall approach that I develop.

[12] In this book, I spell the name of Ukrainian capital as "Kiev" according to the convension used in the U.S., including USAID and U.S. Department of State policy documents and communications. The correct transliteration from Ukrainian is "Kyiv."

[13] Michael Schudson, "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols," *Theory and Society* 18, no. 2 (1989): p. 157.

[14] Hajer and Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievement, Challenges, Perspectives," p. 181.

[15] E. M. Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society," *The Socialist Register* 1990, John Keane, *Global Civil Society?* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Michael W. Foley, eds., *The Civil Society Reader* (Hanover and London: Tufts University, University Press of New England, 2003), Simone Chambers and W. Kimlicka, eds., *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[16] The full list of cited documents and other primary material is provided in appendix II.

[17] The full list of interviews is provided in appendix I.

2
Changing Perceptions of Civil Society and Gender

This chapter reconstructs the changing perceptions of civil society and gender in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, both before and after the end of Cold War. It deliberately leaves out well-documented definitions and theories of civil society that are widely known to the English-speaking public. Instead, it chooses to "give voice" to a number of indigenous ideas about the meanings of public sphere, individual and collective activism, and the role of civil society vis-à-vis the state. It also shows how these particular understandings of public and private spheres had an impact on dominant patterns of gender relations in (post)communist societies.

Civil Society: Contextualizing the Rediscovery

The thrust of this book is that a concept as complex as that of civil society should always be understood in relation to the concrete cultural context and historical moment in which it is discussed. The revival and fundamental redefinition of the concept of civil society by intellectuals in Eastern Europe in the 60s, 70s, and 80s contributed greatly to the current re-invention of this eighteenth century concept. Although the political importance of events in Eastern Europe of that time is widely acknowledged, the intellectual contribution made here is sometimes questioned. Several Western European thinkers noted in the wake of 'revolutions' in Eastern Europe that there were hardly any new ideas developed in the region.[1] Jürgen Habermas spoke of a "total lack of ideas that [were] either innovative or oriented towards the future."[2] All in all, it has been argued that the only thing Eastern Europeans did then was to quote the liberal classics and to mobilize the idea of civil society for political purposes. In some accounts the similarity between ideas from the West and the East was treated as proof of the irrefutability of one universal concept of civil society to which every free individual

must aspire; here Ernest Gellner's work is a telling example.[3] However, others have argued that Eastern European ideas about civil society do not replicate but rather represent a unique synthesis of radical and liberal agendas; they are also argued to have had a formative influence on the wider radical debate on democracy.[4] In the discussion that follows I show that due to the specificity of the historical context in which authors like Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, Václav Havel, and Janos Kis – to name just a few – wrote, they looked at civil society and its role for democracy from a particular perspective. This made their thinking different from "Western ideas" in interesting ways. I particularly focus on the two-fold understanding of public sphere (as "official" versus "parallel" or "underground") and its relationship to private sphere, "individualist" moral ethic, and the conception of gender that corresponded to these ideas and social and political practices.

In Eastern Europe theories of civil society mainly strove to re-regulate the relationship between the individual and the state. Given the oppressive (post-)totalitarian nature of the state, these concerns were highly political. Individual freedom, solidarity, and morality were the main issues at stake. Concern for individual freedom was different from the individualism of Western liberalism; it was more focused on the freedom to relate to others and to form solidarities based on personal choice rather than on official ideology. A distinction was made between the top-down enforced collectivism and egalitarianism experienced and the desired freedom of individual choice, thus separating the repressive official public sphere from an alternative sphere of freedom.

Some of these theories are closely connected to activities of the Polish independent trade union Solidarity and to lessons learned from the attempts at democratic opposition in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968, respectively. They signify aspirations to create a successful democratic opposition in the face of crude force used by the Soviet Union to dominate these countries. There is, however, considerable divergence between the experiences and ideas of dissidents and intellectuals in different socialist countries. Whereas much of Adam Michnik's work can be read as a rethinking of strategies and tactics for Solidarity and is highly political in the sense of traditional politics, dissidents from other countries were more preoccupied with developing anti-communist ethics rather than practice. These differences are often overlooked in work that is done on civil society in Eastern Europe, which is usually confined to the study of the Solidarity movement in Poland and the charismatic signatories of Charter 77 in the former Czechoslovakia. The divergences in trajectories that these states took after the end of Cold War only confirm their differences.

What Eastern European societies including the Soviet Union had in common before 1989, however, was the dictatorship of a political bureaucracy over society which underwent economic and social leveling – a condition often referred to as "post-totalitarianism."[5] Unlike the fully totalitarian system, in post-totalitarianism or late socialism brutal repression and government by fear took on a more anonymous and selective form. The regime no longer strove to fully control the bodies and souls of its subjects and to bring everyone under a single will; what it required was rather passivity, opportunism, mediocrity, and cynicism. The post-totalitarian system demanded conformity, uniformity, and discipline, rather than faith and commitment.

The suppression of individuality and the politicization of private life under socialism prompted the appearance of a realm of independent or "parallel" activities which were perceived as an alternative to official culture and official politics. Interpretations of the content and the social and political implications of these activities varied not only across different socialist countries but also among different groups within each country. Generally, there seems to be agreement that during socialism a two-fold public sphere existed, which consisted of an official state-controlled public sphere and an alternative public sphere or a "parallel society,"[6] as Václav Benda called it.[7] While there is clear unanimity as to the nature of the official state controlled public sphere, there are divergent ideas as to what were the meaning and the aims of the "parallel society." Most of the time this alternative public sphere was invested with high moral values, as a space for the preservation of "normality" and "authenticity" in the face of the oppressive state and its de-humanizing ideology, which "offers the human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier for them to part with them."[8] The alternative public sphere was defined as harboring "the force of life" and seen as an alternative to the degradation of politics in such regimes.

It was also often conceived of as a realm of morality based on its own ethics, as argued by Jirous: "The essential characteristics of the 'independent society' are kindness, tolerance, respect for the opinions of others, the acceptance of different human beings with love."[9] New forms of communication were believed to be emerging here: "Under the orderly surface of the life of lies, therefore, there slumbers the hidden sphere of life in its real aims, of its hidden openness to truth."[10] The "truth" of the alternative sphere was opposed to the "lies" on which the official public sphere was believed to be building its ideology. This shows that the opposition was created not between the true alternative ideas and the false ideology of the state but between being sincere in

one's deeds and thoughts and lying about one's beliefs and intentions. The official public sphere was criticized not because it was based on a false idea but because it was promoting and even enforcing insincerity and hypocrisy about one's ideas.

Unlike many preceding theories of transformation, change, and even revolution – Marxism-Leninism being the one closest to home – Eastern European theories of the 1970s and 80s were more concerned with means rather than ends. It was believed that in order to defeat the oppressive state one has to find ways of acting that are essentially different from those utilized by the state. Having had direct experience with what George Konrad termed "Jacobin-Leninist tradition," many Eastern Europeans argued in favor of a radically different method for change.[11] Not only did Eastern European thinkers of the time reject the idea of a violent revolution but they were also especially cautious about the methods of their own action. The belief was that those would shape the outcomes of action, and that if one wants to reach a "normal," just, and truthful society, one has to adopt those principles from the very beginning, to start "living in truth" right away. Developing different means of action was believed to be a political project in itself. In the words of Jiří Dienstbier, an early spokesman of Charter 77:

> The basic aim of the self-organization of civil society, of independent and parallel activities, is the preservation and renewal of *normality*, as we understand it in the European tradition. This means the renewal of *civic awareness and interest* in the affairs of the community; it means an appeal to the quality of work and decency in human relationships; it means the attempt to maintain and expand awareness of one's legal rights, self-education and assisting in the education of others, writing books, publishing periodicals, putting on plays, holding seminars, exhibitions, concerts etc. And it also means forming judgments, without emotions and with an effort to get as much information from as wide a variety of sources as possible, on various aspects of the domestic and international situations.[12]

In the words of Adam Michnik, Eastern Europeans did not have a revolutionary utopia, for their utopia was "regaining the right to a normal national, civic, religious, economic, and political life."[13]

> It follows from the very essence of these attempts to form an "independent society" that at their core will always be the creation of islands of plurality that may become a prefiguration of a pluralistic society […]; independent activities will probably continue to encourage the elements of pluralism, as well as everything that we have learned – that is, *tolerance, a revulsion toward ideological*

> *thinking and toward all forms of violence*, whether overt or hidden, etc, in order that these qualities may become firmly rooted.[14]

Attempts to create an independent sphere completely outside the control of the abusive state were famously captured by the notion of "anti-politics."[15] George Konrad argued that anti-politics should aim not at capturing state power but at pushing the state back from various spheres of life, and in such a way curtailing its powers. This theory aimed at recasting the public sphere rather than retreating into the private. Yet, "anti-politics" in Konrad's formulation is also very much an anti-politician perspective. For him, politicians in control of state power cannot be "improved" because their position and their philosophy of life are inherently violent and self-interested. They have to be accepted as a necessary evil and kept at bay by other, inherently moral intellectual forces that should come from civil society. The two realms, however, are and will always be separate and antagonistic towards each other. In Konrad's words:

> Politicians have to be guarded against because the peculiarity of their function and *mentality* lies in the fact that they are at times capable of pushing the button for atomic war. […] No *thinking person* should want to drive others from positions of political power in order to occupy them himself. I would not want to be a minister in any government whatsoever. […] My worst nightmare is to have to tell millions of people what to do next. The opposition thinker is not a member of any shadow cabinet.[16]

Here the state is equated with people of a particular breed whose "mentality" and nature are inherently different from those of a "thinking person." The latter voluntarily chooses to stay outside of the state and mocks its ambition to "tell millions of people what to do next." "Anti-politics" is not about transforming politics but about expanding the "outside" of politics and keeping that realm free of everything (negative) that is embodied in politics.

There were, however, a few qualifications made to the notion of "anti-politics" in terms of how far one could go in turning one's back towards the state and disregarding it. There seemed to lie a danger in trying to push for disregarding the official politics and everything connected to the state completely. In a clear-cut world of an oppressive system on the one hand and rightful dissidence on the other, a potential for dialogue and for a search for new solutions could be lost somewhere along the way. As the former Protestant clergyman and Czech dissident Jan Šimsa put it,

> I think it is dangerous to overload concepts like 'independent society'. We have to keep in mind all of society, culture, science, all of life in its indivisibility. In a sectarian understanding of independence, I see the danger of depoliticization and the danger of remaining too long in seclusion.[17]

To illustrate this point, Šimsa points to the problematic nature of the so-called "kitchen debates"[18] and home education, due to the fact that they were not aimed at educating and sharing information beyond just a closed circle of friends. There was a danger of turning dissident activities into a ghetto rather than facilitating their broader societal impact and potential for change.

The question of how political "anti-politics" could and should be was hotly debated at the time. According to Václav Benda, the parallel polis

> cannot completely ignore the official social structures and systematically remain separate from them (this is reflected in the more extreme aspects of the ideology of the underground) nor can it merely reject them and be their negative image […]; variety, but not absolute independence, for a parallel course can be maintained only with a certain mutual respect and consideration.[19]

How such coexistence could be endorsed without allowing independent activities to be corrupted by the state was a question of key importance. In this respect, the argument for "putting the society first," as for example discussed by Jiří Dienstbier, seems particularly valuable. The idea of the "self-organization of civil society" is based on the belief that if the state does not perform its functions of responding to social needs, civil society has to self-organize and therefore enter into a dialogue with the state and to contest its totalizing demands for power. "The state is too important a social institution to be understood merely as a parasitical organ that can be gradually pushed out of the life of society."[20]

The ideas that laid a basis for the activities and identities of the Polish movement "Solidarity" and of KOR[21] are the most proactive and explicitly political responses to this dilemma in the whole of Eastern Europe. Building upon the idea of the prevalence of political means versus political ends, some Eastern European thinkers developed the concept of a "self-limiting revolution" that would be aimed not at capturing state power but rather at a peaceful transformation of society towards autonomous self-organization outside of it. This would allow the establishment of a new order in which civil liberties and human

rights would be safeguarded. The Polish movement Solidarity sought neither to form a political party nor to capture state power. It sought neither the restoration of capitalism nor the withering away of the state. The importance of the concept of the "self-limiting" revolution is that – unlike the classical Marxist understanding of history and revolution as contesting the state on its own ground – it does not aim at the total destruction of a despotic state: "The 'independent society' does not compete for power."[22] After all, such a strategy would put revolutionary forces themselves in the place of uncontested state power and, thus, threaten to undermine citizen self-organization and defense against the despotic state.[23] Indeed, the close knowledge of "vanguardist" top-down change as realized by the Bolsheviks was seen as an example of a revolution that signified a transition from a despotic monarchic state to a despotic proletarian state.

In moving away from radical ideas of revolution and reform while maintaining the emphasis on civic activism, Polish émigré philosopher Leszek Kolakowski argued in favor of a reconstruction of the social sphere through oppositional practices which would create a realm free from state control.[24] This opposition was to be aimed not at influencing the state directly but at addressing an independent public, in order to form a culture of new citizenship based on rights and principles of equality. "Every act of defiance helps us build the framework of democratic socialism, which should not be merely or primarily a legal institutional structure but a real, day to day community of free people."[25] This "society-first" argument was presented as a more viable strategy for creating a counterbalance to the state, in which case the pressure on the state from below would be more of a by-product than an end in itself.[26] Developing such a sphere was believed to provide the necessary safeguards in the face of the oppressive state. "The commonness of revolutionary attitudes among the citizens and the resulting tendency of the citizens to control the authority are sufficient to guarantee that the sphere of regulation does not reach beyond the range of administration."[27]

However, there were divergent views as to the political implications of "parallel" activities, and in fact, even as to their possibility. Recalling events in Poland, George Konrad reports on the mixed feelings that he and his fellow Hungarian intellectuals had. He admits to the perceived impossibility for Hungarians at the time to have something like KOR and to wide-spread doubts about whether the Poles would ever succeed, even though everyone wanted them to.[28] Many intellectuals at the time preferred a more individual and more contained conception of opposition. Some (for example Havel) believed that every individualist

act outside of the official public space was in itself an act of political significance since it defied the logic of the regime. Dissidents like Jiří Dienstbier believed that the political impact of creating such a sphere arose from the mere fact of its existence: "What is the meaning of independent activities that openly declare themselves as such? When a citizen proclaims that he will not allow his citizenship to be taken from him, he renews the very notion of citizenship itself."[29] Therefore, much effort was invested by such thinkers into developing and maintaining an individual moral stand rather than into attempts to mobilize the broader public. This view is close to the ideas supported by some Soviet dissidents. For them, what mattered was an individual act of opposing the regime rather than attempts at mobilizing masses or achieving the actual regime change. The latter task, most of the time and, according to some accounts, even in early 1989, seemed virtually unattainable given the perceived stability of the Soviet system.

In the Soviet Union, the idea of opposing the regime as an individual in one's private realm rather than as a community in its alternatively constructed sphere was even more pronounced. Dissidents like the famous historian Roy Medvedev were, in his own words, "dissenting against the authorities from a moral point of view. They never developed a goal to be political leaders."[30] The dissidents were very brave intellectuals but not organizers with a political program that would answer the question what should be done once the Soviet Union disappeared. The realm of dissidence in the Soviet Union was not the realm of collective opposition but the realm of critically minded and marginally positioned individuals. In an interview ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union another prominent dissident Larisa Bogaraz explained: "The dissidents weren't representing anyone. We wanted the situation to be just like that. Each dissident could represent himself."[31] In fact, their dissidence was largely based on ignoring the system and is exemplified in a subculture of "janitors and night guards"[32] – people who chose for the utmost marginality in the socialist system for the sake of securing their freedom from the state.[33] Opposition to the state took place first and foremost on the level of ideas or rather on the level of rejecting ideological totalities and through the choice of staying outside of and partly disregarding the state.

These ideas are reflected in a peculiar understanding of the relationship between public and private, in which the public represents the "wrong" kind of politics and the private is seen as a realm of individual freedom. The "parallel society" was private and largely based on familial ties and small circles of friends, whose relations with each other were predicated on high degrees of trust and almost intimacy, due

to the potential dangers of even seemingly innocent activities.[34] Reporting on the results of extensive interviews conducted in 1980, Krzysztof Nowak concludes that

> In his private role, an individual was relatively outspoken and could trust […]; the politicized sphere of public life gave rise to the division of the world into the private and the public realm […]; in the private realm people could be frank and "authentic," whereas in the public realm they were forced to obey the alien rules. For them [Nowak's informants] the public world was "artificial," a world where you had to pretend things and must not tell the "truth."[35]

According to another account

> […] in authoritarian states *citizens* seldom become *persons* until they are in private, with their families, among friends, at their cottages. As citizens, they are more apt to stylize an appropriate behavior for themselves, maintaining certain rules of behavior that become habitual. There is always tension between *natural*, spontaneous behavior and "*official"* behavior.[36]

What is particularly revealing in this quote is the rigidity of the opposition between the private as "natural" and the public as the "habitual" that is mirrored by another opposition between "persons" and "citizens." This points to a significant belief that one's role as a citizen (which, as Battek argues further, is not chosen freely but imposed by circumstances of one's birth) is not only devoid of creativity and self-expression but is actually inhibiting these human qualities. By implication, individual freedom of expression is only possible in one's private role as a "person." For Rudolf Battek, the private realm offers an alternative – "the spiritual," which he defines as "ethical postulates, sensitive creation, analytical and synthetic processes of learning and self-discovery […], feeling, knowing, giving, learning, loving, [and] believing."[37] This alternative is essentially concerned with the intellectual, creative, and emotional needs of an individual rather than the collective, and it endows the private sphere with a multitude of roles that could otherwise be spread between different realms, such as the church, the educational system, and the family.

The distrust in the "official" sphere was elegantly described as a so-called "as if game" that characterized people's behavior in public. In a much quoted example given by Václav Havel in his landmark essay "The Power of the Powerless," the manager of the fruit and vegetable shop places the slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!" in his shop

window. He does so not because he feels truly concerned about the unity of the workers all over the world but because "that poster was delivered [to him] from the enterprise headquarters together with the onions and carrots." The greengrocer sees the slogan as a way to signal his loyalty to the regime and thus, to secure himself. He does not have to be passionate or sincere about it because it is sufficient to behave "as if" he believes it, and the authorities behave "as if" they believe he believes. This mechanism places individual citizens in the position of being simultaneously accomplices and victims of the regime.[38]

What is significant in this analysis is that it shows how hypocrisy and oppression cultivated in the socialist public sphere were commonly reproduced by the system and its citizens. The conscious retreat into the private and the explicit disinterest and disdain of the public were feeding into rather than subverting the existing system. Czech academic Miroslav Kusy presents a similar argument:

> People continue to play the game of "as if" and keep their reservations to themselves. They have grown accustomed to the confusion of concepts and the relativity of moral values. Not only that, they have been able to turn this weapon of real-socialist ideology to their own advantage. With its help, they ideologize their own behavior vis-à-vis the regime and justify their way of life within the context of the harsh reality. […] People expect no change in the foreseeable future, and consider any effort to bring about such change as vain and dangerous. Like the regime, the nation becomes offensive about what it already has.[39]

There is a widespread argument that the Soviet regime collapsed so rapidly and irrevocably partly due to the fact that nobody in the society, including the ruling elite, cared for it anymore. The arguments outlined above introduce another way of looking at the apathy, hypocrisy, and disillusionment that characterized late socialism and its citizens. It shows that just "talking the talk" and "playing the game" is not a mask one is free to put on and off while retaining a "real" face under it. The "talk" and the "game" are real and constitutive of the identities of the actors involved.

In the following chapters I show how an intricate combination of "old" and "new" talks is at work in the more recent postsocialist reality. Some general patterns of societal relations that developed under socialism persisted after its collapse, thus shaping the new post-socialist societies alongside with the new processes of democratization and introduction of market economy.

Coming back to the discussion of the "as if game," it is important to acknowledge the persistence of informal networks and a peculiar type of individualism and particularism that developed as a response of acting "as if" in the socialist public sphere. In her analysis, Watson spells out the following dynamic: The perceived lack of scope for effective autonomous action in the public sphere triggered two complementary tendencies. First, it led to the valorization of an "insider" status in the public sphere and the increased negative significance of an "outsider" status. This could be rephrased as an overall lack of trust in fellow-citizens other than those that belong to one's family or personal network and even as heightened social intolerance – a peculiar mixture of social vulnerability and hostility. Second, the overall disbelief in political and social goals officially declared in public was supplemented by the rise of an individualist, consumption-oriented, and family-centered ideology, which, however, was difficult to pursue given low standards of living, limited availability of consumer goods, and low quality of social services. Watson provides an illuminating comparison between the post-War Stalinist era (the 50s) and the late socialism (especially the 70s and 80s). Whereas the living and working conditions as well as state coercion were harsher in the post-War period, the overall dynamism, social mobility, and increased levels of education were experienced and then translated into a (more strongly) shared sense of social advancement. In contrast, the late socialism was characterized by both a higher quality of life and a higher dissatisfaction with it, by an increased feeling that it was impossible to reach self-fulfillment. This latter tendency was due to the inability of citizens to engage reflexively with formal institutions and the public sphere, on the one hand, and to the lack of opportunity and resources to fulfill individual goals, on the other.[40]

This dynamic also translated into particular understandings of the "public good" and of appropriate ways to produce and to (re)distribute goods and benefits in the society. Again, as a critique on an unreflective assumption that civil society – understood as a parallel polis or otherwise – necessarily produces the desired democratic effects, the other face of "parallel activities" can be evoked. During socialism, the "parallel polis" comprised not only parallel cultural or political activities but also a parallel economy. These informal economic networks were a way to make up for the failures of distribution in the state-controlled economic system and for the ineffectiveness of state social services. They embodied a survival strategy that was employed not by the politically or socially marginalized minority but by the majority of the population that was underprivileged by the state. Ironically perhaps, in

late socialism the bureaucratic state apparatus itself was thoroughly pervaded by the "economy of favors" and clientelist networks.[41] Even more interestingly, the parallel economy was largely perceived as an effective response to the failures of the socialist system and in that sense as a way to contribute to the common good. An administrator who used personal networks to arrange some extra benefits for a particular enterprise would more commonly be seen as socially responsible rather than corrupt. In fact, these perceptions are still very visible today, especially on the local level. Mayors and civil servants still draw their legitimacy from delivering services rather than from adhering to transparent democratic procedures.[42] In general, the public good is defined in terms of material security and good services rather than in terms of legal equality or justice.

What is often overlooked in the analysis of (post-)socialism is that, empirically speaking, the widely acclaimed "parallel polis" and the often stigmatized "parallel economy" are two sides of the same pattern of survival strategies developed by the society in the face of an ideologized, intrusive, and ineffective state. Both faces of the "parallel polis" are embedded in the particular condition of (post-)socialism:

> Both were based on the ethics of particularist loyalty in the face of the regime that paid lip service to the common good. Both included an effort to create and reproduce a sphere of relative autonomy from the totalitarian ambitions of the state. This can, on one level of analysis, be treated as "resistance;" on another level, however, it can be seen as a way of adapting oneself to the existing mechanisms of domination – and even of reproducing them.[43]

Instead of having an ethical and political potential, it can endorse clientelism, nepotism and hidden corruption[44] in the form of informal distributive and power networks.

The degree to which these informal "parallel" structures shaped the (post-)socialist societies and impacted on the nature of their transformations is reflected in the following analysis by Janine Wedel. In her account of Polish society in 1990 Wedel describes

> […] a complex system of informal relations, in such forms as "social circles," horizontal linkage networks, and patron-client connections, all carried on in one sense outside authorized institutions […]. Although not explicitly institutional, the relationships are regularized and have clear patterns. Understanding these patterns is the key to understanding not only Polish society today [back in 1990] but also how it is going to respond to coming changes.[45]

Indeed, the persistence of informal and network structures of social and political relationships in the former socialist countries has been emphasized in some of the literature.[46] Given the changing socio-economic context, the actual services that are exchanged through these informal networks may be changing: For example, in addition to the exchange of primary goods and services, there is also more and more exchange of practical information. However, the relationships themselves still largely shape the political, social, and economic developments in the former socialist states. The history of privatization in the early 1990s is perhaps one of the most notorious examples of how administrative resources were utilized by the old Soviet elite to maintain economic and political power after the collapse of socialism.[47]

Some researchers conclude that not only do such informal networks remain strong in the post-socialist societies, but they also have proven to be a major obstacle to democratic change.

> The founding principle of the "power of the powerless" – the stress on "immediate personal trust and the informal rights of individuals" has in the post-socialist condition become, from being a shield against totalitarian ambitions of the repressive state, a major obstacle for the development of democracy beyond formal, procedural participation.[48]

This points to the tension between the idea of "anti-politics" and the actual reality of the political transformation in those countries. When the socialist regime went down, the envisioned public sphere as a sight of morality did not get strengthened but disappeared along with this regime. In a way, the ideologized official public sphere and the alternative "parallel polis" were mutually reinforcing constructions. Both must be understood as a legacy of (post-)socialist societies, but neither can continue to exist without the other. While the informal relations persisted, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to formal and legal changes that enabled new forms of civic participation.

The dualism between formal and informal, official and parallel relationships in the public and private sphere inspired particular identities among citizens. Slavoj Zizek coined the term "cynical subjects" to refer to the citizens who were aware of the gap between ideology and social reality and at the same time chose to adapt to this gap rather than to take an active stance in changing the situation.[49] In these societies, between the two minorities of those who were truly convinced of the ideals of the Communist Party and those who were actively dissident, the majority of the people – whether party members or not – were consciously passive and shared an aversion to grand ideas

of any sort. Differences between different socialist countries notwithstanding, what seemed to have been shared by all who were living under "socialism" was their antipathic position vis-à-vis an all-intrusive state that was imposing particular identities and a particular belief system on them.

The gap between the official propaganda and the social and political reality was so tremendous that many citizens of socialist countries developed deep-seated distrust not only of public institutions and official channels of information – be they the state controlled mass media or educational systems – but also of discourses that constituted the public sphere. As an anecdote goes, when people in the former Soviet Union received the opportunity to travel abroad more easily[50] in the early 1990s, some were utterly surprised to find out that the Apartheid regime in South Africa as well as racism in the U.S. actually existed and were not inventions of Soviet anti-capitalist propaganda.

In this context, the meaning of terms such as "independent" activities or a "parallel polis" calls for further explanation. The fact that these activities were conducted outside of the official state-controlled public sphere does not suffice for their understanding. The often-quoted examples of "underground" cultural activities were very different from both individual acts of civil disobedience by dissidents and wider anti-communist social movements. These activities were everything the state, official culture, and ideology were not – a way of disregarding the official culture rather than confronting it. These tendencies became increasingly widespread in the 1970s and 80s, among the so-called "last Soviet generation". As Alexei Yurchak, a cultural anthropologist and a representative of the last Soviet generation himself, put it, "in this respect, it is more accurate to speak, for example, of nonofficial culture than of 'counter culture' or the 'underground', both of which imply resistance to or subversion of official ideology and culture, and thus an *involvement* in their official logic."[51] In other words, the strategy was developed to disregard the official public sphere and to mock it in the private. This strategy, however, did not entail direct confrontation or purposeful subversion.

This idea of "non-involvement" produced a peculiar understanding of what a politically meaningful action was. The fact that official ideology was built around notions borrowed from Marxian class struggle created a strong aversion among the passive majority against ideas of political mobilization of any kind. It meant that any claim to bigger ideals or any activist position ending with an "-ism" were perceived with a high degree of distrust and even disdain. As is vividly captured by a quote from Jan Jirous, an art historian closely associated with the

musical underground: "any vertical organization – hierarchization – of the 'independent society' would at the same time bring its demise […]; an organization requires both a hierarchy and a program; *we are fed up with both.*"[52]

These attitudinal dynamics also had an important impact on the public understanding of "acts of civil courage," their nature and their scope. Here "civil courage" refers not only to overt protests and political actions but also to expressing oneself freely in small-scale every-day situations. According to an insightful and empirically grounded analysis by Krzysztof Nowak, the oppressive system was based not only on overt revolutionary terror and coercion but also on an intricate set of mechanisms or, in Nowak's words, "defense lines" that sustained the stability and "no-alternativity" of the communist regime. The "legitimation of the regime through no-alternativity" was performed through "constraint applied indirectly or 'reified' in forms of social life and symbolic communication."[53] Such peculiar forms of oppression fed into a "pragmatic attitude" or a "cynical reason" on the part of the majority of society, which was based on protecting oneself and one's life through abstinence from public action, through pragmatic conformity based not on belief or conviction but on convenience. Such convenience came with a price – even in small-scale every-day situations, let alone in mass public gatherings, people would choose to remain silent.

Nowak holds that this line of defense works set up by the state was built upon instilling despondency and a sense of hopelessness. In the words of one of his informants: "There was no such situation in which people were afraid to speak up. Whereas, people did not want to talk because *they had become convinced as to the ineffectiveness of speaking up.*"[54] The pragmatic choice not to get involved also led to a lack of appreciation of other people's active positions. Nowak describes this rationale very well: "One becomes a hero when one braves a great danger in the name of a grand cause, while exposing oneself to harassment only because one is attracted to the more common and less grandiose values is tantamount to earning the label of an impractical person who does poorly in life in spite of his noble intentions."[55]

This shows that the position of a dissident was much more ambivalent than is usually assumed these days. It also points to a tension which is often overlooked, due to the overall enthusiasm that the figure of a dissident evokes, especially in the West – a tension around the meaning of being a dissident in a socialist society. Many people have tried to address the issue of the apparently marginal and almost detested position of dissidents during socialism. For example, Václav Havel

argued that dissidents were avoided by the majority in society due to fear of being associated with them or due to the shame of being afraid while others were outspokenly opposing the system.[56] On the other hand, the Russian poet Joseph Brodsky has disputed Havel's claim by pointing out that, given the seeming stability of the system, dissidents were simply perceived as impractical and slightly abnormal, a sort of "God's fools" deserving pity rather than active support.[57] Such an ambivalent relationship between the figure of a dissident and the majority of the people also continued after the collapse of the Soviet system.

In a somewhat prophetic essay written just a few months before the historical change of 1989, Jiřina Šiklová talks about the "silent majority," people in the "gray zone" who, although politically uninterested, will be of immense importance in the course of anticipated changes. Šiklová supposed that the people who were not involved in active opposition during socialism would turn out to be "the ones who will take over the leadership of the society."[58] These people

> […] are employed within the structure, in jobs roughly in keeping with their qualifications; they are not ostracized, they want to retain the minor advantages that the regime grants those who stay within the norm. At the same time, they strive not to get "into" anything, not to damage anyone; they are often helpful to others persecuted by the political regime. On the other hand, they take no visible stands against the establishment and so to some degree compromise themselves.[59]

According to Šiklová's predictions, which turned out to be largely true in the light of subsequent events, such people would move to the forefront the moment the situation would change and new opportunities for employing skills and expertise would arise, whereas the dissidents might have to face redundancy. "The dissidents may have moral superiority, but they must also realize that they have lived, or survived, for twenty years outside 'the structure', for the most part in isolation, out of touch with scientific institutions and institutes."[60] Šiklová also supposed that people who were actively opposing the regime could also experience a sort of a loss of identity after its demise:

> The dissidents will also lose much that is valuable to them [….] Lost to them will be their unity, which up till now was considered a matter of course; their cohesiveness, their solidarity, their uniqueness, their moral superiority, their aura of being persecuted and ostracized, and along with these, a certain nonresponsibility for everything that is wrong in politics and society.[61]

Another precaution voiced by the dissidents themselves concerned the idealization of the views and methods of dissidents and the demonization of those of former communists. Instead, as Adam Michnik has argued, both should be seen as mutually constitutive identities created by and embedded in the socialist system. This means that both should be transformed under the new circumstances.

> Immediately after Communism, the following problem arose: we all – both the Communists and the anti Communists – were bastards of the Communist system, who were mentally shaped by this system. And so a tendency immediately emerged of wanting to replace the Communists, as soon as they were removed from power, by the Solidarity structures. So that after "the leading role of the Communist Party" – as we used to call it – comes the time of the leading role of the Solidarity trade union. And further, from the churches' pulpits you easily hear: "for forty-five years we had Communists in power – now it is time for us, the Catholics."[62]

In addition, many of the dissidents who had been active during socialism did not become active in the public life after its collapse. With the exception of a few prominent figures, like Václav Havel in the Czech Republic, there was almost no connection between dissidents and post-1989 elites; even more strikingly, in many countries, including Ukraine, the old *nomenklatura* successfully moved into post-1989 positions of power.

The Meanings of Gender

In the socialist or post-totalitarian context, gender as one of the key dimensions of subjectivity also had peculiar characteristics. Unlike a more "classic" conception of gender as a binary opposition of power constituted by a dominating and a dominated side that originated in Western/Northern capitalist societies, gender in socialism was formed by a different power context. The gendered subject was positioned in higher-level power relations between the individual and the state. This resulted in a unique lived experience of a shared subjugated position by both genders, which did not eliminate gender differences but rather relativized them vis-à-vis other power structures.

As Hana Havelková, a prominent Czech sociologist, has argued, as a result of the totalizing nature of the socialist state "the orientation toward the private sphere was an essential, psychologically formative consequence of the suppression of public subjectivity. The family assumed a special function as the *refuge of moral values*."[63] Here the

connection to ideas of civil society as a sphere of morality is clear. Given the strong party control over education, media, and other forms of public discourse, family and close friends were the only alternative "schools of political thought," spaces for critical discussion and moral education. This seems to stand in stark contrast to the classical idea that morality and education cannot be obtained through family or kinship ties but only through civil society. Civil society in socialism was located in the private sphere, whereas in liberal democracy it is located in the public sphere. Therefore, "as a consequence of the practice of really existing socialism,[64] the concepts of private and public have meanings and functions different from those of Western countries […]; the relation of the individual subject to the public sphere is abstract, while the subject's relation to the private one is concrete."[65]

In a less idealistic tone, other scholars have used the label of "neo-traditionalism" coined by Jowitt to describe this dynamic.[66] In her analysis, Watson shows that the tremendous importance of family and household was a sign of "creative" social adaptation to systemic exclusion in the public sphere that was experienced by both men and women under socialism. In those industrially modern societies, traditional family models were preserved by the society in order to create alternative spaces for self-articulation, to organize social life, and to sustain "coherence" – all of which was to help self-protection and survival. In this way, individual survival was connected to family survival, which in turn depended on the crucial "learned resourcefulness" of women, their paid and unpaid labor.[67] In other words, both men and women subscribed to a traditionalist gender division partly as a result of their peculiar relation to the socialist state. To my mind, seeing gender in this way is crucial for understanding the seeming lack of gender awareness by Eastern European women, bemoaned by their Western counterparts. I would argue that, on the contrary, in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union women were acutely conscious of the gendered nature of their social relationships but perceived them as the only survival strategy vis-à-vis the state system.

According to an in-depth analysis by Hana Havelková, rather than being an issue of "false consciousness," the disinterest in feminism and the desire to attain positive change and equality for men and women alike has to be conceptualized in different terms due to the specificity of the socialist system as experienced by both men and women. Havelková attributes this "supra-feminist" syndrome, as she calls it, to specifically socialist forms of individual subjectivity and private/public distinction. Since the totalitarian government strove to undermine individual autonomy and exercised objectifying practices vis-à-vis all its citizens,

men and women alike, "a positive concept of the subject" defended by feminist theorists in the West had to be applied to men as well.[68] In a similar fashion, in socialism – unlike in the West – the gendered divisions of power did not correspond to the division between public and private: An "[…]overriding division was drawn between the Communist Party and all those who were its objects. In spite of the fact that women did not sit on the Party Central Committee, they, like men, were given positions in accordance with the degree of their loyalty, not their abilities."[69] This point is echoed by Peggy Watson, who writes that "under state socialism, society was politically excluded *as a whole*, and citizens, far from feeling excluded relative to each other, were held together in a form of political unity, it was this essential unity that made possible the idea of Solidarity."[70]

Some authors have argued that the importance of the private sphere as a counterbalance to the oppressive system and the central role that women played in it placed them in a more privileged position as compared to men. "Where the subject was oppressed in the public sphere, the family represented for the woman, much more than the man, the possibility of choice and escape from the political blackmail. Women consciously made use of this opportunity."[71] Without any intention to overestimate the gains that such gendered divisions gave to women, I would argue that there was more congruence between the gender expectations of women and opportunities they had to meet them than was the case for men. Watson expresses a similar idea when she refers to "a fixed and traditional notion of masculine identity in a political and economic context, which thwarted traditional masculinity by precluding autonomous activity outside of the private sphere."[72] Public performance and career were often tied to compromising oneself and one's principles in favor of the official party ideology. Facing such pressures, men needed to reassert their self-worth and their masculinity in the face of day-to-day humiliation and ideological pretence. Such refuge was only available in the private realm. In this sense, unbalanced as they were, Eastern European roles in the family, which might have seemed to reinforce traditional gender roles and formulas like "two people – one career," had a different meaning and a different economy behind them. This is also evident from Havelková's observation that many women admitted to having deliberately encouraged the patriarchal manners of their husbands as a way to boost their self-confidence.[73]

Different experiences of men and women are reflected in different social dynamic in these two populations. Research is available that shows the rise in male mortality from the 1960s onwards and higher suicide rates (markedly among the non-married population) as well as

higher consumption rates of alcohol and more recently, non-traditional recreational drugs by men as compared to women.[74] Such tendencies are argued to be primarily caused by "psychosocial factors" such as the ones elaborated on above.[75] They also translated into different experiences by men and women after the collapse of socialism. The "learned resourcefulness" of women became particularly important for survival during the difficult period of social and economic collapse of the early 1990s.

After the collapse of socialism, both men and women were eager to re-establish themselves as free subjects in the public sphere. Notions of liberal citizenship and gender-blind equality were eagerly embraced and constructed as a common interest for all social groups. Seeing gender roles in terms of a mutually beneficial social contract, women (and men) did not see the need to think of the new social or political conditions in gendered terms. This partly explains the lack of interest in identity politics and in feminist agendas in particular. However, as the oppressive state withered away in 1989 and 1991, the gendered power structures in these societies changed and the gendered social contract is being transformed. In this context, the question whether a distinct women's identity and political agenda in formerly Soviet states will develop remains to be seen.

This issue has been particularly visible within the East-West dialogue on what the goals of women's activism should be – a process that has yielded as much frustration and misunderstanding as cooperation. In the words of Barbara Einhorn, "the 'myths of transition' have arisen partly from contesting notions of the position and project of feminist identities reflected in the continuing and difficult East/West feminist dialogue."[76] An account of the early East-West encounters presented below is very illustrative:[77]

> The common (to be fair, there are certainly exceptions, too!) pattern goes like this: a Western academic gets a grant for research on Eastern Europe. She uses her grant money to travel to the area and we spend hours and hours with her answering questions and providing her with data and information – sometimes making them up, as we lack basic research on such issues in our intellectual context. Then she flies herself back and nobody sees her anymore. Several months later, if we are lucky, we receive a photocopy of an article published in one of the feminist journals. I say photocopy – the one-year subscription of a Western academic journal still could represent an equivalent of one month of our incomes. And there we read a report of "our" world, full of misspelled names, misunderstood points, unconfirmed information, and rarely any insight. […] There are still many humiliating

> experiences of facing the ones who know more and have more. Or who present themselves as knowing and having such.[78]

To somewhat soften this critique, it is worth mentioning that this particular account itself was published in the leading Western feminist journal *Signs* as early as 1995. Yet, it highlights the fact that the way a particular dialogue constructs the relative positions of those interacting is as important as what they are interacting about. My own findings presented in Chapters 5 to 8 provide a detailed account of such interactions characterized by unequal power relations, not only between the "East" and the "West" but also between different women in the "East."

In this context it is useful to recall some aspects of the general debate about the political role of feminism and its relevance across different settings. The analysis by Karen Offen offers a very useful historical-theoretical discussion of the meaning of the terms "feminism" and "feminist."[79] The author shows that even a cursory look at the history of women's movements in different cultural contexts reveals conflicting understandings of what it means to act on behalf of women. By citing such examples as German ideas of male/female complementarity and critiques of social institutions or Swedish "motherhood" feminism, she shows that the Anglo-American tradition of equality of rights is only one way of understanding women's issues and women's activism. The general argument is that this diversity has to be considered and theorized if one is to arrive at a meaningful theoretical definition of "feminism." Indeed, the very term "feminism" invokes a host of theoretical and political debates. One of the tensions between feminist political science of the "classical" period of the 70s and its post-feminist turn in the 90s is between the idea of empowering women as the oppressed and subjugated class (and therefore assuming that there is such a distinct group as women that share the condition of oppression) and the idea of gender as a construct constituted by the opposition "male–female," which is reconfigured in a variety of contexts and implicates both the "male" and the "female" part of the opposition. This tension is well captured in the analysis by Barrett and Phillips, who argue that in the 1970s feminists disagreed substantially (and fiercely) over what the cause of women's oppression might be but "did not really question the notion of the cause itself. Nor was there any difficulty with the idea of oppression, which seemed to have self-evident application."[80] Also, for most feminists of the time, gender issues were cast in social structural terms; in this sense "feminists united in the importance they attached to establishing the fundamentals of social causation."[81]

One of the critiques of this position came from the so-called "black" feminists, who pointed to the issue of power inequalities between women of different backgrounds, rather than between women and men.[82] According to one of the early critiques, universalizing the category of a woman brings to life several axioms that underlie international "gender" policies and perspectives: Women are the same due to the shared fact of their oppression; they are always the victims of male violence, of religious fundamentalism, and of familial code; they are always dependent and have little access to the material and symbolic resources of society. Regardless of the particular historic and cultural meanings of womanhood, women in "other" countries are defined as oppressed, traditionalistic, and legally illiterate.[83] In other words, being defined *by* the Other, objects of international donor activities are inevitably defined *as* the Other.[84]

Other authors have provided historical examples of earlier women's movements to illustrate the problematics of inequality between different women and of the politics of agenda-setting within women's movements, for example, the history of the women's movement in France from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, which was torn by class clashes,[85] or the "fallen women campaign" that was led by British upper-class women on behalf of their Indian "sisters."[86] According to a historical analysis by Antoinette Burton, British women were particularly outspoken on the issue of prostitution, in which "Eastern harem slaves"[87] presumably found themselves, and used it to frame the broad discussion of women's subjugation. However, their agenda and activities were much more fragmented on the issues that concerned the situation of British women and their disfranchisement at home.

These tensions have been more recently captured in the "sisterhood–difference" debate. Some feminists have argued in favor of strategic alliances between women that should be based on the discovery of shared oppression.[88] They have defined "sisterhood" as a political project that would lead to the success of the (global) women's movement. For example, the two volumes edited by Robin Morgan, published some fifteen years apart, both insist on the apparent possibility and success of "sisterhood" as a universal global strategy.[89] This position, however, has been criticized as one that leads to a complete erasure of positional differences between women and sustains hegemonic constructions. Thus, many authors have instead argued in favor of acknowledging "difference" between women.[90] The insistence on the notion of "difference" has raised another question: whether or not it may still be possible to develop a common political agenda. For

example, Ann Sisson Runyan provides a useful discussion of whether the plurality of positions denies any possibility for feminist solidarity.[91] Such research, however, remains highly theoretical and addresses the normative rather than the practical empirical dimension of the problem.

Related to this dilemma is the issue whether there has to be a (global) women's agenda at all. Should women keep to women-specific issues even if their experience and intuition point to other kinds of issues and concerns? Felly Nkweto Simmonds provides the example of the International Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980. The event was literally split into two between the delegates who were concerned with the Israeli occupation of Palestine and wanted to include in the conference report a call to "eliminate imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, Zionism, racism, and apartheid" and those who rejected such language and were upset that "key political questions of concern to women" were not being sufficiently addressed in the conference.[92] Not surprisingly, those who rejected the call were mostly the delegates from Australia, Canada, the U.S., and Israel. What is more important for the present discussion, however, is the issue of whether and how the women's movement is capable of responding to different systems of oppression, both local and global, and whether the insistence on "sisterhood" and "women's issues" cannot turn into a straight-jacket for activists who may want to respond to some other issues that are not globally recognized as "questions of concern to women." This is one of the dimensions of debate that render "global sisterhood" difficult.

Notes

1 See for example: Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New York: Times Books, 1990), Timothy Garton Ash, *We the People* (London: Granta Books, 1990).

2 Quoted in Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

3 Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994).

4 Gideon Baker, "The Changing Idea of Civil Society: Models from the Polish Democratic Opposition," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3, no. 2 (1998).

5 V. Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Keane (Hutchinson, 1985).

6 There are a variety of labels that were used to denote this sphere, such as "parallel" or "independent society," "underground", or "alternative culture," "counterculture," "second society," and "parallel polis." Empirically, all these

labels refer to the same phenomenon of activities outside the official state-controlled public sphere; theoretically, however, they carry different ideas about the character and aims of such activities – a point I elaborate on later in the text.

[7] Václav Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *Social Research* 55, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 1988). Originally presented in a *samizdat* essay *The Parallel Polis* of 1977.

[8] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p. 28.

[9] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 227.

[10] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p. 41.

[11] George Konrad, *Antipolitics: An Essay*, trans. Richard E. Allen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

[12] Jiri Dienstbier in Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 231.

[13] Adam Michnik, "The Rebirth of Civil Society," *'Ideas of 1989' Public Lecture Series at the London School of Economics*, no. 20 October (1999).

[14] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 225, emphasis added.

[15] Konrad, Antipolitics: An Essay.

[16] Ibid., p. 96–119.

[17] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 245.

[18] "Kitchen debates" are a peculiar phenomenon in socialism, when people would gather informally at each other's homes to discuss philosophical, ethical or political issues, to read and talk about art and literature excluded from the official "culture."

[19] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 217.

[20] Ibid., p. 230.

[21] *Komitet Obrony Robotników* (Workers' Defense Committee)

[22] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 227.

[23] Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

[24] Leszek Kolakowski, *Toward a Marxist Humanism; Essays on the Left Today* (New York,: Grove Press, 1968), Leszek Kolakowski, "The Fate of Marxim in Eastern Europe," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 9 (1970), Leszek Kolakowski and Stuart Hampshire, *The Socialist Idea : A Reappraisal* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).

[25] Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1985), p. 148.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Leszek Nowak, *Power and Civil Society: Toward a Dynamic Theory of Real Socialism* (Westport: Greenwood, 1991), p. 64.

[28] Konrad, *Antipolitics: An Essay*.

[29] Jiří Dienstbier in Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 231.

[30] "The Russia Project: Whatever Happened to the Soviet Dissidents," Reese Ehrlich, [cited April 29, 2004. Available from http://www.russiaproject.org/transcripts/dissidents.html.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Another metaphor that is sometimes used to refer to this phenomenon is the "boiler room" subculture.

[33] For an ethnographic account of this life "*vnye*" (outside), see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

[34] As, for example, a legally prosecutable practice of telling jokes (*anekdoty*) in the Soviet Union was a way of expressing mockery and distaste for the official rhetoric of the state. See Yurchak, "The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretence, and the *Anekdot*," *Public Culture* 9, no. 2 (1997).

[35] Krzysztof Nowak, "Covert Repressiveness and the Stability of a Political System: Poland at the End of the Seventies," *Social Research* 55, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 1988): p. 184–187.

[36] Rudolf Battek, "Spiritual Values, Independent Initiatives, and Politics," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p. 101, emphasis added.

[37] Ibid., p. 97.

[38] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p. 27–29.

[39] Miroslav Kusy, "Chartism and 'Real Socialism'," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p. 165–166.

[40] Peggy Watson, "Explaining Rising Mortality among Men in Eastern Europe," *Social Science & Medicine* 41, no. 7 (1995).

[41] See for example Steven Sampson, "The Informal Sector in Eastern Europe," *Telos* 66, no. Winter (1986).

[42] This is evident in different post-socialist countries. Henk van de Graaf, an expert on Romania, notes the same attitudes in local administrations in Romania: "the mayor is corrupt but we have got asphalt on the streets" (November 9, 2005, personal communication).

[43] Mikko Lagerspetz, "From 'Parallel Polis' to 'the Time of the Tribes': Post-Socialism, Social Self-Organization and Post-Modernity," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 17, no. 2 (2001): p. 6.

[44] The difference between hidden and open corruption is that the former refers to the use of connections and network ties for accessing resources and benefits and is therefore often a straightforward survival strategy, whereas the latter is connected to abuse of political and administrative resources. Ibid.

[45] Janine R. Wedel, "The Ties That Bind," in *Polish Paradoxes*, ed. Stanislaw Gomulka and Anthony Polonsky (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 241.

[46] Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchanges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Alena V. Ledeneva, S. Lovell, and A. Rogatchevsii, eds., *Bribery and Blat in Russia* (Macmillan, 2000).

[47] For a detailed analysis of privatization in the former socialist states, see Anthony Levitas and Piotr Strzalkowski, "What Does '*Uwlaszczenie Nomenklatury*' [Propertization of Nomenklatura] Really Mean?" *Communist*

Economies 2, no. 3 (1990), David Stark and Laszlo Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For the analysis of elite networks in general, one of the core references is Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

48 Lagerspetz, "From 'Parallel Polis' to 'the Time of the Tribes': Post-Socialism, Social Self-Organization and Post-Modernity," p. 13.

49 Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1991).

50 While acknowledging a considerable amount of strict regulation and policing of East-West movement of people that persists up to this day, by saying "freely" I refer to an opportunity to travel without meticulous screening and close supervision by the KGB before as well as during the visit abroad, as was the case during the Soviet Union.

51 Alexei Yurchak, *The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology and Culture of the Last Soviet Generation* (Duke University, 1997), p. 5, emphasis in the original.

52 Jan Jirous in Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p. 227, emphasis added.

53 Nowak, "Covert Repressiveness and the Stability of a Political System: Poland at the End of the Seventies," p. 181.

54 Ibid., p. 201, emphasis in the original.

55 Ibid., p. 196.

56 Vaclav Havel, "The Postcommunist Nightmare," *The New York Review of Books*, 1993, p.8.

57 Joseph Brodsky and Vaclav Havel, "The Postcommunist Nightmare: A Discussion," *The New York Review of Books*, 1994.

58 Jirina Šiklová, "The 'Gray Zone' And the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia," *Social Research* 57, no. 2 (1990: Summer [September 1989]): p. 350.

59 Ibid., p. 354.

60 Ibid., p. 357.

61 Ibid., p. 353.

62 Michnik, "The Rebirth of Civil Society," p. 164.

63 Hana Havelková, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 68, emphasis added.

64 "Really existing socialism" is a label used by the Communist Party to indicate the particular condition that was said to have been established in the communist block and was believed to be a stage preceding communism.

65 Havelková, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p. 69.

66 K. Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Extinction of Leninism* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1992).

67 Watson, "Explaining Rising Mortality among Men in Eastern Europe."

68 For discussions of Western feminist theories see for example Sandra Harding, *Whose Enlightenment? Whose Postmodernism?: Feminist Epistemologies for Rainbow Politics* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies,

1991), Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002).

[69] Havelková, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p. 68.

[70] Peggy Watson, "Civil Society and the Politics of Difference in Eastern Europe," in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, ed. Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan, and Debra Keates (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p. 25, emphasis in the original.

[71] Havelková, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p. 69.

[72] Watson, "Explaining Rising Mortality among Men in Eastern Europe," p. 924.

[73] Havelková, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts."

[74] Murray Feshbach, "Ukraine: Health Problems and Priorities in a Regional Perspective," (USAID, 1995), M. Ellman, "The Increase in Death and Disease Under 'Katastroika'," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 18, no. 4 (1994).

[75] Watson, "Explaining Rising Mortality among Men in Eastern Europe."

[76] Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5, no. 2 (2003): p. 165.

[77] Some publications by Eastern European women reflect the tensions in this dialogue. See, for example, Jirina Šiklová, "Why We Resist Western-Style Feminism," *Transitions* 5, no. 1 (1998); Slavenka Drakulic, "What We Learned from Western Feminists," *Transitions* 5, no. 1 (1998); Mira Marody, "Why I Am Not a Feminist," *Social Research* 60, no. 4 (1993).

[78] Jirina Smejkalova-Strickland, "Revival? Gender Studies in the 'Other' Europe," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 4 (1995): p. 1001.

[79] Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 1 (Autumn) (1988).

[80] Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips, "Introduction," in *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, ed. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 2.

[81] Ibid., p. 4.

[82] Chandra Tolpade Mohanty, A. Russo, and L. Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991).

[83] Chandra Tolpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30, Autumn (1988).

[84] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 235.

[85] Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[86] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

[87] Ibid., p. 184.

[88] For example, the famous collections by Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Movement* (New York: Vintage, 1970) and Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (London: Doubleday, 1984).

[89] Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Movement*, Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*.

[90] For example, Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis, *Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

[91] Anne Sisson Runyan, "World-Traveling Feminisms in an Era of Global Restructuring," in *Partial Truths and the Politics of Community: Feminist Approaches to Social Movements, Community, and Power*, ed. Mary Ann Tetreault and Robin L. Teske (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

[92] Felly Nkweto Simmonds, "Who Are the Sisters? Difference, Feminism, and Friendship," in *Desperately Seeking Sisterhood: Still Challenging and Building*, ed. Magdalene Ann-Lygate, Chris Corrin, and Millsom S. Henry (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997).

3
Civil Society and Democratization Assistance

This chapter focuses on the rationale and practices of democracy promotion and support to civil society in the post-Cold War era, especially with respect to the formerly communist states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It highlights an increased interest by most donors in providing support to civil society and especially to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and discusses a number of unintended consequences that such NGO-ization has created in formerly communist states.

Making Democracy Happen: How and Why to Assist

> At the beginning of the twenty-first century, democracy promotion and assistance have become part of a global cultural script. There is almost no international organization, regional organization or state left that does not at least rhetorically proclaim its support of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and good governance.[1]

The (renewed) interest in democracy and civil society during the last two decades has characterized not only academic debates but also policy-making.[2] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, foreign assistance programs worldwide changed in many important respects, due to changing foreign policy objectives, reassessments of the past achievements, and financial imperatives.[3] In this chapter I explore the rationale for, main features of as well as some criticisms of democracy and civil society promotion theory and policy practice that characterize the post-Cold War era. I focus particularly on the formerly socialist states of Eastern Europe and Soviet Union.

Inspired by the recent wave of regime change in different parts of the globe, famously termed the “third wave” of democratization by Samuel Huntington,[4] numerous studies have been striving to

conceptualize the change towards democratic regimes, "to determine why countries do or do not evolve, consolidate, maintain, lose, and re-establish more or less democratic systems of government,"[5] and what makes for the successful consolidation of democracy. These attempts to conceptualize democratization struck a chord with many policy communities, in which a new vogue of promoting democracy worldwide was on the rise. Actors as varied as U.S. and European governments, multilateral, international, and nongovernmental as well as private organizations and academics were busy exploring the virtues of supporting democratization around the globe.

Despite the richness and diversity of democratization and democracy promotion studies, once applied to policy-making, this amalgam of ideas about what could happen after the collapse of a previous totalitarian or authoritarian regime and the role of external actors in subsequent processes quickly translated into a universalistic prescription that gained the label "transition paradigm."[6] The transition paradigm rested on the key assumption that any country that had been freed from any form of dictatorial rule was moving towards democracy and, thus, presented a case of a democratizing country or a country "in transition to democracy." According to Carothers, "in the first half of the 1990s […] numerous policy makers and aid practitioners reflexively labeled any formerly authoritarian country that was attempting some political liberalization as a 'transitional country'."[7] Transitional countries were perceived as being on a path towards establishing clearly defined democratic institutions and free market economies. They were being described and evaluated on the basis of the degree of progress made along these lines. The assumption was that all it took was the desire to abandon communist legacies and to embrace new democratic and capitalist ideals.[8] The paradigm postulated a so-called "snowballing" effect amongst democratizing countries, as a result of which countries could not help but democratize following the examples set by others.[9]

Within this paradigm, there was also a strong belief in "demonstration effects" – the effects produced by the exposure to and exchange with established democracies.[10] Knowledge of democratic principles and practices elsewhere was believed to inspire oppositional elites to pursue democratic change and reform. The assumption here was that Western democracies served as a standard to which other nations should aspire.[11] The main feature of the "transition paradigm" was its highly prescriptive character and its assumption that democracy could be attained by any country. This latter point drew on a "no preconditions" argument introduced as early as 1970, which set forth an optimistic view

that democracy could travel easily and "anyone can do it.[12] This argument originally applied to the unexpected break-ups of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes rather than to the actual processes of democratization. However, these two processes became largely conflated in subsequent scholarship representative of the transition paradigm thinking. According to the infamous argument by Francis Fukuyama, after the collapse of communism in different places around the world we were witnessing "the end of history" in the sense that history itself resolved the biggest twentieth century dispute about the best political system and capitalist liberal democracy proved to be the only alternative for the future. The demise of previous regimes was believed to lead to (at least the first stage of) democratization.[13] Democracy, it was further argued, did not need especially favorable conditions, and "genuine democrats need not precede democracy."[14] In other words, democracy was believed to be the result of an inevitable turn of history.

The "transition paradigm" inspired a number of distinctive characteristics of democracy promotion programs. Democratization was seen as evolving according to several universal stages borrowed from democratization studies,[15] such as the break-up of the previous regime, transition, and consolidation. For example, the USAID NGO Sustainability Indexes used "early transition, mid-transition, and consolidation" as the three stages of democratization according to which aid recipient countries were classified for the whole of the 1990s. The question raised by some critics was whether this concern with pre-defined stages could stand in the way of appreciating those developments that did not fall neatly into the paradigm. Moreover, democratic reform was always framed within the same set of institutions and did not attribute sufficient importance to contextual factors. The "transition paradigm" was criticized for its ethnocentric nature, which justified a simple transfer of (ideal) models based on the cultural experience and ideology of donor countries. This led to ignoring the local forms of civic activism as well as the cultural and historical context of a given polity and to underestimating local ownership and local autonomy.[16]

In line with the transition paradigm, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall it was believed that the "West" had a role to play in exposing the "East" towards the right ideas and ideals.[17] This East-West dialogue, however, has been everything but nonambivalent and unproblematic. The end of Cold War unleashed unrealistically high expectations on both sides about the envisioned success of economic and political reform, and the eventual discrepancy between the verbal and the

monetary support granted to countries undergoing reforms led to much subsequent disillusionment. Scholars point to the fact that the failures of assistance in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are also the result of inadequate funding.[18] The discourse of rebuilding "the other" part of Europe was organized around the metaphor of a new Marshall Plan,[19] which stood for the vision of remaking the European countries shattered by the cruel history of communism. The importance of this metaphor at the early stages of American assistance was extensively addressed by Wedel: "The words 'Marshall Plan' became almost a metaphor for America's role as a white knight. They carried a powerful sentimental appeal that called to mind one of America's most celebrated moments of global leadership and enlightened self-interest."[20]

The expectation was that Western assistance after 1989 would become a new "Marshall Plan" for quick and painless recovery; however, the actual structure and content of the assistance efforts were dramatically different from the actual Marshall Plan as well as from the rhetoric around it. Unlike the post-war Marshall Plan that consisted of grants to more than 90 percent, the post-1989 transition assistance largely consisted of technical assistance, export credits, loans, and debt relief.[21] While foreign consultants placed much emphasis on providing advice and "technical assistance," assuming that after decades under communism people lacked basic knowledge, Eastern Europeans – buying into the "Marshall Plan" rhetoric – were mostly counting on receiving large sums of grant money.

Post-1989 foreign assistance programs were designed and implemented as a contribution to the long-awaited East-West dialogue and exchange, cushioned by the rhetoric of "the return to Europe" of those historically and culturally European countries that had been long separated due to an accident of history.[22] "The prevailing idea, in both East and West, was that Eastern Europe should look to the West not only for financial help and political models but also for economic strategies and cultural identity."[23] However, the actual practice was largely compromised by the lack of knowledge and understanding of the new assistance setting. Moreover, the perceived "European-ness" of some postcommunist countries[24] masked the mistakes of assuming that the two sides were speaking the same language, while in reality there was much misinterpretation and a disturbing mismatch of expectations. The "West" and the "East" did not have the same understanding of what the priorities and directions for change should be and, therefore, how this change should be assisted. Assuming that democratizing countries should simply "catch up" with the model offered by assistance, the donors paid little attention to the overall political context in which this

model was introduced. In fact, the major problem with the assistance effort is not so much that it did not lead to the proclaimed results but that it did not try to develop an approach that would be relevant for the countries in question. Now after almost 20 years of democracy promotion in the formerly Soviet countries, the cumulative effect of democracy assistance is increasingly recognized as minimal.[25]

Indeed, it took almost two decades for policy-makers to realize how little relevance the transition paradigm had in the real world, even though already in the late 1990 some academics were pointing to the rise of (semi)authoritarian[26] or "hybrid"[27] regimes stuck somewhere halfway to democratization. More recently, there is a growing body of literature on the so-called "backlash against democracy promotion"[28] or what Larry Diamond has called the "reverse wave" of democratization.[29] According to Thomas Carothers, policy makers working on democracy assistance need to adapt adequately to what he has called "the challenges of the *new landscape of democratic stagnation* in the world."[30] Democracy is said to be largely stagnant, and suspicion of and hostility toward international democracy aid burgeon in different countries around the world.[31] Authoritarian leaders around the world have recently started to crack down on democracy-promotion efforts in their countries. Explicitly or not, authoritarian leaders have begun to publicly denounce Western democracy assistance as illegitimate political meddling, expelling or harassing Western NGOs and prohibiting local groups from taking foreign funds.[32] One of the most notorious examples is the controversial new law signed in 2006[33] by the then Russian President Vladimir Putin that imposed heightened controls on local and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the country.[34] Moreover, on July 2, 2005 the Shanghai Group comprising Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan released a joint declaration on "World Order in the 21st Century," in which they rejected the attempts to impost on them alien models of social and political systems, saying that "concrete models of social development cannot be exported" and that "the right of every people to its own path of development must be fully guaranteed."[35] Even though democracy promotion programs are becoming increasingly sophisticated, custom-made context-sensitive approaches are still rare in this field and the criticisms of an imposition of "one-size-fits-all" programs and schemes remain valid.

Making Democracy Work: Civil Society and NGO-ization

One of the most striking peculiarities of the post-Cold War assistance is its everlasting enthusiasm about civil society in different parts of the

world, and the fact that this enthusiasm remains widely shared by a variety of donors.[36] Van Rooy summarizes this enchantment with the concept of civil society in the following way: "the idea of civil society has become omnipresent because it rings most of the political, economic, and social bells."[37]

Civil society has gained such a prominent placed as it is believed to be essential for safeguarding the gains of democratization. Civil society is said to contribute to deepening, consolidating,[38] and maintaining democracy in a variety of ways. It allows holding state officials accountable in between elections, stimulates political participation, and increases citizens' political efficacy and skill as well as elucidating norms of tolerance, trust, moderation, and accommodation in society. It also provides additional channels of interest expression and pursuit for marginalized groups. In addition, civil society can breed new political leaders and generally enhance the accountability, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and legitimacy of the political system, granting citizens respect for the state and positive engagement with it. Last but not least, many civil society organizations are explicitly engaged with improving democracy through election monitoring, human rights campaigns, democratic reform initiatives, and anticorruption action.[39] In other words, there are few things civil society cannot do. This optimistic (over-)investment of the concept of civil society with the multiple democratic effects it can produce is one of the explanations for its emergence as a newly discovered missing link in progressive social development. This also explains its popularity as a foreign policy tool: civil society incorporates a variety of tasks and activities aimed at different social and political goals without entering the realm of party politics, which would make assistance politically sensitive.

There are also other, practical reasons for the attractiveness of the civil society concept to many donors, whose aid budgets now have gotten much smaller in the post-Cold War period, such as, for example, the simple cost-effectiveness that it offers. Unlike large-scale industry reorganization, banking restructuring, or engineering projects, support for NGOs does not require large inputs of capital; this allows both downsizing, and maintaining programs and influence.[40] For example, U.S. foreign aid shrank by approximately fifty per cent in real terms from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. "Civil society assistance made a virtue out of necessity by providing a theoretical justification for the small-scale assistance dictated by many donor budgets."[41]

Some scholars have, however, argued that the popularity of civil society in policy-making circles constitutes a problem rather than presents a solution:

> The problem with the language of civil society is that it is used to explain almost everything: social disintegration in North America, the democratic surges in China, the transformation in Eastern Europe, the relative wealth of Northern Italy, the efforts to remove Moi from his Kenyan throne, and the dominance of the free market, among other things.[42]

A similar worry is expressed in the book by Howell and Pearce who point to the depoliticizing impact created by the "conceptual elasticity" of the concept of civil society and especially by its usage in the realm of assistance.[43]

Another important tendency provoked by the recent popularity of civil society is a significant reduction in its meaning, which has been labeled by some authors as a tendency towards the NGO-ization of civil society observable beyond specific cases of civil society assistance.[44] This formalistic operationalization of civil society in terms of NGOs is reflected in some academic research, for example, the studies of the so-called "third sector" and its role in economic development conducted at the Johns Hopkins University Center for the Study of Civil Society.[45] Salamon and Anheier are taking a structuralist and instrumentalist approach to pursuing the world-wide study of organizations which are formal, private, non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary. These organizations, they argue, have only recently been conceptualized as a social sphere that goes beyond more traditional oppositions of market vs. state or public vs. private. Salamon and Anheier and their colleagues classify and analyze third sector organizations worldwide and measure their impact on social capital and economic and political development. Their argument for reclaiming civil society as a sector is that, although it takes different forms in different contexts, it has developed into a major social and economic force that accounts for a far larger share of national employment than is widely assumed. It also boasts substantial operating expenditures.[46] These studies helped accumulate expertise in quantifying the activities of certain organizational units attributed to civil society and a justification for developing the tools that would allow doing so across a variety of contexts, it also contributed immensely to the connection and often substitution that is made between civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Also in the post-Soviet Block, donors started supporting civil society by providing grants and technical support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was believed at the outset of assistance initiatives to the former Soviet Block that no local democratic

institutions were present in any form, which was of course true to a certain extent, given the nature of the previous regime. What was interesting, however, was that the absence of those democratic institutions was believed to be a sufficient proof of absence of any kind of civil society. This view seems at best limited, given that those totalitarian regimes did not collapse on their own but through considerable citizen pressure. Nonetheless, most donors were initially driven by the assumption that civil society had to be built afresh and reserved for themselves the privilege of defining what kind of civil society was to be built and how. Since Western-style NGOs were indeed non-existent, the success of civil society programs was, and still is, evaluated on the basis of quantitative growth of NGOs.

It has been argued that such institutionalization and formalization of civil society organizations around the world has created a number of problematic tendencies that are particularly acute in transitional or newly democratizing contexts. Contractual relationships between NGOs and their donors introduce undemocratic incentives for NGOs by emphasizing effective implementation over democratic practice, and the moral mission of NGOs is often in conflict with issues of organizational survival. NGOs tend to downplay difficulties or problems and to focus on easily quantifiable successes that can be attractive to the mass media in order to increase their profile and improve their track record. In the words of Simmons, "even legitimate, well-established groups sometimes seize on issues that seem to be designed more to promote their own image and fund-raising efforts than to advance the public interest."[47] One could mention here the Brent Spar incident or the failure to ratify the Convention on Biodiversity in the U.S. to illustrate how actions of a particular NGO or coalition can create more confusion or even harm than contribute to the common good. Simmons suggests that such incidents are "a useful reminder of the complexity of the role that these groups now play in international politics […]; hailed as the exemplars of grassroots democracy in action, many NGOs are, in fact, decidedly undemocratic and unaccountable to the people they claim to represent."[48] Their choice of local counterparts among the domestic civil society groups is also driven by pragmatic considerations; they may be in favor of working with grass-roots and community organizations in Russia and be wary of the same in some of the Central Asian countries, where grass-roots activism is often driven by nationalist and religious agendas. Women's NGOs may seek transnational coalitions, especially around such international campaigns as "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence," and yet show lack of interest in domestic women's groups that do not talk the language of "gender" or "activism."

In addition there are numerous challenges that are specific to civil society foreign assistance. Using her research of some Russian women's groups, Hemment has illustrated how the present "third-sectorization" of women's activism clashes with the visions and hopes of Russian activists.[49] It has been shown that certain structural features of civil society promotion programs create problematic outcomes and unintended consequences in very different contexts.[50] What is being criticized first and foremost is the overall approach and attitude that foreign donors demonstrate to the engagement of and support to domestic civil societies. Such donor efforts are largely based on paternalistic attitudes towards local actors. In the words of Mendelson, who provided a critical assessment of 20 years of such donor efforts in Russia,

> the supply by the democracy assistance industry has become […] disconnected from the demands of the local population – both in terms of issues it has focused on and the manner in which it has been delivered. […] [L]eaders from a wide swath of Russian civil society […] repeatedly rejected what in their view was seen as a paternalistic model positioning them as recipients of aid and instead advocated for equal partnerships in the design and delivery of projects.[51]

Such paternalistic attitudes are not only offensive or discouraging, they also justify top-down approaches to programming and implementation with little *ex ante* appraisal that fail to take into account local needs and priorities.[52] This leads to a poor contextualization of donor programs and often renders the outcome of this assistance opposite to what was intended, facilitating little more than maintaining the continued existence of institutions – foreign and domestic – involved.[53] In her study of environmental NGOs situated mainly in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Henry indicates that Western thinking and agendas often dominated the type, style and direction of international funding. Donors would "export" Western style techniques with no real knowledge or experience of individual NGOs in the recipient country.[54]

Poor correspondence between donors' programs and domestic realities is apparent with respect to issues and norms that are being promoted. Sundstrom has argued that when foreign assistance is employed in the pursuit of norms that are unfamiliar to local contexts, it fails to spark an NGO movement, regardless of the amount of funding from abroad. She contends that NGOs often only superficially adopt "international norms" in order to get funding from abroad and only rarely, if ever, impact public policy outcomes in their home states.[55]

Imposition of particular methods, formats, and forms of interaction has also been shown as problematic. Donor programs tend to transplant a particular set of organizational practices across different contexts. For example, Cooley and Ron examine three different cases of transnational assistance[56] to show and explain failures of implementation and negative (un)intended consequences. Drawing on their findings, the authors interpret some dysfunctional organizational behavior as a rational response to systematic and predictable institutional pressures to which international organizations are subjected, such as competition for resources, hierarchical relationships, organizational insecurity, and fiscal uncertainty.[57] Henderson has reached similar conclusions for Russian NGOs. She contends that, despite the funders' self-proclaimed moral intentions, they helped institutionalize a vertical and isolated (although well-funded) civic community based on "principled clientelism."[58] According to Henderson, this is a direct result of the so-called "grant game,"[59] which consists of "a set of incentives and sanctions that encourages a separate pattern of behavior that undermines rather than facilitates civic behavior" and impedes collective action.[60] She also pays attention to idiosyncrasies between the donor's organizational styles and those of the recipients of assistance and argues that they predetermine the outcomes to a greater extent than proclaimed agendas and envisioned goals. She finds, for example, that "the goals of many Western agencies were to facilitate small, grassroots initiatives. Yet Russian civic groups tried to mimic the organizational style of the Western assistance agencies operating in Russia, which are wealthy, centralized, and bureaucratized 'corporate' NGOs."[61]

NGO projects tend to be devoid of mechanisms that would allow their participants to effectively learn from their failures and to incorporate those lessons in their future activities. The fact that "projects" are oriented towards reporting quantifiable results within a short-term framework constrains the range of options as to what NGOs can be meaningfully doing with the help of foreign funding.[62] Mendelson points to the inherent contradiction of this approach that requires "quantitative measurements of qualitative transformations" and thus builds on the wrong premise.[63] In addition, being mostly targeted at the short-term, assistance projects often do not allow Western donors and their implementing partners to go beyond a set of well-established links with a few domestic NGOs.

It goes without saying that donor projects risk creating strong dependencies of local civic groups on their funding. According to several comparative studies, the dependencies of NGOs on their donors in these otherwise very different contexts are so strong because their

survival is predicated on their interaction with the donors and not with fellow-citizens or institutions. NGOs tend to prioritize the acquisition of donor funding at the expense of everything else.[64] These NGOs have become increasingly detached from their environment, forming connections with the donor rather than with the local population, thus making it less likely that the funding received will result in the widening of citizen participation or the bolstering of civil society. These practices flourish at the expense of the creation of genuine social movements around truly pressing issues.[65] Scholars increasingly talk about the "ghettoized" position of NGOs in the former Soviet Union in the sense that they are closer to their donors and other transnational partners than to their government or society.[66] This has been shown true also for civic groups that used to have a wide societal base before entering into a long-standing relationship with foreign donors.[67]

The impact of these tendencies on the nature of domestic civil societies cannot be underestimated. Foreign assistance has created divisive effects among domestic civic groups with clear barriers between "ins" and "outs."[68] Rather than expanding civil society, the system of competition for foreign grants has forced groups which might otherwise work together into a competitive relationship.[69] As Henderson concludes, despite many similarities and complicating factors, the gap between home-grown civic groups and NGOs that are mainly provided for by Western assistance agencies is disturbingly big. She shows that

> The activities, goals, and structure of groups that receive foreign assistance differ substantially from those who rely primarily on domestic funding […]. Groups that had received funding tend to reflect the post-materialist values of the donor, such as concerns for gender equity, environmentalism, or respect for human rights, rather than the survivalist, materialist bent of many organizations that rely solely on domestic sources of financial support.[70]

The stronger and richer NGOs are inevitably setting the terms and the format for interaction with their counterparts. Moreover, due to their interest in the available resources, smaller NGO are prepared to compromise on their own visions and missions and are likely to downplay the irrelevance of the plans of action proposed from the outside. Practically, this can create undemocratic hierarchical relationships between different NGOs (especially between international and local ones); it can lead to the strengthening of certain local NGOs in a way that creates boundaries and inequalities within the local civil society and supports a local NGO elite.[71] Foreign assistance is attributed

the most blame for fostering internal rivalries, jealousies, and overall divisiveness among and within groups.[72] As Henderson puts it:

> Many groups, funded and unfunded, tended to be small, relatively distrustful of others, and focused on guarding their civic turf. What was surprising, however, was that foreign aid was not necessarily ameliorating these problems; rather, it seemed to be *exacerbating* them, despite its intentions to the contrary.[73]

After two decades of foreign assistance to the former Soviet Union, Mendelson concludes:

> Western NGOs should not be held accountable for the spread and the scope of political transformation or lack thereof in specific states. They should, however, be held responsible for their analysis of what is most feasible and needed in a given situation, in other words, for the strategies they use to pursue their goals.[74]

In addition to such findings of broad-scale effects, there is also extensive literature on the new identities inspired by foreign assistance. A "new" generation of professionals is said to have moved to the foreground. These people, sometimes referred to as "fixers" or brokers, became proficient in facilitating the "dialogue" between East and West or sometimes "explaining" the East to the West. Most of the time these were people who spoke good English, mastered the conventions of "Western style" communication, and knew how to get things going locally while at the same time projecting the right image of professionals to their foreign counterparts.[75] These people formed a new "civic elite" or even a "civic oligarchy."[76] Now, two decades into the "civil society building effort," this group has become increasingly visible – "the indigenous development professionals, an aspiring elite, who are part of the human fallout of international development aid."[77] In the words of Hann,

> the most enduring effect of the aid effort so far has been the formation of a new local elite of "development professionals." The trouble is that the value produced by these people takes the form of project "deliverables" that are unlikely to have any bearing on the deteriorating living conditions of the mass of the population. Meanwhile the young professionals imbibe a set of Western values and earn Western salaries. They become unemployable in their local societies.[78]

Mandel echoes this observation by saying that "local people trained in the servicing of the aid industry have been rendered unsuitable to work for their own governments" due to the pay differences but also due to the fact that this new cadre has been socialized into different organizational structures with different work styles and ethics.[79] She is particularly outspoken in her dissatisfaction with the role played by this new elite: "The local development workers have become proselytes of the international development missionaries, and the rhetoric of civil society, privatization and democratization is their catechism."[80]

What comes across as somewhat ironic is that, while on the one hand donor activities are biased towards certain kinds of civic activists, donors are, on the other hand, often dissatisfied with the local people they have to work with, reporting some kind of "donor fatigue" and dissatisfaction with the delivered results.[81] Often putting the blame on Soviet or other legacies, they fail to see their own contribution to the consolidation of the "civic elite" they interact with as well as the larger impact on the nature of citizenship and the face of civil society in recipient countries.

Notes

[1] Amichai Magen, Thomas Risse, and Michael McFaul, eds., *Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law. American and European Strategies* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 263.

[2] For a comprehensive analysis of international efforts to promote democracy worldwide since the post-World War II period, see Peter J. Schraeder, ed., *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric Vs Reality* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

[3] For a detailed overview, please consult the following volumes: Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), T. Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), Karen Dawisha, ed., *The International Dimension of Postcommunist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), Kevin F.F. Quigley, "Lofty Goals, Modest Results: Assisting Civil Society in Eastern Europe," in *Funding Virtue: Civil Society and Democracy Promotion*, ed. Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

[4] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[5] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p. 7.

[6] A term coined by Thomas Carothers. Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002).

[7] Ibid., p. 6.

[8] It is precisely for the reasons described below that some authors reject the term "transition" altogether; for example, Barbara Einhorn has argued for the term "transformation" to indicate the departure from Western notions of a historical progression from state socialism to liberal democracy. See Barbara Einhorn, "Discussant's Comments," in *Making Transition Work for Women in Europe and Central Asia: World Bank Discussion Paper 411*, ed. Marina Lazreg (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000).

[9] Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Upon closer inspection, this line of argumentation was supported only by few and ambivalent examples of formerly colonial states, which were argued to be more successful in their democratic reforms after longer colonial rule because they had more time to embrace liberal and democratic values from their British or French colonizers. The examples named were India, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, or Senegal – as quoted in Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, pp. 48–49. These authors went on to argue that shorter colonial rule in Africa could be used as an explanation for a weaker democratic legacy in some African countries.

[12] Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Comparative Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. April (1970).

[13] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 3rd ed. (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1992).

[14] Giuseppe Di Palma, "Why Democracy Can Work in Eastern Europe," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 261.

[15] Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994).

[16] Evans, Henry, and McIntosh Sundstrom, eds., *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*.

[17] Some light has been shed within the international socialization literature on whether and how international norms can be adopted in different transition countries and the conditions and scope of influence of these norms on political systems, processes, and policies. Ronald H. Linden, ed., *Norms and Nannies: The Impact of International Organizations on the Central and East European States* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

[18] Sarah Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 48, no. 3, May/June (2001), p. 24.

[19] The "Marshall Plan" (the Economic Recovery Program) was a plan for the reconstruction of Western European nations in the aftermath of World War II presented by the Secretary of State George Carlett Marshall in 1947. According to this plan, 17 Western European nations were to set up a program for reconstruction, while the United States was to provide financial assistance. The aid was to be channeled for food programs, repair of devastation caused by war, and economic reconstruction. The plan was aimed at two broad goals: to prevent the spread of communism in Western Europe and to stabilize the international order in a way favorable to the development of political democracy and free-market economies. The Marshall Plan was formally in operation during the period of April 1948 to December 1951 and involved USD 13.3 billion, mostly in direct grants but also in loans. It is believed to have been the most successful and the most expensive peacetime foreign policy initiative to date. It is also important in a historical sense since it paved the way for other forms of international cooperation such as the OECD and NATO. It is important because it established a certain framework of relations between the United States and the European nations. The success of the Marshall Plan inspired President Harry S. Truman to extend it to less developed countries throughout the world under the Point Four Program initiated in 1949.

[20] Janine R. Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe* (Palgrave, 2001), p. 17.

[21] Tanya Narozhna, "Failed Expectations: Or What Is Behind the Marshall Plan for Post-Socialist Reconstruction," *Kakanien Revisited*, (November 2001), Melanie S. Tammen, "Aiding Eastern Europe: The Leveraged Harm Of 'Leveraged Aid'," *Policy Analysis*, no. 139 (September 1990).

[22] Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe*.

[23] Ibid., p. 16.

[24] For a detailed account of the concept of a "return to Europe" in Ukraine see Larissa M. L. Zaleska-Onyshkevych and Maria G. Rewakowicz, eds., *Contemporary Ukraine on the Cultural Map of Europe* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009).

[25] Sarah Mendelson, "From Assistance to Engagement: A Model for a New Era in U.S.-Russian Civil Society Relations. A Report of the CSIS Human Rights & Security Initiative," (CSIS, 2009), p. 3.

[26] Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged. The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003).

[27] Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6, (Nov. –Dec. 1997).

[28] Thomas Carothers, "The Backlash against Democracy Promotion," *Foreign Affairs* 2006, Carl Gershman and Michael Allen, "The Assault on Democracy Assistance," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 2, (April 2006).

[29] Quoted in Peter Burnell and Richard Youngs, eds., *New Challenges to Democratisation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

[30] Thomas Carothers, "Revitalizing Democracy Assistance: The Challenge of USAID," in *Carnegie Report* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), p. 1, emphasis added.

[31] For the most updated and detailed overview of problems with democracy promotion around the world, see the following edited volume: Burnell and Youngs, eds., *New Challenges to Democratisation.*

[32] Carothers, "The Backlash against Democracy Promotion."

[33] Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 18-FZ "On Introducing Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation," January 10, 2006.

[34] Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

[35] As quoted in Gershman and Allen, "The Assault on Democracy Assistance."

[36] For an overview see Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration.*

[37] Alison Van Rooy, "The Art of Strengthening Civil Society," in *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The Politics and Promise*, ed. Alison Van Rooy (London: Earthscan, 1998), p. 196.

[38] Consolidation has been defined as fixing democratic rules and institutions in such a way that they gain primary influence on the behavior of political actors as well as strengthening civil society and letting democratic values and norms penetrate the social fabric – as argued in Guiseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). As a result, democracy becomes "so broadly and profoundly legitimate and so habitually practiced and observed that it is very unlikely to break down" Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, p. 53.

[39] Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, p. 29.

[40] Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*.

[41] Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, p. 8.

[42] Van Rooy, "The Art of Strengthening Civil Society," p. 199.

[43] Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*.

[44] Sabine Lang, "The NGO-ization of Feminism," in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, ed. Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan, and Debra Keates (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), James Richter, "Promoting Civil Society? Democracy Assistance and Russian Women's Organizations," *Problems of Post-Communism* 49, no. 1 (2002).

[45] Lester M. Salamon and Helmut Anheier, "The Civil Society Sector," *Society: Social Science and Modern Society* 34, no. 2 (1997), Lester M. Salamon and Helmut Anheier, *The Emerging Sector Revisited: A Summary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, Center for Civil Society Studies, 1999), Lester M. Salamon, "The Rise of Nonprofit Sector," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 4 (1994).

[46] Salamon and Anheier, "The Emerging Sector Revisited: A Summary," p. 61.

[47] P.J. Simmons, "Learning to Live with NGOs," *Foreign Policy*, no. 112 (1998), p. 90.

[48] Ibid., p. 83.

[49] Julie Hemment, *Empowering Women in Russia: Activism, Aid, and NGOs*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[50] Chris M. Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Alison Van Rooy, ed., *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The Politics and Promise* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1998), David Lehrer and Anna Korhonen, eds., *Western Aid in Postcommunism: Effects and Side-Effects* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Paulina Pospieszna, "Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10 (2007).

[51] Mendelson, "From Assistance to Engagement: A Model for a New Era in U.S.-Russian Civil Society Relations. A Report of the CSIS Human Rights & Security Initiative," p. 4.

[52] Peter Burnell, "From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion," *Political Studies* (2007), see also Gordon Crawford, "Promoting Democracy from Without, Learning from Within (Part I)" *Democratisation* 10, no. 1 (2003).

[53] Jo Crotty, "Managing Civil Society: Democratisation and the Environmental Movement in a Russian Region," *Communist and Postcommunist Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003), Laura A. Henry, "The Greening of Grassroots Democracy? The Russian Environmental Movement, Foreign Aid, and Democratization," *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Affairs Working Paper Series*, no. Spring 2001 (2001), Armine Ishkanian, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia* (Routledge, 2008).

[54] Henry, "The Greening of Grassroots Democracy? The Russian Environmental Movement, Foreign Aid, and Democratization."

[55] Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, "Foreign Assistance, International Norms, and NGO Development: Lessons from the Russian Campaign," *International Organization* 59, no. 2 (2005), Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[56] The three cases are: (1) economic technical assistance by for-profit corporations operating in Kyrgyzstan under contracts by Western governments, International Financial Institutions, and the UN; (2) refugee aid by INGOs in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire); and (3) IO and INGO efforts to protect prisoners of war in Bosnia.

[57] Alexander Cooley, "International Aid to the Former Soviet States: Agent of Reform or Guardian of the Status Quo?" *Problems of Post-Communism* 47, no. 4 (2000), Alexander Cooley and James Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action," *International Security* 27, no. 1 (2002).

[58] Sarah Henderson, "Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and Nongovernmental Organization Sector in Russia," *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2002), p. 140.

[59] Others have called it "project life" of domestic NGOs, for example, Steven Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania," in *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, ed. Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

[60] Henderson, "Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and Nongovernmental Organization Sector in Russia," p. 146.

[61] Ibid., p. 143.

[62] For evidence based on ethnographic research, consult the following volumes: Chris M. Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2002), Hann and Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, Sarah L. Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[63] Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p. 23.

[64] Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, B. Jancar-Webster, "Environmental Movement and Social Change in the Transition Countries," *Environmental Politics* 7, no. 1 (1998), Richter, "Promoting Civil Society? Democracy Assistance and Russian Women's Organisations."

[65] Jo Crotty, "Making a Difference? NGOs and Civil Society Development in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 1 (2009).

[66] Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, eds., *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[67] Benoit Challand, *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude* (Routledge, 2008).

[68] M. L. Gray, "Creating Civil Society? The Emergence of NGOs in Vietnam," *Development and Change* 30, no. 4 (1999).

[69] Evans, Henry, and McIntosh Sundstrom, eds., *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*.

[70] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, pp. 9–10.

[71] For more empirical examples from the field of transnational women's mobilization see Jael Silliman, "Expanding Civil Society, Shrinking Political Spaces: The Case of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations," *Social Politics* 6, no. 1 (1999), Jill Bystydzienski and Joti Sekhon, eds., *Democratization and Women's Grass-Roots Movements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), Amrita Basu, ed., *The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995).

[72] Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition*.

[73] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, p. 11, emphasis added.

[74] Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p. 24.

[75] Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe*, Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania."

[76] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations.*

[77] Ruth Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society," in *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia*, ed. Chris Hann (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 279.

[78] Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, p. 277.

[79] Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society," p. 287.

[80] Ibid., p. 293.

[81] This is particularly visible in the analysis by Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania."

4
The History of Women's NGO Activism in Ukraine

This chapter provides a historical overview of different forms of women's activism in Ukraine. In particular, it highlights a number of issues that have been on the agenda of women's movements in Ukraine in different periods of time. Some of these issues, such as for example, family and motherhood protection, did not resonate much with the agendas of Western feminists who were eager to collaborate with Ukrainian women after the end of Cold War. These diverging perceptions of priorities for women's activism created a number of misunderstandings and frustrations that remain visible to date. In addition, the institutional forms of women's activism changed considerably after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The last two decades are characterized by the disappearance of broad social movements and proliferation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A number of important characteristics of the NGO sector that developed in Ukraine after 1989 are discussed.

Women's Activism in Ukraine

The first wave of women's activism in Ukraine began as early as the 1860s with women struggling to obtain access to higher education. The activities of women's clubs and unions of the time, both in Naddnipryanska Ukraine (eastern and central parts), which was part of the Russian empire, and in Western Ukraine, which then mostly belonged to Austria, were similar to those in other parts of Europe. After the Bolshevik Revolution, however, the two regions diverged strongly: whereas in Western Ukraine many women's organizations continued functioning till World War II (they also maintained closer ties with diasporic and other European women's organizations), Soviet Ukraine denounced those organizations as bourgeois, and in their place a new revolutionary women's movement was created. The period from 1917 to

1929 in Soviet Ukraine was characterized by the proclaimed "general emancipation." Equality of men and women was an important issue for the new regime. Women's issues and women's activism were institutionalized in the 1920s in the form of the *zhenotdel* (women's department) in the Communist Party. The department was effective in passing a series of laws on marriage, abortion, and property rights for women.[1]

Stalin's rule set an end to these developments and started the so-called "invisible years" for women's issues.[2] The *zhenotdel* was abolished in 1930s, when Stalin declared that *zhenskii vopros* (the "woman question") had been successfully resolved. Instead, a new section – *zhensector* – was introduced for purely propagandistic goals. It was not before the period of the "Khrushchev's thaw" that *zhensovety* (women's councils) were created with an explicit agenda of improving the position of women as a response to the recognition that more could be done to ensure women's political and economic leadership.[3] The councils, however, remained closely directed by the Communist Party and their agenda was predicated on official ideology. An important task of these councils in the international arena was to be a mouthpiece for the supposedly emancipated Soviet women and, thus, to show that the Soviet state surpassed capitalist countries in its treatment of women. The supposed progress in the position of women was framed as another manifestation of the superior nature of the socialist state. Any social or political criticism on the real position of women was therefore inconceivable within the official discourse.

As part of his *perestroika* and *glastnost* reforms, the last Secretary General of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, authorized the establishment in 1987of the *Rada Zhinok Ukrainy* – a separate Council of Women of Ukraine, which was headed by Maria Orlyk, a long-term party functionary. "Gorbachev hoped that women would be able to help promote his policies of reforming the ruling structures, not replacing them."[4] However, as subsequent events showed, the council did not mobilize women around party lines, and many councils did not try to push for the party agenda beyond what was compulsory.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Council of Women of Ukraine as well as other formerly state-organized women's organizations redefined themselves as independent organizations as soon as it was possible for them to do so. The *Rada Zhinok Ukrainy* renamed itself the *Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy* (Confederation of Women of Ukraine). Similar developments were happening in Russia, where the Soviet Women's Committee re-emerged as the Union of Women of Russia. *Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy* redefined its goals as attaining equality between

men and women; protecting women from negative consequences of economic transition; and promoting the establishment and development of women's small businesses. It opened its own enterprise, *Kalina*, and regularly conducted professional trainings for women. Many former *zhensovety* continued their work on similar social agendas: they organized around providing support for the handicapped, working with children from disadvantaged families and orphans, or running soup kitchens for the homeless, for example.

An important feature of organizations like *Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy*, which is often overlooked by pro-Western feminist researchers, is the considerable amount of local expertise, activist experience, and human resources that they possess. The Soviet Women's Committee, for example, had a long record of advocating peace as a women's issue at international fora and maintained extensive links with international women's organizations. Their active members developed the identity of high profile activists explicitly oriented towards mainstream politics. This is partly an explanation for the fact that women's organizations that grew from those long-standing official structures are now showing clear concern with nationwide activism and are relatively successful in making their voices heard in mainstream politics. During the Gorbachev years towards the end of the Soviet era, the Soviet Women's Committee was awarded 75 seats in the Congress of People's Deputies.[5] It continued by organizing a political block, "Women of Russia," that managed to elect 21 women to the State Duma (Russian Parliament) in the election of December 1993.

The "wind of change" in the late 80s also brought about new oppositional movements, of which the popular front *Rukh* (Movement) in Ukraine is one prominent example. A women's group, *Zhinocha Hromada* (Women's Community), headed by a prominent dissident, Maria Drach, emerged from within this movement; in the fall of 1992 it became an independent organization with a broad grassroots base in Ukraine, in the Russian Federation, and in Eastern Europe. One of its main emphases is on state policies that would improve the welfare of children. It clearly sees itself as keeping alive the traditions of Ukrainian women's organizations of both pre-1914 and pre-1939 vintage. Remarkably, it also serves as an umbrella organization for women's organizations of ethnic minorities in Ukraine (such as Jewish, Tatar, or Korean women).[6]

Around the same time, independent women's groups were being formed in small towns across Western Ukraine. By January 1992 representatives of the branches of the independent Women's Union *Soiuz Ukrainok*, headed by Athena Pashko, wife of prominent

opposition leader and presidential candidate Viacheslav Chornovil, convened in Kiev to claim to be "the heir to the democratic traditions of the Women's Union that functioned in Ukraine since 1917 and had been liquidated as the result of Bolshevik occupation."[7] The Women's Union of Ukraine, which was recognized by the International Council of Women, existed during the period of the Ukrainian National Republic (formed in 1917); after the Bolsheviks came to power in Ukraine, it continued its activities in exile in the 1920s.[8] Then the organization's primary focus was on the revival of Ukrainian cultural heritage and national values; it was engaged in much charity and educational work. Another influential all-Ukrainian women's organization that works to promote Ukrainian culture, traditions, and history is *Olena Teliha Society*. There are also other ethnic women's groups that work to promote their indigenous cultures such as *Rumunski Pani* (Romanian Ladies) in Chernivtsi, the Jewish women's community *Myloserdya* (Compassion) in Kiev, or the League of Crimean Tatar Women in Simferopol, among others.

One of the first and most impressive instances of independent women's mobilization in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a movement that mobilized in response to the abuses in the army as well as recruitment and deployment rules. Mothers of draftees became the first effective nation-wide pressure group called *Komitet Soldatskykh Materiv* (the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers). In addition to the abuses by the higher-rank commanders, which persist in the army to the present day, there was a growing concern about the rules according to which soldiers were serving in Soviet republics other than their own or could even be sent directly to war. In the times of the disastrous war in Afghanistan, this meant that 16- to 18-year-old boys without any military experience were sent directly to the front lines; in Russia this problem persisted throughout the 1990s during military conflicts in the Caucasus. In Ukraine public uproar also grew over the fact that recruits were used to clean up the nuclear waste after the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986.[9]

The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers first organized in Moscow and held its first mass demonstrations there in 1989. In September 1990 the Committee held its first All-Union Congress in Moscow, demanding of Gorbachev to create a Presidential Inquiry Commission to investigate the abuses in the army. Despite the unprecedented nature of this protest, achievements were moderate. It was not before November that Gorbachev authorized a commission with limited competence, making sure not to undermine the authority of the military. Out of 107 cases investigated, it was only in four that the commission was able to prove

that the real cause of death of the recruits was mistreatment by superiors. This became a sobering experience for the Ukrainian faction of the movement, and some argued that it was the disillusionment with the All-Union army response that motivated those women, led by Liudmyla Trukhmanova and Valentyna Artamonova, to express their support for Ukrainian independence and an independent Ukrainian army. The Ukrainian faction of the Committee held its mass rally in Zaporizhzhia in August 1991, within days of the proclamation of Ukrainian independence on August 24, 1991.[10]

Although not having any strong affinities with nationalist groups, these women reasoned that it would be easier to pressure the Ukrainian national army than that of the whole Soviet Union. Even more importantly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union would mean the end of imperialistic wars that were taking so many lives. In the words of one of the women activists: "We mothers finally realized that the Soviet Union is such a huge state that such atrocious actions could take place and it would be impossible to prove anything […] and so we began the struggle for our independent state and for our army."[11]

Concern with the welfare of children and families due to the difficult socio-economic situation, environmental problems, and the deteriorating health care system was behind a variety of self-help groups and organizations that focused on social issues. Issues of child protection were forcefully being put on the agenda of many smaller groups, which began forming Associations of Mothers of Large Families throughout the Newly Independent States. In Ukraine such an Association was officially formed in 1993; by 1996 it had 25 local chapters around the country.[12]

Mobilization of women across the country culminated in a major political demonstration with an explicitly political agenda. Held in Kiev on the International Women's Day, March 8, 1991, it brought together the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the Union of Women of Ukraine, the newly formed Committee of Families with Many Children, an umbrella organization for associations of mothers with more than five children, and Mama-86, a group of mothers whose children had been born around the time of Chernobyl.

Most of these early initiatives had an explicitly maternalist focus; values of motherhood and child protection proved to be the most productive frame for women's mobilization at the time. These were effectively tied into the then powerful nationalist discourse of Ukrainian revival, even though this should not be seen as a purely strategic choice of framing and agenda-setting. Strategic or not, however, this connection clearly irritated many Western feminist observers, for whom

the frame resonated with a "backward" and "traditionalist" period that preceded the "real" emancipation of women in the West. Women's protests of the time were described with a measure of condescension, if not pity, as immature, almost expressions of "false consciousness." For example, Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak writes: "In the euphoria of the days of the collapse of the Soviet Union the organizations of women that emerged often *returned* to the rhetoric of the nineteenth century of the woman as the keeper of the hearth, the solace of the heart, the giver of life, the guardian of children."[13]

From this arises a certain ambivalence that is evident in the literature on how to categorize different women's groups.[14] Women's activism in the former Soviet Union is often described as an opposition between the "old" or "traditional" women's groups and the "new" women's groups – groups and organizations that were formed as a result of post-1991 interactions with Western counterparts.[15] "New" women's organizations had no ties to ex-Soviet structures nor were they connected to the nationalist project. This way of classifying women's groups reflects a general ideological bias in the West, which defines civil society as an inherently "apolitical" concept. It is seen as a sphere that cuts across and goes beyond traditional political cleavages, hence its apparent popularity both on the left and on the right. Such accounts also tend to undervalue women's mobilization that occurred on the basis of "regressive" traditional roles or that originated in Soviet organizational structures. These are, however, the cleavages that are constructed by Western observers rather than local women themselves. Instead, Ukrainian women-activists are concerned about strong competition between NGOs as well as different degrees of access to resources and to emerging power networks. These concerns are often stronger than ideological differences between women's organizations.

The interaction between local women's groups and their Western (often feminist) counterparts – Western women who came to work in the Newly Independent States in the early 1990s – has proven highly important for the institutionalization of certain forms of women's activism. Following the influential work by Keck and Sikkink, some scholars suggest calling them "feminist moral entrepreneurs" – a group of women who see their goal in building organizations and discourses that have moral implications.[16] Undoubtedly, these women have played an important role in the making of "new" women's activism in the post-Soviet space. A major institutional outcome of this interaction was the U.S.-NIS Women's Consortium, a large umbrella organization that connected women's groups all over the former Soviet Union, American women's NGOs, and, most importantly, major donors such as the

Eurasia Foundation and USAID.[17] The idea of founding a consortium among women's organizations in the former Soviet Union and women's NGOs in the U.S. came about around the time some American women activists and development professionals came to Moscow to participate in conferences on "transition" and the role of women. Their travel was largely supported by USAID and the MacArthur Foundation, as well as some other donors eager to develop a cohort of experts on the region with field experience. Many had a background in the Peace or Green movements; others were career people from the field of development. A woman who played a pivotal role in networking with the Russians and lobbying for a common project on the Hill was Elise Fiber Smith.[18] On the Russian side, the key person was Elena Ershova, who had a background in U.S. studies with a specialization in mass movements and social protests; on the Ukrainian side it was Olena Suslova, formerly a member of *Soiuz Ukrainok*.

Although initially Moscow-based, the Russian and Ukrainian part of the Consortium split into two around 1995, partly due to the pressure for independence of the part of its Ukrainian members. In 1996, under the leadership of Ershova, a non-profit Consortium of non-governmental women's associations was officially registered in Russia.[19] At the same time USAID funded a West-NIS Women's Consortium that included organizations in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. This latter grant was largely biased towards Ukrainian organizations, which reflected the tremendous importance given to the country in all of USAID's assistance projects for the region.

At early stages the activities of the Consortium were largely aimed at training women in technical skills pertaining to fund-raising and running an NGO. This was unanimously pushed for by the Western and the local sides of the Consortium.[20] The idea was to teach women how to write projects that would be acceptable to any Western donor, by using application guidelines from the Global Fund for Women as a template. Russians and Ukrainians were eager to embrace this knowledge. According to Sperling, Ferree, and Risman, who studied the Russian side of the Consortium, "technology transfer rather than promoting a particular set of projects" – that is, an emphasis on skills rather than agendas – came out of the seminars in different parts of Russia and was pushed for by Russians.[21]

The Rise and Development of NGOs in Ukraine

General legislative change has been crucial for the overall development of civic organizations. Two important laws: the law "On Citizens'

Associations" (in 1992) and the law "On Charity and Charitable Foundations" (in 1997) enabled the growth of officially registered civic organizations. Specifically, the peak in the formal registration of women's organizations occurred around the mid-1990s, partly as a result of preparation for and of the after-effects of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In recent years, the overall growth of women's NGOs has subsided. As one activist told me, "There's a sort of a crisis now. There are fewer grants and there are no more new organizations."[22] The projects implemented by women's NGOs are more thematically focused and there are fewer differences between "old" and "new" organizations in terms of their activities and engagement with the donors. Despite these complaints, the growth of civic organizations in Ukraine remains quite sustained up to date. To illustrate the growth, some numbers are compiled in Table 1 below.

However, the numbers themselves are a poor indicator of what the NGO boom is about. It was estimated that by 2006, only 4000 – 5000 NGOs could be considered active and had been known for more than two years.[23] According to my field research in different Ukrainian cities, about 50 percent of officially registered NGOs exist only on paper (the so-called "briefcase" NGOs). For example, during my field visit to the city of Kharkov in 2002 I did the following recount of women's NGOs that were registered with the municipality. The list consisted of 52 NGOs, out of which at the moment of my inquiry 17 did not exist; 11 were in reality no more than 4 with several "official" faces each; and only 5 turned out to be active organizations, whose set-up and activities corresponded directly to what the official registry presented. The remaining 19 NGOs were private creations by one or two energetic personalities. Such MONGOs (My Own NGOs), as I suggest calling them, were only operational when and if their creator thought it useful. In the majority of cases an NGO was composed only by a few women equipped with an Internet connection and a fax machine.[24]

In addition to often existing only on paper, NGOs are not evenly distributed across the country. According to the data collected by a research team of Ukrainian civic leaders, considerably fewer NGOs are found in the agricultural areas (36–41 of officially registered NGOs per 100,000 people); in the developed areas the number of NGOs is higher (50–68 NGOs per 100,000 people); and the highest rate is found in the capital (87 NGOs per 100,000 people). Lately, although disparities between NGOs located in larger cities and those in rural areas remain considerable especially in terms of technical capacity, overall, this gap seem to be narrowing. It has also been noted that the increase in numbers and capacity of NGOs in Kiev has slowed down whereas the

numbers of strong NGOs outside of the capital has been picking up.[25] Most NGOs operate within a particular city (39 percent), 33 percent of NGOs work within the whole *oblast*, and 8 percent have national and international status (those are mainly based in major cities, such as Kiev, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odessa, or Donetsk).[26]

Table 1: Quantitative Dynamics of NGO Development in Ukraine

Year	Number of NGOs[27]
1991	319
1992	1, 356
1993	3, 257
1994	5, 302
1995	8, 352
1998	17, 781
1999	22, 263
2001	25, 500
2002	30, 000
2005	41, 000
2006	47, 000
2008	53, 496
2009	63, 000

This data is compiled from published research reports by the Innovation and Development Center, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences, SOCIS, the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society, Counterpart Creative Center and USAID NGO Sustainability Indexes over the period 1994–2008 as well as some data from the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine (www.ukrstat.gov.ua).

However, the numbers shown in the table above cannot be treated as a direct indication of civic activism writ large; in fact overall civic participation in Ukraine remained low throughout the 1990s.[28] The levels of membership and the numbers of volunteer personnel are extremely low compared to NGOs in Western Europe and even in the "new" EU member states. Ironically, as the number of civic organizations was growing in the 1990s, citizen participation in them was decreasing. If 30 percent of the population were members of civic organizations in 1991, this number dropped to 13 percent by 1996 and came down even further to 7.8 percent in 1999. Ukrainians continue to show preference for participating in one-time civic actions or acts of charity rather than being involved regularly in NGO work.[29]

It is important to consider that the average profile of a civic organization in Ukraine also changed towards the mid- and the late 1990s. The civic groups that were active and/ or had large constituencies before 1991[30] had either disappeared or became considerably less active. James Richter in his analysis of post-Soviet Russia summarizes this tendency in the following way:

> The movement organizations did not fare well in the first decade of the post-Soviet era […]; civic powerlessness dominated the society. Many people expected the state to supply their education, employment, housing, health care, and even recreation, as it had under the Soviet regime, and *the continued concentration of political and economic* power gave them little reason to believe that public action would change anything. Most Russians again *retreated into private worlds* relying on their gardens, *their networks*, and barter to insulate themselves from economic turmoil.[31]

According to the nationwide sociological poll conducted by the Innovation and Development Center in Kiev in 2000, the general level of participation in public life was fairly low: 59 percent of Ukrainians reported to never have taken part in public life. For NGOs specifically, the figures reflect even lower interest: 83 percent of the population never took part in NGO activities. The main reasons provided by respondents were: no free time – 18.9 percent, lack of desire – 16.8 percent, absence of trust in public organizations – 8.4 percent, absence of desired types of NGOs – 7.9 percent, and lack of information concerning NGOs and their activities – 6.6 percent. Attitudes of the population towards NGOs are most positive in the cities (with 76 percent in Kiev and 51 percent the average across Ukraine). Out of those supporting NGOs, 75 percent have a university education.

The majority of the population is not well informed about the activities of NGOs.[32] The average level of citizens' trust in NGOs on a five-point scale never went above 2.5 points, according to regular public opinion polls conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences. It is true that the level of trust in other institutions – such as government, parliament, or political parties – remains on this (or a bit lower) level as well. This points to the fact that the lack of trust here is not specifically about NGOs but about general skepticism towards institutions that are meant to act in the public good on behalf of Ukrainian citizens. In addition to the decrease in civic activism in general, the behavior of NGOs themselves is partly responsible for these tendencies. James Richter points out:

> Even committed social service organizations frequently reproduced the Soviet pattern of small private worlds, where the director and a few other activists – often personal friends or former coworkers – allocated organizational resources according to personal loyalty rather than more disinterested criteria. Such practices reinforced the perception that NGOs exist primarily to enrich the organizers, discouraging others from participating in NGO activities.[33]

It is also evident that most corporate and private foundations in Ukraine choose to finance their own programs or to provide funding directly to recipients rather than to registered NGOs.[34] This again points to the contested status of NGOs in Ukrainian society that is aggravated by their image as corrupt and self-interested. The spread of instances of corruption, in fact, is of great concern to members of Ukrainian NGO community, who claim that these, to their estimates, are no longer substantive in number but have detrimental effects on the image of civil society as a whole because "few corrupt individuals destroy the image of many."[35] Moreover, the instances of corruption are often connected to incorrect donor practices that either do not presuppose strict reporting or do not provide sufficient funding for certain types of expenses.

The financial viability of NGOs remains low even if improving.[36] Less than half of NGOs surveyed in 2008 by the Center for Philanthropy managed to diversify their resource base to at least three different sources of funding as well as to get substantive support from local resources. In terms of estimates for the future, it is still believed that almost 50 percent of funding will come from foreign donors. In fact, the tighter competition for resources among NGOs is believed to be for the funds provided by foreign donors. In the 2008 survey conducted by the Center for Philanthropy, as many as 55 percent of NGOs surveyed

confirmed this, indicating among other reasons the fact that "donors have their own narrow circle of NGOs who get advantage when applying for grants."[37]

This is a worrying tendency, given the skepticism towards practices and priorities of foreign donors that is growing among Ukrainian NGOs. The report quotes some NGO representatives as saying that "foreign funding is highly volatile and donors often give the kind of support that is not needed or irrelevant." For example, as far as humanitarian aid is concerned, some NGOs believe that local actors can provide much more relevant and timely support.[38] Interestingly, foreign donors report a decrease in the number and quality of proposals for grant competitions.[39] This may mean that stronger NGOs are gradually withdrawing from the "assistance industry" – potentially good news for the sustainability of Ukrainian NGO sector but a worrying tendency for foreign donors who are still in need of good local implementing partners. Nonetheless, if this tendency continues, it might push the donors to compete for good local partners and therefore, to come up with grant programs that are more relevant and better tailored to local needs and practices.

Notes

1 Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

2 Ludmila Smolyar, *Mynule Zarady Maybutnioho: Zhinochiy Rukh Naddnipryanskoi Ukrainy Ii Polovyny XIX – Pochatka XX St.: Storinky Istorii [Past for the Sake of the Future: Women's Movement in Naddnipryanska Ukraine of the Second Half and the XIX – Beginning of the XX Centuries: Pages of History]* (Odessa: 1998).

3 Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (Hammondworth: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1989).

4 Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990–1998," in *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity*, ed. Sharon L. Wolchik and Volodymyr Zviglyanich (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000), p. 266.

5 Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See, "Organizing Women before and after the Fall: Women's Politics in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 4 (1995).

6 Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990–1998."

7 From the by-laws of *Soiuz Ukrainok*, quoted in Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power" (paper presented at the Eastern European Perceptions and Perspectives:

J.B. Rudnyckyj Distinguished Lecture Series, University of Manitoba, Department of German and Slavic Studies, 1997)

[8] See Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women in Ukrainian Community Life 1884–1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988). Pre-World War II Ukrainian women's community organizations are argued to be manifestations of "unconscious" feminism, in the sense that although women's activities were not conceptualized as such they were essentially feminist – an approach Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak defines as "pragmatic feminism." She attributes high cultural and political value to those community organizations. Giving a new twist to communitarian literature by connecting it to issues of nationalism and statehood, the author argues that for Ukrainian society of the time, community organizations played a bigger role than state organizations. This leads her to conclude that the Ukrainian history itself is devoid of a traditional state bias that sees the state as an ultimate stage of political history.

[9] Soldiers' rights NGOs remain highly popular to date, especially in Russia, compared to other types of civic organizations. According to Sundstrom, this is because of deeply rooted cultural norms that consider bodily harm against soldiers more important than, for example, violence against women, as discussed in Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia*, p. 149. In fact, if one thinks about the meanings of gender in the former Soviet Union, as discussed in Chapter 2, it becomes clear that post-Soviet citizens are more likely to feel solidarity towards the victims of violence perpetuated by the state organs and institutions than towards those who suffer violence or discrimination in the private sphere.

[10] Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990–1998."

[11] Artamonova, August 1992, interview quoted in Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power."

[12] Women's Information Consultative Center, *Directory of Women's Organizations and Initiatives in Ukraine* (Kiev: Women's Information Consultative Center, 1996).

[13] Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power."

[14] An example of such classifications by a Ukrainian scholar is in Ludmila Smolyar, "The Women's Movement as a Factor of Gender Equality and Democracy in Ukrainian Society," in *Ukrainian Women's Non-Profit Organizations: Directory*, ed. Oleksander Sydorenko (Kiev: Innovation and Development Center, 2001).

[15] To name just a few: Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power;" Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990–1998;" Alexandra Hrycak, "From Mothers' Rights to Equal Rights: Post-Soviet Grassroots Women's Associations," in *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*, ed. Nancy A. Naples and Manisha Desai (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

[16] Valerie Sperling, Myra Marx Ferree, and Barbara Risman, "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (2001).

[17] Other early Western initiatives on women's issues include the Women in Society Program of the Soros-financed International Renaissance Foundation and the UNDP Project for Equal Opportunities.

[18] Elise Fiber Smith has had a long career promoting the basic rights of women across the globe. At the time of the conference, she was the founder and director of the Global Women's Leadership Program at Winrock International, which started in 1989 with the creation and establishment of the Pan-African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment Initiative. Prior to that she had extensive experience with Overseas Education Fund International in the field of women in development, leadership, legal rights, and small business development. She is currently a member of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign AID (ACVFA) that provides guidance to the Administrator of AID and the State Department's Advisory Committee on U.S. International Economic Policy.

[19] The Consortium is a coalition of 99 women's organizations in 37 regions of Russia. It is a part of the International Network of the CIS-USA Women's Consortium, established in 1993. The Network unites over 200 women's organizations, including 30 organizations in the U.S., over 100 in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, and 99 organizations in Russia.

[20] Vandenberg, interview by the author, August 17, 2004.

[21] Sperling, Ferree, and Risman, "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism," p. 1173.

[22] Bodnarovska, interview by the author, April 1, 2003.

[23] USAID, "The 2006 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia," ed. Office for Democracy Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, Governance, and Social Transition (2006).

[24] This phenomenon was also described as NGIs (non-governmental individuals) – individuals who simultaneously operate several different organizations in order to maximize funding streams Henry, "The Greening of Grassroots Democracy? The Russian Environmental Movement, Foreign Aid, and Democratization," p. 10.

[25] USAID, "The 2008 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia," ed. Office for Democracy Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, Governance, and Social Transition (2008), p. 240.

[26] The data is taken from Svitlana Kuts et al., "CIVICUS Index on Civil Society: Strengthening the Roots of Civil Society in Ukraine," (Kiev: CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, 2001).

[27] The numbers include both registered associations and charity organizations.

[28] The remarkable events during the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine at the end of 2004 may be seen as an indicator that popular attitudes to and ideas of civic activism may be transforming. Yet, as far as NGOs specifically are concerned, there are fewer reasons to believe that their nature or their position in the society has changed considerably since the time of the research cited above.

[29] USAID, "The 2008 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p. 240.

[30] In Ukraine in particular, these were mainly oriented at Ukrainian cultural and historical revival ("Heritage," "Memorial"), environmental problems ("Green World") as well as human rights (the Ukrainian Helsinki Group).

[31] James Richter, "Evaluating Western Assistance to Russian Women's Organizations," in *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sarah Mendelson and John K. Glenn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 58, emphasis added.

[32] Oleksander Sydorenko, "Civic and Charitable Organizations in Ukraine," (Kiev: Innovation and Development Center, 2000).

[33] Richter, "Evaluating Western Assistance to Russian Women's Organizations," p. 59.

[34] USAID, "The 2008 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p. 240.

[35] Center for Philanthropy, "Stan Rozvytku Organizatsiynogo Potentsialu Gromadianskogo Suspilstva V Regionah Ukrainy [Capacity of Civil Society in Different Regions of Ukraine: The State and Development]," (Kiev: Center for Philanthropy, 2008), p. 9.

[36] This is confirmed in the most recent report on the state of civil society in Ukraine: Palyvoda, Lyubov, and Sophia Golota. "Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine: The State and Dynamics in 2002–2009." Kiev: CCC Creative Center, 2010.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., p. 13(7)

[39] USAID, "The 2008 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p. 240.

5
The Origins of Assistance in Washington, DC

> The weight of the United States as a geopolitical actor and the substantial amount of U.S. funding committed to this area ensure that the United State remains to many people around the world the single most important player in the democracy aid domain.[1]

The assistance discourse originates in the governmental departments and federal agencies based in Washington, DC. In this chapter, by focusing on assistance programs of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), I investigate the emergence and development of assistance discourse and practices with respect to democracy promotion and support to civil society and women's issues in the former Soviet Union and especially Ukraine. I show that the "assistance" to the former Soviet Union is a relatively new but highly prominent area in U.S. foreign policy, whose emergence was characterized by the sense of urgency and uniqueness felt at the end of the Cold War. In fact, "novelty" and "uniqueness" became the founding features that defined the nature of "assistance" discourse and practices. I answer the following questions: what does it mean to assist, what does it mean to promote civil society through assistance, and what does it mean to empower women?

The Discourse and Practice of the Post-Cold War Assistance

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal government agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the Secretary of State. USAID's history is said to date back to the Marshall Plan and the Truman Administration's Point Four Program. The actual institution was founded by President John F. Kennedy who signed the Foreign Assistance Act in 1961. USAID became the first U.S. foreign assistance organization whose primary

emphasis was on long-range economic and social development assistance efforts. The involvement of USAID in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics started after the official demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, whereas its operations in the other "satellite" countries were launched two years earlier with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

After the end of the Cold War, adjustments were made at the U.S. federal agencies and new units were created. In 1991 a New Independent States (NIS)[2] Task Force was established that comprised just six people. These were mainly development professionals with much experience in many other parts of the world but not in the former Soviet Union. In 1993 the Bureau for Europe and New Independent States (ENI) was formed that combined the Eastern Europe Task Force and the NIS Task Force. At the same time, USAID was intensively seeking contacts with people who had knowledge of Russia and Ukraine, either through previous contacts or as academics specializing in Russian studies. There were a number of universities that had had linkages to Ukraine during the Soviet times. There were also a few Ukrainian Americans who were willing to renew linkages with Ukraine or even go there to work. As a result, what is now called the Europe and Eurasia Bureau was formed by both "insiders" and "outsiders" to the existing "aid" machinery. Thus, a new concept changed the average profile of the professionals working with it.

The need for Russia and Ukraine specialists resulted in a staff that was much more mixed than in other bureaus in terms of professional backgrounds. Many of the people who came from the diaspora had a stronger commitment towards Ukraine than is usually the case with the so-called "development professionals" who specialize in a certain theme or area rather than a country. Initially, the new bureau was disconnected from the other regional bureaus within USAID. In the words of a USAID official: "nobody quite knew what they were doing there in that bureau but it was said to be different from everything else."[3] The concept of "assistance" created a new bureau different from other ones and a new cadre of USAID officers; at the same time, it enabled the reconciliation of these new discursive and institutional structures with the existing ones.

From the very beginning, around 1989–1992, "assistance" was defined not in terms of what it had to do but in terms of what it should *not* be; it should not be the same as development "aid." It was argued that the new political context required new approaches, and so it was a widely shared belief that going into the countries of the former Soviet Block would require a new discourse that would define a new set of tools and mechanisms. The whole concept of providing financial and

technical aid or support had to change. In our interview, Deputy Assistance Administrator at USAID Barbara Turner explicitly referred to this process:

> Russia[4] was a great power and it remained great in many areas and they were still orbiting satellites around the world, the scientists were still producing high quality pharmaceuticals; we were very sensitive to the concern of the country that did not want to be seen as the ones on welfare; they did not want to be seen as poor African countries, they felt they were beyond that […]. So we started from the beginning trying to talk about it more as a *partnership* and more as *assistance* and a *transition* program rather than that they were developing countries […]. We did try to use very *different terminology* in those countries.[5]

Here the discourse of assistance is defined through such terms as "partnership," implying that support is provided on an equal footing and does not resemble charity. The notion of "transition" is also important because it implies a clear goal and a well-defined timeframe for change, in line with the "transition paradigm" discussed in Chapter 3 of this book. It meant that restructuring processes in the recipient countries as well as assistance itself were temporary and that the destination envisioned for each country was clear and self-evident. In other words, the discussion largely revolved not around what should happen in those countries but around how quickly it could happen.

In many areas the countries of the former Soviet Union had a potential comparable to if not exceeding that of the U.S., especially in the area of military, nuclear, and space technologies. They also had a well-developed and heavily subsidized welfare system, literacy rates of almost a hundred percent, and high levels of higher education. At the same time, the collapse of the whole system and the political and economic instability that followed threatened rapid degeneration and abuse of powers and resources. Thus, the general feeling in Washington, DC was that the U.S. had to intervene and intervene fast in order to exert influence over the direction of change in these countries. The collapse of the Soviet Union was said to present: "an *historic opportunity for a transition* to a peaceful and stable *international order* and the integration of the independent states of the former Soviet Union into the community of democratic nations." It was asserted that the "international community has a *vital interest* in the success of this transition [and that it is] *imperative* for donor countries and institutions *to provide the expertise and support* necessary to ensure continued progress on economic and political reforms."[6]

There was an agreement that the collapse of the Soviet Union was an event of unprecedented magnitude and that maintaining the newly emerging international order depended on steering the "transition" of the countries of the former Soviet Union in the right direction; hence the emphasis on democracy, open markets, and political reforms. Assistance was about providing expertise and advice on how these goals could be attained more quickly. The United States government set forth two main reasons for its "assistance" to the former Soviet Union (fSU): it was economically beneficial and it was key to ensuring American national security. Both notions remain the cornerstones of the U.S. foreign policy towards the former Soviet Union until today. They were clearly outlined in the FREEDOM Support Act:

> The United States is especially well-positioned because of its heritage and traditions to make a substantial contribution to this transition; […] failure to meet the opportunities presented by these developments could threaten United States *national security interests* and jeopardize *substantial savings* in United States defense that these developments have made possible; the independent states of the former Soviet Union face unprecedented environmental problems that jeopardize the quality of life and the very existence of not only their own peoples but also the peoples of other countries; trade and investment opportunities […] will generate employment and other economic *benefits* for the United States as the economies of the independent states of the former Soviet Union begin to realize their enormous potential as both customers and suppliers.[7]

The urgency and enthusiasm of the "assistance" discourse created the space for unprecedented proactive measures and unusually high spending. In 1989 the U.S. Congress passed the "Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act" to

> promote political democracy and economic pluralism in Poland and Hungary by assisting those nations during a critical period of transition and abetting the development in those nations of private business sectors, labor market reforms, and democratic institutions; to establish, through these steps, the framework for a composite program of support for East European democracy.[8]

This act became the founding document that created the new "region" of the so-called SEED countries, which were to become the first recipients of "assistance." The same act was used to extend assistance to other countries in Eastern Europe and three former Baltic republics of the Soviet Union. In 1992 another act was passed – the

Freedom for Russia and the Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act (FSA) to "support freedom and open markets in the independent states of the former Soviet Union." The overall coordination of the U.S. assistance was placed within the U.S. Department of State. More than half of U.S. government funds for assistance purposes were (and still are) administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), including almost all funds dedicated to support for civil society and democratic reform.

The first appropriations under the FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) came to USD 742 and 1,760 million for fiscal years 1993 and 1994, respectively.[9] According to the cumulative figures for the fiscal years 1992–2009 released by the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. government spent a total of about 30 billion dollars on assistance programs to the twelve countries of the former Soviet Union.[10]

At the same time, as the U.S. Congress was passing these budgets, USAID officers were busy figuring out how to spend the money in a way that would reflect the new ideas and imperatives. In other words, the new discourse about a "new" and "different" assistance had to be further substantiated with new notions and ideas about *how* assistance should take place. Moreover, these new notions had to be developed within the shortest possible time frame. In the words of Donald Pressley, Assistant Administrator of the USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia: "Central and Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union were a new frontier for USAID in 1989. As a result, USAID had to try *new approaches*, move *quickly*, and constantly *adjust* to changing circumstances."[11] Assistance became a politically prominent discourse, the specific content of which, however, had yet to be defined. According to a more passionate account of another former USAID official:

> The original program itself was literally written on the back of a napkin. That's not an exaggeration! USAID put together a blueprint of what it needed to do, it sent it to Congress, Congress immediately allocated [funds]. Now just step back and think that you were spending something like a billion dollars on the part of the world you knew nothing about, you had no idea what to spend it on and you must spend it, you get told by Congress: get it out, just shove it out of the door.[12]

The political imperatives of delivering assistance were apparent much before an understanding of what kind of assistance was needed could develop. While it was politically important to stress the different nature of "assistance" as compared to "aid," it took longer to establish

how to meet "assistance" goals. Although it was established that the former Soviet Union had to be treated differently, the question of *how* differently remained open to a plentitude of programmatic and institutional responses. However, the urgency and strong emphasis on "novelty" of assistance also played an important constitutive role in the overall nature and direction of these discursive and institutional responses. In answering the "how" question, priority was given to solutions that took the least preparation and promised to yield tangible results the fastest.[13] Such solutions turned out to be mostly of a technical nature and were designed with very little attention to the possible specificity of the new assistance countries.

Assistance recipient countries were not defined in terms of their specificity but in terms of their uniformity in the face of "assistance," as exemplified in the notion of a new "region" to be assisted. However, despite the uniformity of the "model," different post-socialist countries to which it was applied were not dealt with in the same way. Various gradations were introduced as to the degrees of European-ness of the new assistance recipients. The more developed "Visegrád countries"[14] were viewed as almost Western European countries that would catch up quickly, while the Southeastern European countries were not widely considered as partners or candidates for integration by foreign donors and especially the U.S.. Further differentiations emerged in 1991, when the former Soviet Union split up into 15 newly independent states. A new distinction was made that defined the nations with nuclear weapons or sizable deposits of natural resources – Russia, Ukraine, or Kazakhstan – as more "developed" or more promising in terms of transition and more attractive for assistance than, for example, some countries in Central Asia or the Caucasus. However, these differentiations have not translated into context-sensitive program designs differentiated by country. The differences between countries in the region were mainly collapsed into loose teleological categories of those countries which were "ahead" and those "lagging behind" on the road to transition. Nonetheless, all the countries were firmly believed to be trotting down the same road. The Cold War idea of an evil empire as a political and socio-economic monolith that embodies everything anti-Western translated into democratization and free-market programs supposedly applicable to the region as a whole.

In 2001 an attempt was made by the State Department and USAID to adapt to the apparent diversity within the "region", which, however, did not lead to any substantive institutional changes till several years later. As an official from the U.S. Department of State Office of the Coordinator for U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia explained:

> New Independent States weren't new any more, and it was decided that they shouldn't necessarily be treated as one unit together. They are different countries now. At one point there was talk of putting the Central Asian countries with other parts covering Asia. That didn't happen so we had this enormous Europe and Eurasia office that went from Dublin to Dushanbe; it was 55 countries – the largest bureau with over 500 people working.[15]

Nowadays, there is a growing recognition of internal differences between Europe and Eurasia countries, sometimes referred to as the "transition divide" between Eastern Europe and Eurasia, which is shown to be particularly visible with respect to progress made on democracy and health issues.[16] Many of the SEED countries are EU members now and so do not receive any assistance – they belong to the category of the "countries that graduated from assistance."[17] Out of eleven "graduates," ten are now full EU members and are moving from aid recipients to donors.[18] The SEED funding has subsequently dropped and goes mainly to the Balkans today. After the events of 2001 and the two wars that followed, U.S. foreign policy is increasingly preoccupied with a new "region" – that of the Middle East. As the political geography is being reconfigured, Central Asian countries and countries in the Caucasus are more and more considered in the context of their proximity to this strategic "region," rather than in the context of their postcommunist heritage. In fact, as of March 2, 2008, the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) were moved to the USAID Asia Bureau.

In its programs in the region, USAID always showed special attention to Ukraine. Over 1992–2009, U.S. government spent in Ukraine almost 4 billion dollars (USD 3.8 billion) in support of economic restructuring, democratization, and reforms in the health and social sectors. USAID was responsible for expending roughly half of these funds.[19] Such interest has been driven primarily by security and geopolitical concerns, such as Ukraine's strategic position between Russia and Europe and its nuclear arsenal. When the Soviet Union broke up, Ukraine had within its territory the third largest strategic nuclear arsenal in the world – greater than those of the United Kingdom, France, and China combined. More recently (with all the nuclear warheads dismantled back in 1996) the U.S. strategic interest in Ukraine has been explained as follows:

> The United States has a strong national security interest in Ukraine's successful transition to a stable and independent, democratic, market-oriented, and prosperous state, with good relations with its neighbors

> and strong links to the West. *Its successful transition may assist similar transitions elsewhere in the region.* With a population of approximately 50 million and a strategic location between Russia and Central Europe, Ukraine is important for building *a secure and undivided Europe*.[20]

Ten years later, Ukraine retains its importance for the U.S. foreign policy. In the words of Daniel A. Russell, Deputy Assistant Secretary from the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs:

> Ukraine matters to the United States and it matters to Europe. […] It serves as a transit route though which nearly a quarter of Europe's gas imports flow […] It could become a net contributor to global food security; its rich black soil produced over one-quarter of the Soviet Union's agricultural output. It has shown leadership on the world stage, giving up its nuclear weapons to become a non-nuclear state and contributing to security and peacekeeping operations from the Balkans to Iraq. And Ukraine's highly educated workforce is probably now more connected with Europeans and Americans through business, travel and education than ever before.[21]

Strong U.S. interest in the political and economic situation in Ukraine has also been evident before and during the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine that famously concluded with the Orange Revolution. High-level officials were closely monitoring the pre-election situation, stating that the U.S. wants to see "open, free, full and fair elections," which will determine the democratic credentials of Ukraine's next president.[22] On many occasions the election was described as an opportunity to accelerate development and integration with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, and great concern was voiced about the campaign and the election rounds falling short of international standards.[23] The proportion of democracy programs within the FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) budget for Ukraine increased (even though the overall FSA budget for Ukraine dropped) in the period 2002–2004. Democracy assistance has gone from one-fifth of the FSA budget for Ukraine to nearly one-third. In the words of Steven Pifer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs:

> We have kept our investment in promoting democracy and civil society a strong one. […] We believe that this type of support reinforces what is already a very encouraging trend in post-independence Ukraine: namely, the *growth of civil society*.[24]

In the following section I show exactly how a particular conception of civil society has been developed within the assistance discourse.

Democracy Through Civil Society Promotion

> The United States supports just and democratic governance for three distinct but related reasons: as a matter of principle; as a contribution to U.S. national security; and as a cornerstone of our broader development agenda.[25]

Historically, Americans have held that the democratic system of government is the distinctive feature of their country, the cornerstone of its freedom and prosperity, and the moral justification for the U.S. proactive role in democracy promotion around the world.[26] Even though the actual approach to democracy promotion – at times inspired by the "idealist" and at other times by "realist" schools of thought – has varied with different administrations, a focus on some form of democracy promotion has always been characteristic of U.S. foreign policy.[27] Moreover, the post-Cold War understanding of civil society as an integral part of democracy promotion has become an axiom and the funding for and through NGOs is unlikely to decrease in the near future.[28]

As early as the first year of FSA assistance, the U.S. government introduced the "democratic pluralism initiative" aimed at facilitating democratization in the countries of the former Soviet Union. It comprised four core components: political and civic organizations, the independent media, the rule of law and governance, and public administration. It might be said to have reinforced an idealist position in American foreign policy, namely the belief that the spread of democracy will lead to greater stability and prosperity in the world. As stated in one of the USAID documents:

> Democratic governments are more likely to advocate and observe international laws and to experience the kind of long-term stability, which leads to sustained development, economic growth, and international trade. Countries that are experiencing economic growth and are actively engaged in trading relationships are less likely to engage in acts of war.[29]

U.S. governmental democracy assistance is provided through the following main organizations: The USAID, The Department of State and its The Human Rights Democracy Fund (HRDF),[30] and the private

non-profit National Endowment for Democracy (NED) are the three main pillars. In addition, several other parts of the government have democracy assistance aspects included in their portforlios, including the Department of Defense, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC),31 and the Department of Justice. Even though the overall coordination of the U.S. assistance is placed within the U.S. Department of State, there is no "command and control center" of the democracy promotion community, no single place where overarching strategy is developed or coordinated, even within the sub-community that is the United States Government.32

Within USAID, the Center for Democracy and Governance was founded in 1994; in addition, each of the regional bureaus received its own democracy and civil society advisors. The Center's role was to provide technical and intellectual leadership to USAID's decentralized mission-based structure by developing tools and methodologies needed to support democratic development. The Center did not have planning or budgetary authority; it was a purely advisory unit. In principle, the Center's task was to facilitate the democracy and civil society building effort across the different regional bureaus; however, it was up to the regional bureaus and field missions to choose to work together with the Center. Therefore, the existence of the Center should not be mistaken for a sign of coherence of USAID's overall worldwide democracy and civil society support.

Different U.S. administrations attributed different weight to federal agencies and departments with respect to the U.S. foreign policy. Whereas the Clinton administration substantively strengthened USAID and its democracy programs, the Bush administration is said to have taken much of the administrative power away from the Agency, subordinating it to the Department of State[33] and promoting new aid channels, such the MCC.[34] The Bush administration has also been criticized for provoking negative perceptions of the U.S. democracy promotion, as "the rhetorical conflation by the Bush Administration and its allies of the war in Iraq and democracy promotion has muddied the meaning of the democracy project, diminishing support for it at home and abroad."[35] It remains to be seen which approach will be adopted by the Obama administration. Some recent initiatives by the new administration, such as a State Department Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review and Presidential Study Directive on U.S. development policy, indicate its willingness to reform.[36]

In terms of total amounts of funding, USAID has always remained responsible for the largest part of democracy assistance. Thomas Carothers cites the following approximate estimates for 2008: While

USAID's spending on democracy promotion was around USD 1.5 billion a year, the State Department's was around USD 500 million, and the NED's a little over USD 100 million.[37]

In the 1990s democracy and civil society support in the former Soviet Union were very different from those that were the basis for civil society programs in other regions. The conception of civil society within the postcommunist assistance discourse was framed in much broader and vaguer terms as a response to the "empty" nature of the assistance discourse itself. This made this civil society assistance discourse different from other civil society programs implemented overseas. In the words of Gary Hansen, Chief of the USAID Civil Society Division:

> Most of our programs overseas are not designed to build civil societies writ large, we're interested in civil society organizations that are advocating on the behalf of good governance and political reform and so forth […]; in this office we are not interested in a lot of organizations they were supporting in the Europe and Eurasia Bureau.[38]

However, as I show below, the differences in programs supporting civil society in the Eurasia "region" and in other parts of the world have diminished substantively in recent years.

Institutional Capacity-building: "Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom"

One of the key notions in the discourse of democracy and civil society promotion in the former Soviet Union, and especially in Ukraine, is "institutional/organizational capacity-building." It describes civil society in terms of formal organizational features and technical tools. It served as a link between "aid" and "assistance" and allowed the USAID staff to bring the models and tools of "development aid" into the new "assistance" programs. The quote below from an interview with a USAID high-ranking official shows clearly how this link was created:

> I think that what we found in Ukraine was that it didn't need the same kind of things Africa needed; for instance, in Africa it was basic education, immunizing children and things like that. […] What was missing was something we always had as our high priority, which we call *institutional development* […]. We found that while the actual types of things we did in Ukraine were different, the *institutional capacity* still needed to be developed. [People] were good technicians but they weren't good managers, had no inventory or budgeting capacity. So we found those sorts of skills were actually quite valuable.[39]

In this way a connection was established between "aid" and "assistance:" While the content was admittedly different, the same tools and skills were argued to be relevant for the new "assistance" recipients. This opened the door for some programs and models developed for other parts of the world. Another important component of assistance that is evident from the above quote is "assistance as teaching." The assistance recipients were seen as "good students" who had taken the wrong classes, and in this way one of the goals of assistance was defined: to teach new skills and to provide the locals with new information.

"Institutional capacity-building" quickly became the cornerstone of civil society assistance and remains such 20 years after the inception of assistance to Ukraine. The core objective is to provide tools and trainings that would make NGOs resemble their American counterparts in terms of their formal structure. Following the "institutional capacity-building" idea, USAID established a New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) in 1995 "to stimulate lasting economic, social, and political developments by building local institutional capacity in non-governmental organizations, competitive small business, and democratic local governments." The "NGO Strengthening" or "NGO Empowerment" component was aimed at promoting "the active participation of citizens in political and economic decision-making through training and small grants."[40] "Increased capacity" meant that NGOs would become more professional and show the formal organizational features characteristic of their American counterparts. NPI was intended to "strengthen the direct contribution of local organizations to development, and […] help increase their professionalism, efficiency, accountability, and transparency."[41]

The Agency's initial understanding of civil society was that at the time when the assistance programs began, civil society in Eastern Europe was

> either nascent or nonexistent in most countries in the region [because] most populations lacked the basic rights of a democratic civil society: freedom of expression, the right to organize, to advocate one's interests, to form independent political parties, to hold free and fair elections.[42]

Indeed, USAID officers were not finding the same kinds of local partners in the former Soviet Union that they were used to finding elsewhere. Some of the core categories, such as service delivery NGOs, think tanks, advocacy NGOs, grassroots groups etc., either did not have any real world equivalents or were only applicable to the institutionally

strong old Soviet associations. Thus, in the beginning most of the effort was invested into helping create new kinds of organizations.

Since there were no organizations in place whose capacity could be built up according to the USAID scheme, the notion of "institutional capacity-building" initially had a component that was captured by a metaphor: "let a thousand flowers bloom!" Apparently, nobody at USAID was aware of the origins of the slogan in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and so it was embraced as an appropriate metaphor for the newly acquired democratic freedoms and democratic pluralism in the former Soviet Union.[43] This approach was new to the USAID, in the words of Gary Hansen, the Chief of Civil Society Division at USAID:

> The Europe and Eurasia Bureau (E&E) was very different in respect to civil society from the other regional bureaus; it defined civil society very broadly. When the transition began the E&E said "our role is to build any kind of associations that are there to appear." […] The culture of association as an independent initiative had been pretty much crushed by the communist government so the idea was to give people incentives to start working together, organizing themselves one way or the other.[44]

The "thousand flowers" approach was implemented through "small grants" programs that were aimed at supporting many different initiatives. USAID was not investing in long-term relationships but in engaging as many different organizations as possible.

> USAID's goal is to create a large, diverse community of local NGOs capable of promoting sustainable development. […] NGOs are everywhere a potentially critical vehicle for articulating collective interests and for ensuring citizen participation in the development process.[45]

The "thousand flowers" approach implied that funds were spent to ensure there were NGO-like initiatives in place as soon as possible. In this way, the approach was by definition supply-driven, meaning that USAID was supplying funds for particular kinds of flowers to bloom. Questions of how to create NGOs relevant to the Ukrainian context were never raised. While high levels of technical assistance were put into providing tools and skills, the issue of who exactly would be using those, and for what purposes, was never addressed. So, thousands of Ukrainian activists were taught NGO management skills at rates that were higher than the numbers of NGOs to be managed. There was a strong belief that civil society assistance should be about putting in place

a critical number of "properly" managed NGOs. However, the question was never raised whether such organizations would be able to function in the Ukrainian context and meet the needs of the Ukrainian civil society. In fact, the connection between the growth of professional NGOs and the institutionalization of a strong civil society was never investigated. After several years of civil society assistance, USAID could report the former but not the latter as an achievement. Moreover, it had to face a range of criticisms that I discussed in Chapter 3, such as for example, corrupt or nepotistic practices among NGOs that received assistance.

By the end of the 1990s, USAID had to admit that institutionalizing a strong civil society in countries like Ukraine would take longer than was initially expected. On the one hand, the explosive growth of NGOs was seen as a positive indicator attributed to the success of assistance: "USAID and other donor assistance has helped fuel the explosive growth of NGO sectors in these countries."[46] On the other hand, the agency attributed the apparent problems (such as lack of financial viability, poor organizational management, lack of public awareness of NGO activities, failure to effectively serve or represent constituencies and clients, etc.) to the nature of the transformation process itself and not to assistance. It argued that the rapid NGO growth was triggered by greater freedom of association, heightened awareness of global issues, and "vigorous response to the opportunities and responsibilities that accompany democracy."[47] The donors were positioned not as another influential factor for the growth and its shortcomings but as yet another party overwhelmed by rapid change, almost as a victim. It was the accelerated change that was said to have challenged donors' capacity to be "phased and strategic" in their programs and not the problematic design and shortsightedness of those programs. Here, again the thousand flowers metaphor came in to stress that such flowers do and should grow on their own.

> For donors, the pace of growth has made it difficult to keep abreast of developments in the sector and *to know whether they are working with organizations with a viable, authentic constituency.* […] In general, accelerated change – coupled with the desire to exert an early positive impact – has challenged donors' capacity to be phased and strategic in their program design; instead, donors have tended to concentrate on the merits of individual projects and the strength of individual organizations.[48]

Interestingly, the "thousand flowers" metaphor translated into projects that had no clearly defined eligibility criteria for NGOs; an

organization only had to have some formal organizational features, and so the notions of "viable, authentic constituency" were not part of the civil society assistance discourse in the beginning.

I argue that the "thousand flowers" metaphor did not mean more openness and pluralism. Ironically, its meaning and function within USAID was not so different from its original one in the history of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The "thousand flowers" metaphor was employed to engage with local civic actors prior to clarifying the terms of such engagement in order to recruit civic leaders and socialize them into different assistance practices and programs. However, it did not presuppose either space for actually learning from those civic leaders or mechanisms for including this local knowledge into the civil society assistance principles and programs.

The longer presence of "assistance" in Ukraine – even if initially unexpected – necessitated the extension of the civil society assistance discourse. In other words, the discourse had to account for more than just a temporary technical intervention. It had to respond to the developments that were taking place in Ukraine, to address difficulties or even failures that were becoming apparent, and to deliver its longer-term vision for the future. In the next subsection I show how this has been made possible through the notion of "empowerment."

Empowerment: Getting the "Mentality" Right

Even though the assistance discourse never considered local ideas about and forms of civil society, it developed discursive mechanisms to adapt to the local environment. Throughout its assistance "career" in Ukraine, the U.S. government constantly had to respond to the harsh social and economic realities and political tensions that resulted from the collapse of the previous socialist system. In 1996 USAID was saying that since 1994

> there has been considerable progress mixed with significant setbacks. While President Kuchma's commitment to the reform program appears firm, support within the ranks of government has been uneven. The Parliament especially has often proved an obstacle to reform […]; as long as the quality of life continues to deteriorate for Ukrainian citizens, maintaining political and popular will to see the reform process through will be a constant challenge.[49]

Uneven local responses to reform and deteriorating conditions were putting the U.S. supported reform process in danger. In addition, there

was always the fear that Russian influence would be resumed. USAID was worried about such tendencies as the "renewed Russian dominance, compounded by the resurgence of Russian Communism, and the popularity of the Communist Party candidate in the 1996 Russian presidential election."[50] Here another concern comes out clearly – to make sure that hardships in Ukraine would not lead to Ukraine "falling back" into the sphere of Russian influence.

By the late 1990s, the situation in Ukraine was not improving as expected. The years of 1998–1999 were marked by important political and economic events. The shortcomings of the reform process were exacerbated by the Asian financial crisis of 1998, which had a grave impact on both Russia and Ukraine. There was also an apparent rise in support for left-wing parties and movements in Ukraine. In the parliamentary election of 1998, the Communist Party of Ukraine was far ahead of the other parties, taking about 25 percent of the votes; the other two left-wing parties, the Block of the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Agrarian Party of Ukraine and the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, gained 8.5 percent and 4 percent of the votes respectively.[51] These developments pushed assistance professionals to mobilize a new concept of "empowerment" in their discourse. The "empowerment" concept entails three related elements: social transition issues, awareness-raising and information distribution, and mentality change. Assistance not only had a prescriptive claim on what kinds of institutions had to be built but was also developing a set of responses to the political, social, and economic challenges in Ukraine.

The focus on "social transition issues" was introduced to ensure that the critical mass of the Ukrainian population would stay "with their heads above water," so that poverty and disillusionment would not ignite conflicts or a national crisis. These concerns were voiced from early on: "Popular support for reform will evaporate unless social benefits and services are maintained […], if affordable methods are not developed to shelter the poor from rapid price increases, falling incomes, and the deterioration of basic public services."[52]

In 1999 an increasing emphasis was again placed on "social transition issues;" ten years of economic and political restructuring had led to "greater poverty and hardship than anticipated at the beginning of the transition."[53] Fearing that hardship and the disillusionment with reforms would increase the popularity of left-wing parties,[54] USAID decided to pay greater attention to improving the quality of life in Ukraine to mitigate any backlash against the reform process. The worry was that the population was growing cynical about the reform process and apathetic toward participation in citizens' groups in Ukraine.[55] So it

was argued that "USAID has a role to play in bringing the benefits of systemic change to a broader population."[56]

The agency believed this could be achieved through empowering populations and increasing economic opportunity at the provincial and local levels. Activities at the local level were defined as key for assuring the actual implementation of the nationally adopted reforms. "Successful transition requires public confidence and acceptance of new ways of operating."[57] Reaching out to a broader constituency at the grassroots and regional levels was seen as necessary for building an understanding of and a demand for reform and developing a cadre of local leaders for change. Thus, in addition to improving social conditions, there was a perceived need for changing people's attitudes towards reform or, in broader terms, their "mentality."

People in Ukraine were believed not to be aware of "the universe of possibilities" for improvement that existed. "They cannot articulate the changes they want, therefore their advocacy policies are ineffective."[58] Thus, it was seen as imperative to invest in information campaigns that would explain and popularize the reforms. One of the most expensive civil society projects in Ukraine was UMREP – the Ukraine Market Reform Education Program established in 1993 as a joint project of the governments of Ukraine and the U.S. through USAID. Its rationale was that:

> Increased, better-informed citizens' participation in political and economic decision-making is essential to the development of a viable democracy in Ukraine. USAID's independent media program is enabling Ukrainian citizens to become better informed about current events in general, including issues related to economic reform.[59]

In addition to informing people about the substance of and the need for the U.S.-supported reforms in Ukraine, this objective also contained a stronger educational claim. It aspired to change what was believed to be the wrong mentality inherited by the Ukrainians from their Soviet past. This is, for example, captured by the following quote: "Given the Ukrainian history of top down political and economic decision-making and service to the state, changing people's expectations and behavior to accept that the state is responsive to influence by the people is a major transition."[60]

It is on the basis of these ideas that the concept of "empowerment" was defined. The key assumption of "empowerment" was the need to replace the wrong Soviet mentality with new liberal values and beliefs among the population. In addition to the task of "institutional capacity-

building," the Agency was increasingly speaking of the need to change individual values, attitudes, and behaviors: "The importance of individual attitudes, practices and behaviors for successful transition had been underestimated."[61] In 2002 the Agency commissioned a multi-party investigation into USAID's civic programming in order to understand how and under what conditions civic education contributes to the development of a more active and informed democratic citizenry and to explore perspectives of integrating civic education components into other assistance programs. The rationale for engaging with civic education was that "for a democracy to survive and flourish, a critical mass of its citizens must possess the skills, embody the values, and manifest the behaviors that accord with democracy."[62]

Individual participation was seen as essential for shaping and deepening the reform process. The goal for the assistance area "democratic transition" was to "foster democratic societies and institutions through the empowerment of citizens."[63] For purposes of "empowerment" civil society activity was broadly defined as participation in political and economic processes by well-informed and responsible citizens.[64] Across the portfolio, the Agency placed an emphasis on public education, training and exchange programs, as well as selective interventions for curriculum change in schools. In 1999 education was identified as a priority for the future. While the short-term objective remained to push for top-level structural reforms, the long-term goal was seen as "working to prepare the next generation or perhaps the generation after for coming to power."[65]

The education approach worked in two ways: it aimed at promoting the so-called "demonstration effects," on the one hand, and at bringing up a new "critically thinking" generation of Ukrainians, on the other. The former goal was highly reminiscent of the liberal idealist belief that all it takes is to expose peoples to liberal democratic values and they could not but embrace them eagerly. The educational efforts were related to the idea of a "wrong mentality" in the sense that much blame was directed towards the legacies of communism, which meant that older generations were almost perceived as hopeless for building a new democratic society.

"Empowerment" was defined in terms of individual values and concerns, "[g]etting people to believe in themselves, to rely less on government to guide their daily lives, and to take control of their destiny through economic opportunities and political choices."[66] Such understanding of "empowerment" in that particular context is at best questionable. On the one hand, this being a question of survival in the first place, it is hard to believe that those people who had the resources

(for example, material and physical resources and networks) and belonged to advantaged social and demographic groups at the beginning of transition would not have used the available opportunities to guide their daily lives. On the other hand, according to the Agency's own analysis, the biggest "losers of transition," such as children, ethnic and religious minorities, women-led households, female pensioners, etc., are the ones who more often oppose reform or show apathy. These groups are unlikely to benefit from "demonstration effects" unless provided with structural opportunities and financial means to improve their positions.

Sustainability: Enabling the "Phase Out"

Defining "assistance" in terms of facilitating "transition" on a short-term basis meant that there has always been a clear idea of a "phase out." In terms of the time that was believed to be needed to achieve the assistance goals, in the early 1990s the Americans aimed at the shortest possible intervention, not exceeding three to five years. From 1991 on, U.S. assistance programs:

> […] operated on the premise that a small number of targeted interventions in economic policy reform, coupled with selective support for democracy building, would help move countries of Europe and Eurasia far enough *along the transition path* that they could enter normal economic and political relations with other countries and *complete the journey* on their own.[67]

In 1994 a USAID administrator confirmed: "Our mandate is not a protracted program of economic support, but one that is strategically targeted to support a critical period of economic and political transition and then phase out."[68] The notion of the "phase out" thus has been an important part of assistance from its very first day; even before any substantial assistance reached its recipients, USAID had started talking about the "phase out" and, ironically, it continues to do so 20 years later.

Nowadays there seems to be a general consensus within USAID that the initial policy assumptions about the transition timeframe were not realistic. This view is also supported by Barbara Turner, the USAID Deputy Assistance Administrator:

> At that time [in the beginning of assistance] U.S. government thought that we would have a short-term program in those countries; we were invited by the State Department to keep our projects to no more than three years because the feeling was that for Russia and Ukraine (and

> we always knew that Central Asia would be different) – those were pretty sophisticated countries, they had high levels of education, nuclear power, scientists, governments that knew how to function, so they would transform more quickly. Clearly we underestimated the complexity of shifting from communist centrally run society and economy to a pluralistic society and economy […]. So we had to do a lot more programs than we ever anticipated.[69]

Already in 1999, much more circumspect judgments were put forward about the anticipated impact of assistance. Generally, USAID withdrew from claiming to know how to "do transition" and turned around to downplay the impact it could have on the country's development:

> The euphoria that greeted independent Ukraine in 1991 has subsided. The G7 countries anticipated a quick and thorough destruction of Ukraine's Soviet past, but expectations were overly ambitious and greatly exceeded what could realistically be done. […] The donors have learned that the problems for countries in transition are unique and complex. Lack of political will does not fully account for lack of progress. Western experts hold neither precise nor clear remedies for Ukraine's troubles.[70]

However, updating the timeframe and toning down the ambitions of "assistance" did not lead to a dismissal of the notion of a "phase out."

The "phase out" notion had important real-life implications because it defined long-term processes and goals in terms of short-term interventions. It therefore prevented the emergence of long-term commitments and of experimenting with various organizational forms and with different assistance partners. With the shadow of "phase out" looming above the heads of USAID officers from the very beginning of assistance, very little incentive was created for investing time and effort into building up long-term relationships. Instead, preference was given to those partnerships that would enable spending of money and getting reportable results on a yearly basis.

The idea of a "phase out" was also important for civil society programs because it translated into an emphasis on the "sustainability" of NGOs. NGOs had to reach a certain degree of "sustainability" in a relatively short time by means of increasing their organizational effectiveness and professionalism. The standard of professionalism was set by the American NGOs implementing assistance programs in Ukraine. The idea was that the sooner Ukrainian NGOs resembled their American counterparts, the sooner NGO programs could be phased out

and the activities that constituted them could be relegated to Ukrainian NGOs. This meant that the "sustainability" of Ukrainian NGOs was not defined in terms of their position in Ukrainian society in the post-funding phase but in terms of how instrumental they could become in facilitating the "phase out" of assistance. Professional and cost-effective NGOs were argued to accelerate the "graduation" from assistance.[71]

> USAID's experience with small NGO grants and local development activities is that they are information and staff intensive. However, under NPI [New Partnership Initiative], most of these responsibilities will be transferred to USAID's development partners by focusing on *capacity-building* of local organizations early in the process and encouraging the development of *intermediary organizations* […]. USAID's direct management role will be reduced, providing considerable cost savings.[72]

Thus, the concept of sustainability also meant that local NGOs were expected to become capable of taking over some of the assistance activities implemented by USAID and its implementing partners, making assistance cheaper for USAID. This also led civil society assistance in Ukraine to become increasingly similar to such programs in other parts of the world. Over the past few years, there is no more talk of the "thousand flowers;" instead, the USAID and other democracy program implementers are increasingly concerned with promoting a specific type – professional advocacy organizations.[73]

The Assistance Strategy for Ukraine for the fiscal years 2003–2007 was written up in a much more enthusiastic tone than the previous one due to the improved situation in the country in terms of impressive levels of economic growth and increased social and economic stability. The proposed activities were said to "fine-tune existing activities building on previous successes."[74] The period was framed as extending "beyond transition" and into sustainable economic growth. The Agency made a definite claim that the basic institutions needed were in place and therefore the assistance should focus on increasing their effectiveness and sustainability. In addition, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 changed considerably the language in which civil society is talked about today. Civil society is now widely seen as already in place, as having revealed itself at a critical moment.

> While the governments can put in place laws to protect our most cherished institutions and freedoms, that in and of itself is not enough. There must be a civil society where democratic values live in citizens' hearts and minds, where people stand up for what is right and where

> the rule of law, not the rule of crime and corruption, prevails. In recent weeks, Ukraine's people have shown that they have been building a *civil society*.[75]

In fact, the administration had initially requested less than USD 80 million for Ukraine (compared to around USD 225 million per year in the late 1990s) for the fiscal year (FY) 2005;[76] however, in February 2005 (just two months after the Orange Revolution) it doubled the budget request up to USD 165.5 million, including USD 60 million for democracy assistance to consolidate the achievements in the progress towards democracy, so as to confirm its commitment to the country and recognize its progress on strengthening democracy front. Once again, Ukraine became the largest recipient of American governmental assistance in the former Soviet Union. Despite continued "phase out" measures and performance evaluations, civil society and democracy remained best supported sectors. Indeed, as stated in the FY 2005 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations:

> In FY [fiscal year] 2005, FSA assistance will be used to broaden Ukraine's *growing civil society*, foster participatory democracy, and buttress the independent media. […]The United States will therefore focus *increased* resources on strengthening local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent research institutions[77] that serve as *watchdogs* over the government's activities and articulate public interest. In addition, funding will continue for legal support and training for independent media. FSA funding will also continue to support the development of and access to the Internet throughout Ukraine and grassroots activism aimed at community empowerment.[78]

This changing understanding of the potential of civil society support was already apparent in 2002, when support to civil society was defined as aiding a "citizenry increasingly engaged in promoting their interests and rights for a more democratic market-oriented state." The ultimate goals were (1) to increase the extent to which citizens believe that they can influence the government and (2) to increase civic activism – the former reflecting the concept of "empowerment" and the latter that of "advocacy."[79]

"Advocacy" is a relatively new term in the USAID programs for Ukraine. Although advocacy techniques were mentioned in documents for Ukraine before (more in passing than in a directive sense), this is the first time that advocacy training is mentioned as a part of civil society assistance. According to USAID, "advocacy" is a method used to demand transparency and accountability from the government by

employing a range of professional tools, such as "information, coalition building, engaging the mass media, and lobbying."[80] The introduction of the notion of "advocacy" marked an almost total abandonment of the "thousand flowers" idea. Instead of supporting many different NGOs, the notion of "advocacy" privileged a few well-developed, professional, and "institutionally capable" organizations with good track records. These were the kinds of organizations that would facilitate "sustainability" and "phase out." The introduction of "advocacy" as well as the overall increase in the professionalization of civil society has made more recent civil society programs in Ukraine similar to those in other parts of the world.

In general, the more recent trends in USAID assistance show that it moved from granting the region an unconditional importance to trying to integrate it with other activities of the Agency. Overall, the concepts of "institutional capacity-building" and "sustainability" highlight the idea that, rather than building civil society per se, civil society assistance should be focused on a few targeted interventions aimed at creating and developing organizational structures that are professional and effective enough to implement assistance project activities, especially after the "phase out." The fact that the civil society assistance discourse draws on three different notions to sustain itself in effective ways shows that despite the seeming inflexibility and even arrogance of "assistance," it permits a considerable degree of adaptation and transformation. However, these adaptations are aimed at sustaining the core meaning of "assistance" rather than at questioning or substantially changing it.

Gender and Women's Issues: How Are They Defined?

The following sub-section shows how the issues of women's empowerment have taken a prominent place on American foreign policy agenda. In particular it looks at the "women in development" discourse and analyzes the role that this discourse attributes to women in NGOs, or the so-called "third sector" organizations.

Women as a Target Group: "Marginal and Powerless"

The Office of Women in Development (WID) was established in 1974 "to help ensure that women participate fully and benefit equally from the U.S. development assistance programs."[81] Similarly to other technical offices within USAID (e.g. the Center for Democracy and Governance), it is meant to be providing technical expertise on this particular (cross-cutting) issue to USAID bureaus and field missions and has no planning

or budgetary authority. "WID is the focal point for technical expertise and leadership on gender issues, leading, advocating, and providing assistance in USAID as the Agency incorporates gender considerations into its programs."[82] As far as the "assistance" programs are concerned, the WID Office was never involved in their actual design or implementation. However, the "women in development" discourse played a role within USAID in terms of creating a space to raise "women's" and later "gender" issues as one of the priority areas. The content of "women in development" issues is well established and institutionally accepted. Attempts to (re)define "women's issues" in a particular context are often based on a dialogue with the "women in development" discourse, and some notions and tools are inevitably transferred from other contexts.

In this book I focus particularly on the concept "women as a target group" that sustains the discourse of "women in development." It is based on two core ideas: first, women in their entirety form a group that shares certain characteristics and is overall underprivileged compared to men; and second, women as a group are particularly vulnerable and exposed to threats such as disease or criminal activity.

The main effect of the concept "women as a target group" is to support the view that women belong to the underprivileged and marginalized and that instead of aggravating these inequalities development aid should strive to help overcome them. This agenda is driven by a growing awareness of the problems that women in the so-called developing countries face, such as poor access to education, absence of property rights, health problems, and so on. One of the main recommendations developed is that women have to be given more assistance compared to men and to benefit from women-specific programs. From here a whole portfolio of programs targeting women has grown – microcredits, trainings, educational programs – that is organized under the heading of "women in development."

However, the other side of the consolidation and institutionalization of the discourse of "women in development" is that by identifying a specific target group marked by lack and deviance, it naturalizes those qualities. Women become defined in terms of being universally oppressed and underprivileged. The problematic nature of these notions is also understood within the WID bureau; however, such opinions are excluded by the discourse of "women in development." One of the former WID employees expressed a similar concern over the meaning of women as a target group: "It is another form of marginalization, another way of making it be about another underprivileged minority that did not get something."[83]

So how exactly are the connections maintained between the notions of "women as a target group," "women's issues," and "gender"? The following quote is instructive.

> The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) recognizes that *equal opportunity for women and men* is necessary not only for the well-being of their families but also because *women's involvement* is key to advancing economic and social development and promoting democracy. *Even today many women are not able to fully share* in the political and economic life of their societies. They face enduring economic, legal and customary barriers to their participation in development. In addition, in recent years the toll of *HIV/AIDS on women* and the abominable practice of *trafficking in women* and children have *held back women's progress* and that of their countries. The Agency addresses *gender inequalities* […]; *gender considerations* cut across all aspects of USAID programs.[84]

The paragraph above clearly illustrates the understanding of "gender inequalities" and "gender considerations" that the WID seeks to promote throughout the whole set of USAID programs. The WID promotes "equal opportunity for women and men" through improving the position of women both in terms of their increased participation in social, economic, and political life and in terms of protecting them from health and criminal threats. In other words, "equal opportunity" means upgrading women's status to that of men rather than ensuring equality of both women *and* men. "Gender inequalities" imply that one gender is made inferior to the other. As I have argued in previous chapters, this essentializes positions of women and men in the society and in this way reinforces rather than ameliorates gender inequalities.

Another important dimension to such constructions of "gender," "women," and "men" is the emphasis on issues that render women particularly vulnerable and define them in the context of physical disability. Those issues are the HIV/AIDS pandemic and trafficking in women. I argue that the Agency focuses on these two issues as opposed to other, more locally specific issues of gender violence or of health risks due to their perceived global nature. This provides discursive alignment with the "global reach" orientation that characterizes American post-Cold War assistance and especially its direction in the aftermath of September 11. In this way, these specific issues are constructed in ways which link them to the perceived immediate strategic concerns of the U.S..

Such a "globalization" of the relevant issues is of consequence for how they are understood and defined, for it implies that women

everywhere are affected by these issues in the same way. "Everywhere" of course refers to every aid/assistance recipient rather than indeed everywhere in the world. Thus, the divide is further maintained between those who are affected by disease or subjected to criminal activities and those who are not. The sharp distinction between the donor who develops "women's programs" and the aid/assistance recipient who suffers from a problem contradicts the nature of those (global) issues and, thus, prevents their solution. In other words, if these issues are indeed global, they are the result of processes that are going on in different countries and of connections and mutual dependencies between countries that are rich and poor, or more or less democratic. One of such "global" issues that has been receiving considerable attention from USAID is the trafficking in women.

Trafficking in women was first introduced on the USAID agenda in the late 1990s and was seen as a problem that is particularly acute in the former Soviet Union. In 1998 the Global Survival Network (no longer active) presented the results of a two-year undercover investigation into the trafficking of women for prostitution from Russia and the Newly Independent States in the form of a final report entitled *Crime & Servitude: An Expose in the Traffic in Women for Prostitution from the Newly Independent States*, and a 42-minute documentary video entitled *Bought & Sold*. In addition, the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement was increasingly concerned with the interconnections between organized crime, drug trafficking, trafficking in weapons, and trafficking in human beings. By now assistance to combat these issues is growing; for example, as of 2004, the Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues reported that eight out of eleven initiatives it was supporting throughout the world had to do with supporting women in war and conflict zones and fighting the spread of violence against and trafficking of women.[85]

In her remarks to the organization Women in International Security, Paola J. Dobriansky, Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs, made a connection between women and "global" or "transnational" threats and the issue of American security. It was argued that women are part of the "drugs, bugs, and thugs" threat to national security. They fall victim to transnational threats that are either illegal or contagious. Infectious diseases, such as SARS, avian flu or HIV/AIDS then "cause both direct harm to the health and well-being of those infected and ancillary *damage to societies and economies.*" Drawing on the National Intelligence Reports, Dobriansky emphasized the fact that these diseases "endanger U.S. citizens at home and abroad, threaten U.S. armed forces deployed overseas, and exacerbate social and political *instability in key*

countries and regions, in which the U.S. has significant interests." In a similar vein,

> crimes like trafficking in persons can contribute to a vicious cycle of collapsing order and increasing criminality that *destabilizes states and even regions,* [… and] the forced prostitution that is frequently related to trafficking in persons can expedite the spread of HIV, TB, and other diseases.

Further, the connection is made to drug trafficking, "a well-known cousin of trafficking in persons [that] sets in motion a vicious cycle of corruption and violence and can ultimately *weaken states* and give rise to *elements that threaten our security and also that of our allies and friends.*"[86]

What is important here is the connection to such key elements as the recently introduced U.S. government concept of "failing states" and their implications for international security. An idea has been recently reinforced that U.S. security is dependent on maintaining stability globally and intervening in the "failing states" whose collapse can potentially create a threat. As can be seen very well from the concluding paragraph of the same speech:

> What is important is that we have grasped the importance of *transnational issues*, and with others, we seek to resolve these *global problems*. Our ability to meet these challenges will bear heavily on *international security and prosperity* […]; our tasks are to recognize how critical these issues are, to see their direct correlation to our security and overall well-being, and to continue to work for their resolution.[87]

This points to an important shift that took place over the past decade of assistance – assistance is no longer only about giving aid to a particular country or region, it is about "global" order and stability. The strategic alignment of the most recent discursive change within USAID with these larger discursive shifts in U.S. foreign policy more generally helps strengthen the concept of "women as a target group."

According to one of the former employees of the WID, maintaining a close connection with the core U.S. foreign policy concerns has always been characteristic of the discourse and practice of the organization.

> I think that women's issues resonate very deeply with the core of USAID internal politics. That's something people like, that's something that's very easy to do, that's something that appeals to the right-wing and to the left-wing. An office like WID has less to do with

> what is needed overseas than with what is needed here in Washington.[88]

Even though the particular institutional politics of the WID back in Washington, DC do not translate directly into women's programs in Ukraine, due to the technical advisor status of this office, its programs are representative of the meaning of "women" and "gender" that is dominant within the assistance discourse in Washington, DC.

Women's Empowerment Through NGOs

As a direct consequence of the meaning of "women as a target group" discussed above, the concept "women's empowerment" has a particular meaning in this context. The assistance discourse maintains that women are empowered by being provided with a women-specific realm, such as an NGO sector. Thus, high levels of women's participation in civil society programs are discussed in positive terms. From the very beginning of assistance in Ukraine, women were more actively involved in many programs and initiatives than men. In fact, the civil society programs were and still are largely dominated by women. Many USAID officials have singled that out to remark upon:

> What was different were the local women themselves, who organized very quickly; they were very vocal, very articulate, mostly well educated. My experience as a whole was that Ukrainian women definitely wanted the change and they were prepared from very early on to get organized and work towards it. As a general concept I found women much more reform-minded than men. Many men benefited from the old system, they were little concerned about the reform, they were more cautious.[89]

Another report about the NIS Exchange and Training Program (NET), which began in 1993 and consisted in sending Ukrainians to the U.S. for trainings, states:

> A recent NET project evaluation shows that women find the training experience more positive than men, and are more likely to be expected to return with new ideas to the workplace. Women returnees appear to have received more increases in job responsibilities upon return from NET trainings.[90]

Drawing on the "women in development" discourse, USAID saw the feminization of NGOs as a sign of women's empowerment and a guarantee that "women's" issues would be addressed.

> Stronger NGO sectors appear especially to benefit *women and minority groups*, as well as to be *naturally* reflective of social concerns and public policy issues important to women and *minorities*. Although NGO sector support programs that the Agency [USAID] has sponsored in CEE/NIS countries were not initially designed to emphasize women's issues, they have been effective in responding to them. […] Most NGOs appear to provide equitable professional opportunities to women. […] For women especially, NGOs have provided a vehicle of self-expression, an opportunity to take leadership roles, and a mechanism for dealing with pertinent social issues.[91]

As is evident from the quote above, the discourse of "women in development" is based on the idea that women are not "good enough" (even if for social and political reasons) to express themselves in the same spheres as men. So the idea emerged that women have to be provided with their own public space, in which exclusively by virtue of being women they will address the kinds of social problems that are otherwise overlooked in the society. The following quote captures this essentialist notion of women being a marginalized but "naturally" better and more socially responsible group. According to USAID, the civil society sector

> […] offers women one of the few avenues currently available to them to promote broad-scale socioeconomic change, not just change connected with women's issues. It is a sector that is relatively devoid of corruption. This is attractive both because of women's dislike of corruption *per se* and concern about physical harm.[92]

Perhaps in an unintended way, this gendered perception of the "civil society" sector contradicts the expectation of a high social and political impact of civil society, and thus the idea of empowerment itself. Defining "civil society" as a realm for those who cannot fulfill themselves in other spheres gives it the aura of a specialized and secluded realm. The contribution of civil society to the overall democratization of society is then no longer seen in its direct impact on "mainstream" social and political developments. Instead, it is much more indirect because it consists of providing special opportunities for those who would not get them elsewhere. Keeping a particular segment of the population happy is no doubt beneficial for the society as a whole,

and yet it is unlikely to contribute to substantial democratic transformation or to address deeper issues that are at the heart of social inequalities, be those due to gender or to other factors.

Conclusion

Below I discuss the main findings emerging from the analysis of civil society assistance discourse in Washington, DC by answering the following core questions: (1) what does it mean to assist; (2) what does it mean to promote civil society through assistance; (3) what does it mean to empower women?

What Does It Mean to Assist?

The discourse of "assistance" emerged out of a sense of urgency to act in a world that was rapidly transforming as a result of the end of the Cold War. Understanding this impulse at its origin is important for understanding its limitations. "Assistance" did not develop as a response to particular problems that needed to be resolved, even if it presents itself as a force capable of "making a difference" for developments in other countries. Instead, "assistance" developed as a response to the political imperative to spend money in the part of the world previously closed to any intervention by the infamous Iron Curtain. This points to a fundamental problem not unknown to philanthropy in general: Being created as a response to an opportunity to spend money – even if for a "good cause" – makes any "good cause" secondary to the need to create an infrastructure that would facilitate the spending.

The notion of "assistance" itself was introduced to emphasize the novelty of the programs implemented in the former Soviet Block as well as their differences from the development "aid" administered elsewhere. It conceived of the political changes that occurred in the late 1980s in terms of unique opportunities it offered to the U.S. government to exert influence over the development of its former Cold War rival countries. The novelty of the assistance discourse necessitated new answers to the core questions of assistance: who should support whom, how, and why. I have shown how these questions were addressed through a set of new concepts as well as institutional measures. The discourse defined and enabled the creation of new assistance institutions as well as made it possible to accommodate some of the already existing ones, such as experts and programs from other parts of the world, thanks to the idea that "assistance" should be primarily about teaching a number of technical skills. The discourse of "assistance" also introduced new

political geographies, into which the recipients of assistance were placed. In the newly constructed "region" of assistance Ukraine was given a prominent place.

However, the discourse of "assistance" was less specific about how exactly assistance programs had to be designed and what exactly they were to achieve. I argue that this implicit vagueness of "assistance" is key to its successful functioning over a relatively long period of time and under conditions of rapid political change and overall instability in the former Soviet Block. Such vagueness or emptiness of the assistance discourse – rather than being just an initial stage – became one of its founding principles and determined a set of core ideas concerning ways of assisting civil society in Ukraine.

Defining "assistance" as "teaching" and expertise transfer implies that countries that "assist" already hold the knowledge of "proper" development and have the right conception of "civil society," which they then pass onto the assistance recipients. From the very beginning of "assistance" onward, "transition" has been defined as a temporary period of change whose nature and destination are assumed to be well-understood and clearly defined. Thus, "assistance" is meant to be a purely technical input that will give this change a push and introduce the right tools to go further; it has never been seen as a longer-term commitment. It is for this reason that early "phase out," somewhat ironically, has been an immediate goal from the very beginning of "assistance" and remained so for more than a decade. In a way, this has turned short-term intervention into a permanent state of "assistance," and led to an understanding of long-term processes such as democracy building and civil society development in a short-term perspective.

What Does It Mean to Promote Civil Society Through Assistance?

Although the idea of promoting democracy was not entirely new to U.S. assistance, the prominence given to the notion of civil society within the assistance discourse was unprecedented. The assistance discourse in fact played a significant role in the (re)invention of the idea of civil society. The civil society assistance discourse is based on three main concepts: "institutional capacity-building," "empowerment," and "sustainability." "Institutional capacity-building" refers to the setting up and developing particular organizational structures – NGOs – and training them in key procedures. Since these kinds of organizations were non-existent at the beginning of "assistance," "capacity-building" was defined in terms of reaching out to a wide audience of actual and potential civic leaders. This idea of spreading out widely was captured by the metaphor "let a

thousand flowers bloom," which made the initial civil society assistance look different from the civil society programs implemented in other "regions." However, I argue that this initial take was less different from the promotion of civil society elsewhere than it might at first seem. Importantly, the "flowers" that were invited to bloom in Ukraine and elsewhere in the region were all of the same kind, and the openness of this discourse did not go beyond allowing anyone to join in the space that was already externally defined. This is evident from the highly technical nature of civil society assistance defined through the concept of "institutional capacity-building." In fact, creating "institutionally capable" NGOs was not just an initial stage in civil society assistance but its founding principle and primary content that remained at the core of the discourse throughout the whole period I investigated. It has indeed evolved from building up basic "organizational capacity" towards introducing more sophisticated tools and techniques, such as "advocacy." Its technical nature, however, remains intact. This means that even in the "thousand flowers" period, civil society assistance was not aimed at promoting an open playing field for civil society groups of different kinds and ideologies. Neither had the relevance of the NGO "flowers" for the Ukrainian context been made into an issue to be addressed by assistance.

The technical nature of civil society assistance is particularly prominent in the discussion of the "sustainability" of the newly emerging/created civil society. The concept of "sustainability" endorsed the idea that after NGOs were created they had to be trained to become professional enough to take over the functions fulfilled by their American counterparts. This led to an increase in professional trainings for NGOs towards the year 2000. Instead of promoting a "thousand flowers," USAID is now developing programs to strengthen think tanks, resource centers, and advocacy NGOs – all being defined as organizations with highly skilled staff that provides technical expertise in the areas related to "assistance." In the context of a permanent "phase out," the "sustainability" of Ukrainian civil society is thus understood in terms of the capacity of Ukrainian NGOs to facilitate "assistance" on their own.

The paternalistic conception of assistance as top-down teaching implied that the donor reserved the right to decide not only who but also what had to be taught. The relationship between the ones who know and the ones who have to be taught was further sustained through the concept of "empowerment." It consisted of three key elements: the notion of "social transition issues" that defined Ukrainians as being in a dramatic state of disarray because of the social and economic difficulties

transition entailed; the notion of information and awareness-raising that implied that Ukrainians were disapproving of the reform because they lacked information about its virtues; and the notion of the wrong mentality that Ukrainians were said to have developed during the oppressive Soviet period and that seemed to be in the way of their fully embracing the promise of transition to democracy and market economy. On the basis of these three core notions, "empowerment" was defined as education towards embracing the new ideals offered by "assistance" and liberation from the legacies of the past that may be in the way. The heavy emphasis on mentality change implied that there was something inherently wrong with the way Ukrainians thought of themselves and of their opportunities and responsibilities, and thus it constructed the demand for being taught. Even more importantly, it downgraded locally grown ideas about civil society and activism as stemming from the dark communist past. In other words, if Ukrainians were more interested in other issues or different forms of activism deemed inappropriate by "assistance," the wrong Soviet mentality must have been responsible.

The concept of "empowerment" enabled the civil society assistance discourse to address concerns about problems and failures of a structural nature without actually offering structural solutions or taking an explicitly political stand. It helped redefine socio-economic and political inequalities in terms of individual emotional and psychological problems and move them to the realm of "cultural" or "mentality" issues. In her analysis of women's health projects implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Russia, Michele Rivkin-Fish makes a similar observation about the workings of "cultural" arguments in assistance: "Seeing the problems as based in the need for emotional revival worked to deny the fact that problems of power inequalities […] were products of larger political processes and arrangements."[93]

I argue that recognition of and attention to local politics in the broad sense of the word would be a crucial starting point from which assistance could develop programs that would indeed empower Ukrainians to address their problems. However, this will not happen if assistance systematically and perhaps even purposefully overlooks those inequalities in the first place.

What Does It Mean to Empower Women?

The women's agenda sustained in Washington, DC is largely driven by the "women in development" discourse dating back to the 1970s. Although it is not directly applied to "assistance," it still has a strong formative power. Most of the women's programs developed for

"assistance" are based on the "women in development" discourse, which is sustained by the concept of "women as a target group." The latter constructs women as a generally underprivileged and marginalized group that is defined by its shared experience of oppression and violence against its members. This also implies defining women as an unproblematically uniform category. In other words, once a women's issue is defined, it is implied that all women in the target region are affected by it in the same way. Moreover, the women in the target region are implicitly juxtaposed to those from the assisting countries. This concept is more recently reinforced within USAID through its connection to the discourse on "global threats and security." To make this connection explicit, a particular emphasis is laid on the issues of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and of trafficking, both having a stronger "global" connotation than any other issue related to women's health or exposure to violence. This new global system of meanings implies that women in "other" countries that are in need of assistance are particularly vulnerable because they can fall victim not only to domestic forms of violence and oppression but also to transnational threats. Transnationality, however, is not taken as far as to include more developed, "assisting" countries in the picture when solutions to the threats are sought.

The concept "women as a target group" is central for the ideas related to women's empowerment that are sustained in Washington, DC. It is believed that women's empowerment arises from a women-specific forum for self-realization and action. Rather than addressing the structural gender problems in the society as a whole, this discourse tends to show preference for creating a "ghetto"-like space that would be available only to women, in which they could safely practice social activism. Assistance assigns this role to the NGO sector, and its feminized nature is defined as a sign of women's empowerment; the more women are engaged in NGO work, the more empowered they are believed to be as a whole.

The notion of gender, even though present within the organizational discourse of USAID, is not particularly prominent. It was incorporated as a response to the increased use of the term in policy-making internationally (as, for example, with respect to "gender mainstreaming") but has not to this date gained the power to structure the discourse on women and women's issues in the context of assistance. However, it is one of the terms that was introduced to the recipient countries as part of the "assistance" language, and thus it is part of the language shared among (or at least known by) professionals

in both Washington, DC and Ukraine. I look more into the life of the concept of "gender" in Kiev in the following chapter.

In this chapter I have outlined the origins of the civil society assistance discourse and the core concepts that define it. I have particularly focused on continuities within USAID organizational discourse and practice. I have shown that despite the overall emphasis on the novelty and unprecedented nature of "assistance," "old" ideas and practices were successfully incorporated into "assistance" as well. I have also stressed several points of ambiguity or instances of vague meaning that are evident in the core concepts. In the following chapter, I will show how the civil society assistance discourse is filled with more specific meanings as a result of intense East–West interactions that take place in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, between USAID representatives and Ukrainian mediators and recipients of "assistance".

Notes

[1] Carothers, "Revitalizing Democracy Assistance: The Challenge of USAID," p. 4.

[2] These countries were also referred to as "Newly" Independent States.

[3] Hansen, interview by the author, August 5, 2004.

[4] Here meaning the Soviet Union; people often say "Russia" to refer to the former Soviet Union.

[5] Turner, interview by the author, August 17, 2004, emphasis added.

[6] U.S. Congress, Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasia Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act, 1992, emphasis added.

[7] Ibid., emphasis added.

[8] U.S. Congress, Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act, 1989, emphasis added.

[9] Source: USAID financial information system. However, this USD 1 billion increase for FY 1994 was not an annual appropriation, strictly speaking, because the funds were meant to be used for starting up a whole range of programs, strengthening the field missions, and so on.

[10] Excluding the three Baltic republics, which were funded together with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe under the SEED Act.

[11] Donald L. Pressley, "Preface." In *A Decade of Change: Profiles of USAID Assistance to Europe and Eurasia*, edited by USAID. (Washington, DC: USAID, 1999), emphasis added.

[12] Lyday, interview by the author, August 20, 2004.

[13] In 1993 the Government Performance and Results Act was passed that requested federal agencies to develop and report on quantifiable performance indicators as opposed to qualitative approaches to program evaluation Carothers, "Revitalizing Democracy Assistance: The Challenge of USAID."

[14] Poland, Hungary, and former Czechoslovakia signed the so-called "Visegrád Declaration" on coordinating their international strategies in February 1991. This was the first political agreement reached by former communist countries without the participation of the Soviet Union and, in fact, specifically with the idea of protecting those countries from interference by the Soviet Union.

[15] Eisen, interview by the author, August 5, 2004.

[16] Robyn Melzig and Ron Sprout, "Divergence and Convergence in Eastern Europe or Eurasia: One Transition Path or Two?" (Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, Program Office, 2007).

[17] Graduation dates: Estonia (1996), Czech Republic, Slovenia (1997), Hungary, Latvia (1999), Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic (2000), Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania (2008). USAID, "USAID Europe and Eurasia: An Overview," (Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, 2009).

[18] The Community of Democracies global initiative is one of the most visible in this respect. It is an effort launched by Secretary of State Madeline Albright in 2000 to convene regular meetings at the level of foreign ministers, to explore cooperation in the international arena on the basis of shared political values, which comprises both SEED and FSA countries [http://community-democracies.org/]

[19] In the 1990s this was the largest U.S. assistance effort at the time, and the USAID mission to Kiev was the third biggest mission after Egypt and Israel

[20] U.S. Department of State, "FY 2001 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations." (Washington, DC, 2000), emphasis added.

[21] Daniel A. Russell, "Ukraine and Its Relations with the United States: Testimony before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe." (Washington, DC: Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 2010).

[22] Office of Spokesman/U.S. Department of State. "Interview with Secretary of State Powell." (Washington, DC, May 13, 2004).

[23] Richard Boucher, "Press Statement." (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, October 14, 2004).

[24] Steven Pifer, "Testimony before the House International Relations Committee." (Washington, DC: U.S. State Department, May 12, 2004), emphasis added.

[25] USAID, "Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2007–2012." (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, 2007).

[26] Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[27] Henry R. Nau, "Conservative Internationalism," *Policy Review* 150, (Aug.–Sep. 2008).

[28] Fox, interview by the author, August 9, 2004.

[29] USAID, "Democracy and Governance: A Conceptual Framework," no. 24 (Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, November 1998), p. 1.

[30] Established by the Congress in 1998, the HRDF is the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's flagship program, used to fulfil the bureau's mandate of monitoring and promoting human rights and democracy

worldwide. HRDF programs are designed to promote democracy and human rights and acts as the Department's venture capital for democracy.

[31] MCC was established in 2004 to administer funds under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA); every year it approves new countries as eligible for Compact assistance on the basis of 16 indicators that measure things like political and economic freedom, investments in education and health care, control of corruption, and respect for civil liberties and the rule of law. Once selected as eligible, countries begin a consultation process that includes citizens, nongovernmental organizations, and representatives of the private sector and government to identify the barriers to poverty reduction and economic growth. MCC teams then work in partnership to engage with countries on their Compact proposals to ensure that projects meet economic growth and poverty reduction targets. A Compact also describes how the country plans to manage and implement its MCA program, including how it will ensure financial accountability, transparency, fair and open procurement, and measurable results. Selection as an eligible country does not guarantee funding. On November 8, 2006, Ukraine was announced as a Compact Eligible Country together with Moldova and Jordan [available at http://www.mcc.gov/mcc/press/releases/release-110806-thresholdcountryselection.shtml].

[32] Thomas Melia, "The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion," (discussion paper prepared for the Princeton Project on National Security, Working Group on Global Institutions and Foreign Policy Infrastructure, 2005).

[33] United States Government Accountability Office, *Foreign Aid Reform: Comprehensive Strategy, Interagency Coordination, and Operational Improvements Would Bolster Current Efforts* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2009).

[34] As a consequence of such strategy, the agency's policy bureau was eliminated in 2006, putting the agency under the State Department control. Some authors speak about the increasing marginalization of the USAID in the U.S. foreign policy: Carothers, "Revitalizing Democracy Assistance: The Challenge of USAID." Whether USAID will be folded altogether into the State Department will be clear in due course, as this book is being published (the first half of 2010) several activities to revisit the infrastructure of assistance programs are under way. Some recent critiques of existing intuitional set-ups can be found in a July 2005 monograph from two former Clinton Administration aid officials*: Organizing U.S. Foreign Aid: Confronting the Challenges of the 21 Century*, by Carol Lancaster and Ann Van Dusen, Brookings Institution Press, 2005, quoted in Melia, "The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion."

[35] Melia, "The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion," p. 1.

[36] Carothers, "Revitalizing Democracy Assistance: The Challenge of USAID."

[37] Ibid.

[38] Hansen, interview by the author, August 5, 2004.

[39] Turner, interview by the author, 17 August 2004, emphasis added.

[40] USAID/West NIS, "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request (R4)." June 3, 1996.

41 USAID, "Core Report of the New Partnerships Initiative (Internal Draft)," (Washington, DC: USAID, July 21, 1995).

42 USAID, "Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story. Building Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States." (USAID Bureau for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Office of Democracy and Governance, October 1999), p. v.

43 The phrase comes from a speech delivered by Chairman Mao Zedong shortly before China's Cultural Revolution. In the original, "let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" was proclaimed to encourage freedom of expression, debate, and independent thinking, and gave rise to the Hundred Flowers movement of 1956–1957. However, shortly afterwards it was twisted to mean that upper-class artists, writers, and scientists should have no greater claim than their proletarian counterparts. In fact, it was said, the upper classes had been monopolizing the cultural and scientific spheres for too long. Politically, this translated into the Communist Party of China demarcating a clear line between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries. As Lu Ting-Yi, the director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, announced: "No freedom should be extended to counter-revolutionaries: for them we only have a dictatorship. A clear political line must be drawn between friend and foe" (Lu Ting-Yi, May 26, 1956). Within months, the same slogan was used to justify persecution and purges of political opponents.

44 Hansen, interview by the author, August 5, 2004.

45 USAID, "Core Report of the New Partnerships Initiative."

46 USAID, "Lessons in Implementation," p. xi.

47 USAID, "A Decade of Change: Profiles of USAID Assistance to Europe and Eurasia." (Washington, DC: USAID, 1999), p. 10.

48 USAID, "Lessons in Implementation," p. 11, emphasis added.

49 USAID/West NIS, "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request," p. 1.

50 Ibid., p. 3.

51 Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU), *Returns of 1998 Election to the Ukrainian Parliament*, (1998) [cited 10 June 2000. Available from www.cvu.kiev.ua.]

52 USAID/West NIS, "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request."

53 USAID, "From Transition to Partnership: A Strategic Framework for USAID Programs in Europe and Eurasia," (Washington, DC: USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, December 1999), p. ii.

54 This "communist phobia" is evident from various assessments of the political process in the fSU – high levels of support for communist parties are persistently quoted in USAID documents as worrisome tendencies (for example, USAID/Kiev, "Ukraine: Country Strategic Plan for FY 2003–2007," (Kiev: USAID Regional Mission for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, September 2002)). Other assistance professionals pointed this out during our interviews as well.

55 USAID, "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999–2002," no. 45, (March 29, 1999), p. 2.

56 USAID, "From Transition to Partnership," p. ii.

57 Ibid., p. 33.

[58] USAID, "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999–2002," p. 11.

[59] USAID/West NIS, "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request," p. 3.

[60] Ibid., p. 63.

[61] USAID, "From Transition to Partnership," p. 33.

[62] USAID, "Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned," (Washington, DC: Office for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, June 2002).

[63] USAID, "From Transition to Partnership," p. vi.

[64] USAID, "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999–2002," p. 31.

[65] Ibid., p. 10.

[66] Ibid., p. 12.

[67] USAID, "From Transition to Partnership," p. 3, emphasis added.

[68] Brian J. Atwood, "Statement before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, January 24, 1994).

[69] Turner, interview by the author, August 17, 2004.

[70] USAID, "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999–2002," p. 1–2.

[71] USAID, "Core Report of the New Partnerships Initiative."

[72] Ibid., emphasis added.

[73] Hansen, interview by the author, August 5, 2004.

[74] USAID/Kiev, "Ukraine: Country Strategic Plan for FY 2003–2007," p. 5.

[75] Hillary Rodham Clinton, "America Must Back Ukraine's Struggle for Democracy." *Financial Times*, (December 27, 2004), emphasis added.

[76] Starting on October 31, 2005.

[77] This generally includes the so-called "think tanks," which are registered as NGOs. For example, Freedom House has administered grants to such think tanks.

[78] U.S. Department of State, "FY 2005 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2004).

[79] USAID/Kiev, "Ukraine: Country Strategic Plan for FY 2003–2007."

[80] Advocacy Institute, *Dovidnyk Z Advokasi* [Advocacy Manual], (2003), p. 8.

[81] USAID/WID, *About WID* [cited 10 August 2005. Available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/about_wid.html.]

[82] USAID/WID, *About WID Activities* [cited 10 August 2005. Available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/activities/activities.html.]

[83] Lyday, interview by the author, August 20, 2004.

[84] USAID/WID, *Gender Matters: Integrating Gender – Achieving Results* (Washington, DC: WID IQC Brochure, 2002).

[85] U.S. Department of State, "U.S. International Women's Issues Initiatives: Fact Sheet," (Washington, DC: Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues, May 18, 2004).

[86] Paola J. Dobriansky, "Bugs, Drugs, and Thugs: Dealing with Transnational Threats/ Remarks to Women in International Security." (Washington, DC: U.S. State Department, May 12, 2004), emphasis added.

[87] Ibid., emphasis added.

[88] Lyday, interview by the author, August 20, 2004.

[89] Turner, interview by the author, August 17, 2004.
[90] USAID/West NIS, "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request."
[91] USAID, "Lessons in Implementation," p. 5–10.
[92] Ibid., p. 23.
[93] Michele Rivkin-Fish, "Health Development Meets the End of State Socialism: Visions of Democratization, Women's Health, and Social Well-Being for Contemporary Russia," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 24, no. 1 (2000): p. 98.

6
Assistance Implementation in Kiev

Being the capital city of Ukraine, Kiev is a meeting point for a range of actors, such as the USAID Mission, American NGO subcontractors and implementing partners, and Ukrainians that work as local staff or at NGOs that administer assistance. The implementation of assistance programs is dependent on local partners and staff. That is why Kiev is not just a point of transfer of funds from the donor to the recipient, but also a site where American and Ukrainian mediators of assistance collaborate, even if on unequal terms.

This site of interaction is characterized by the highest level of (re)negotiation based on immediate personal encounters between representatives of the "assistance" discourse and locals. Importantly, these encounters take place within the confines of the assistance discourse rather than on a "neutral" territory and the roles of participants are divided between "insiders" and "outsiders" to the discourse. In this chapter, I answer the following core questions: What does it mean to mediate assistance, what does it mean to mediate between civil society and assistance, and what does it mean to empower women?

Assistance: "East Joins West for Change?"

USAID opened its Missions in Moscow (to serve operations in Russia), Kiev (Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova), Yerevan (TransCaucasus region), and Almaty (Central Asia) in 1993.[1] Initially, those were maintained by only one or two American members of staff assisted by a few local employees. The budget appropriations were made for the whole of the NIS and the programs were planned and controlled from Washington, DC. By the mid-1990s this changed: the local missions received bigger budgetary authority and started planning and implementing their own grant programs within the overall budget that would be appropriated by the U.S. Congress per country. Missions could do their own procurement work and solicit proposals. This is significant

because actual interactions between the Americans and the Ukrainians working at and with the Mission had more impact on decision-making.

An important element of U.S. assistance is the group of subcontractors and implementing partners that work with USAID within a certain assistance category. According to the regulations, the U.S. government assistance rarely goes directly to organizations in the recipient country; much more often there is a bidding procedure among American subcontractors. The subcontractors work either on the basis of contracts, including so-called indefinite quantity contracts (IQC), or on the basis of grants and cooperative agreements.[2] In the area of democracy and civil society assistance most of the work is done on the basis of grants and cooperative agreements (i.e., presumably by non-profit organizations). This means that subcontractors compete not only on the basis of their rates and quality of services but also on the basis of their proposals, in which they try to match their best selling points and expertise with the priorities of USAID. Thus, there is observable continuity between the programs they are implementing in different parts of the world. Before the USAID Mission in Kiev gained more responsibilities and planning authority over the field, the subcontractors and implementing partners had been key in running the programs on the ground. These organizations were among the first to start doing work in the field, which turned them into bearers of knowledge and expertise in particularly high demand.

One of the early programs implemented in Ukraine through Winrock International, an American NGO subcontracting women's programs from USAID, had the following subtitle: "East Joins West for Change." This slogan is largely representative of the assistance discourse that developed in Kiev. It implies a shared effort towards a common goal, in which the West knows how the goal can be achieved and the East joins in. Thus, even though the aspiration is the same, the contributions of the two sides are not. These ideas are further embedded in the concept of the "world/international community."

The concept of the "world/international community", as it is used in the assistance discourse, was created by Americans, many of whom saw this new West–East dialogue as an opportunity to expand their activities to the "global" scale. For example, Counterpart International is one of the key USAID subcontractors in the area of civil society assistance. The organization was registered in 1965 as a New York–based Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP), dedicated to the rehabilitation, welfare, and growth of the Pacific islands after the Second World War. It continued working exclusively in the Pacific Region until 1992, when its whole image and direction of work were

changed. The Board of Directors decided to expand the organization's activities and to move its headquarters to Washington, DC, thus positioning the organization in a new way. It received its present name – Counterpart International, and its new mission statement is worded in a more global language: "Counterpart's mission of building *One Just World* through service and partnership – helping people to help themselves to create a more ecologically and socially sustainable world." By now Counterpart boasts experience in "some 60 countries around the world […] and the number is growing."[3] The first "global" move Counterpart International made was to Ukraine in 1993, where it stayed for almost a decade as one of the biggest USAID subcontractors for civil society assistance. In the late 1990s it expanded further in the post-Soviet space to the countries of Central Asia. More recently, it bid successfully for development projects in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Another U.S.-based NGO, Winrock International, is exemplary in many ways; an NGO from Arkansas known for its work in the area of agriculture, it went "global" in 1985 when it initiated its agriculture programs in the Third World. The way it became known in the former Soviet Union as a women's NGO is puzzling at the first sight. In 1989 the leadership development project of Winrock in Africa was led by Elise Fiber-Smith, who made it a successful project by connecting different women's groups under the heading of women's empowerment. The success of this program gave her a mandate to expand its geographical scope, and she was among the first representatives of American NGOs who went to the former Soviet Union. Having participated in a series of conferences on women in transition, Elise Fiber-Smith started joint initiatives with representatives of Russian and Ukrainian women's organizations. In this case, the heading of "women's empowerment" proved to be a good term that connected the development experience of Winrock with the new opportunities to expand into the post-Soviet space.

The assistance discourse created a new space for different NGOs to redefine their activities and experience in universally applicable terms that frame them as having appeal and importance for "the whole world." This also meant, however, that the applicability of these concepts and methods for the Ukrainian context was asserted before there was time to learn more about it. Nonetheless, the concept embodies the desire of both sides to establish a common ground. The Westerners see assistance as a way to socialize Ukrainians into their world of projects and fund-raising. The Ukrainians see assistance as a channel to (re)enter the "world/international community" by acquiring the tools and skills that are in demand internationally.

The idea of assistance is that Ukrainians are provided not only with resources as such but also with access to information about where and how these resources can be obtained. What the Americans working on the ground were bringing was the expertise they themselves had in fitting into the world of assistance and handling the challenges and requirements it entails. In the words of Sarah Tisch, former coordinator of the NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium that was created with the help of Winrock International,

> there were women's groups organizing amongst themselves but our *role was to get the Western resources for them.* Clearly, if they were organized on their own they had no money […]; civil society organizations had no place to turn but the outside […]; our job was to make all that happen, so it was the facilitating role.[4]

In addition to the idea of sharing resources, the concept of "world/international community" includes the idea of a shared policy language. Many of the concepts used in assistance discourse have no equivalents in Russian or Ukrainian; they are either used in their English versions, such as "advocacy" or "gender," substituted by a descriptive term, as is the case with "awareness-raising" or "outreach," or Ukrainian terms have been found for them, which, however, remain very new and unclear, such as empowerment – *upovnovazhennia*, or sustainable development – *stalyi rozvytok*. It is believed to be important to introduce the key terms into assistance contexts, even if they have no equivalents in the respective languages, because sharing a term creates an entry point for models and procedures. The difficulties as well as the necessity of translation are captured in the following quote from a Ukrainian with more than a decade of experience in mediating assistance:

> We had Americans, we had someone from the Diaspora in our office, and yet we spent a whole month trying to translate "advocacy" and "outreach" and we failed, although we could understand what those notions meant […]; then we gathered our first grantees for a training and they said: we don't know the term advocacy but we are doing it […]; the term is important because if people give a name to what they do, they start doing it differently, they use different tools.[5]

The concept of "world/international community" helps to socialize its new Ukrainian members into assistance discourse and practice. The Western mediators of assistance see their role as one of sharing the professional knowledge, introducing the skills and the language that determine whether an NGO will be able to approach donors with

successful projects. The Ukrainians who are involved in assistance are eager to prove that they can be just as "professional" as their Western partners in using the language and the tools.

> When we conduct trainings, presentations or other events, we explain that we want to be part of the international community. That is why it is important for us to know all this terminology in English. We need it to be able to communicate, to write, to understand – without it *professionalism* is impossible.[6]

"World/international community" is not a shared place strictly speaking; rather, Americans see their role akin to that of missionaries. An example from my interview about the 1998 Trafficking Prevention Program mentions two leaders, one of whom was very enthusiastic about the project but proved "not realistic with money," whereas the other turned out to be "too independent." As one interviewee put it: "I have my own constraints: people who give money have their priorities; she [the NGO leader] was too independent, which is good, but then if she wants to be that independent why doesn't she find her own money?" As a result, both organizations were dropped from the list of project partners. The Americans felt that their goal was not just simple resource transfer but also imposition of assistance rules and requirements. Their knowledge of the assistance world was one of the key areas of expertise they could and wanted to offer: "[…]The donors were holding us responsible. So on all the paperwork it had to be [us] instead of the consortium leaders, because we were the channel through which the money came."[7]

The inequality between the American and the Ukrainian parts of the new "world/international community" has always been exacerbated by their unequal access to resources. As one of the former Winrock employees recalls her experience in Ukraine:

> The discussion was also perceived as to be about "where the money should go;" people smell the money […]; it's easy to be the rich one in the room, us naïve Americans asking about what has to be done. But people don't say: this is not our thing, we won't do it. They say of course we could learn how to do it.[8]

On the other side, some Ukrainians felt that the line between sharing knowledge and being arrogant and disrespectful had been crossed by some of their American colleagues. They were very sensitive to being intentionally kept in a position of less qualified little sisters. One of my respondents recalls:

> If we did not know something, this did not mean that we would never learn. It also did not mean that we were incapable of understanding that, even though our colleagues declared that they were listening to us, in practice they were not. I personally felt as if I had been exchanging one yoke for another. And this was not what I expected from new initiatives.[9]

However, the notion of "world/international community" is not a static entity; it changes as the terms of the American-Ukrainian interaction change. Over the period under study, a substantial number of Ukrainians have been socialized into assistance discourse and practice and thereby also acquired a stronger claim over the "world/international community." Increasingly, Ukrainians talk about the importance of having a say in the choice of priorities and themes that are supported by the donor. Remarkable in this context is an event that took place on 29 and 30 September 2004 in Kiev: the Ukrainian National Conference on *Ethics Guidelines for the Third Sector* organized and sponsored within the framework of the USAID-funded project "Ukrainian Community Action Network" (UCAN). The idea of the conference can hardly be claimed to be "home-grown;" rather it is a follow-up on similar events taking place in other countries (the Czech Republic and Slovakia being particularly prominent examples). Neither is the idea exclusively native to civil society or even the Third Sector; it is also adopted in other sectors and is increasingly part of various professional codes. In fact, one of the presentations at the conference was dedicated to "Developing Professional Ethics Codes for PR Specialists."

Adopting ethics codes is also a topical issue for the donors, as is evident, for example, in the recent activities of the Ukrainian Forum of Donors. The forum is an informal assembly of donors and administrators of assistance operating in Ukraine, which resembles similar formats in other countries. These different forums meet within the framework of annual East European Donors Meetings that have taken place since 1996. The main goals of the forum are to improve coordination between donor organizations and to raise the professional standard of their work. Every forum has adopted its own ethical code. And so the idea that Ukrainian NGOs gather to discuss ethical standards not only has its origins outside of the NGO community but is also a way to pick up an initiative going on in other countries. This event closely reflects the concept of the "world/international community" in that it is based on the aspiration to follow the most recent trends in the world of assistance and beyond.

There are several features, however, that made this conference stand out among other donor-inspired ideas and events. First, instead of announcing the conference from the start, UCAN worked for two years on engaging different NGOs in a dialogue about whether or not and in what form they would like to address the issue of ethics. Second, most of these activities were not funded and, thus, depended mostly on the initiative and enthusiasm of different local NGOs. Third, the majority of participants were Ukrainian, including the representatives of granting agencies. Such participatory planning created a format in which the actual forum for discussion became as important as the (externally introduced) issue.

The resulting discussion is very interesting for the variety of re-interpretations, contestations, and new ideas it contained. It reached out to such fundamental questions as what the assistance is meant for and how to improve it. The failures of assistance were framed as a shared problem of those who tend to abuse donors' funds as well as the donors themselves, whose lack of context-sensitive programming is harmful, unprofessional, and irresponsible. The question of why and how NGOs have to be ethical was broadened in a variety of ways that can be seen as openings in the donor-driven discourse on NGOs.

At the panel discussion "Ethics of the Relationships between Donors and Civil Society Organizations" participants were on several occasions employing the distinction between "donors," i.e., foreign governments and private bodies that were actually giving the funds, and "administrators of assistance," i.e., those who actually administer and distribute assistance. As one of the participants explained:

> There are programs and priorities, and there is the actual implementation – the latter can be influenced. You can implement the programs in a stupid straightforward way as the donor tells you or you can say "no, this is not a good way." You can influence the donor by saying that for *this* country and under *these* conditions this is not going to work.[10]

Here the mediators of assistance are entrusted with much agency in that they are perceived as a capable and legitimate agent of change and influence in the world of assistance. This is very recent rethinking. At the beginning of assistance to Ukraine the main divisions were between those who were giving funds and those asking for them. In a sense, Ukrainians working at subcontractors' offices were also on the side of the recipients of assistance, since they were only there to learn and to be

paid for fulfilling certain tasks rather than to participate or innovate in the program design.

The recent rethinking of this division has much to do with the fact that the number of Ukrainians distributing assistance and implementing donor projects as well as their technical expertise have increased over the past decade. The emergence of the new "assistance elite" – Ukrainians professionally doing assistance – led to the emergence of the new idea that the donors have to be influenced and that Ukrainian concerns have to be communicated more forcefully in the assistance dialogue. As one of the Ukrainians said: "our task is to make sure that the donors – seeing all the failures – do not tell us that our country is hopeless; we have to communicate to them, to work to improve the programs together." It is interesting that the consolidation of the Ukrainian assistance elite leads to the emergence of a new discourse on the quality and professionalism of assistance and on the responsibility that various assistance professionals have. Another participant of the Ethics Conference underlined:

> It is important for donor organizations to practice what they preach […]; there should be no situations when a donor is imposing its own idea, its own narrow specialized projects and programs on an NGO because donors should follow their own ethic norms and stick to the principle "resources are ours – ideas are yours." […] There should be open initiatives accessible to everyone: if a donor can find the *clients* for it, it's fine; if not, this means the initiative is bad.[11]

Here the notion of competition is placed in a new context: it is not only the NGOs that have to deliver quality and compete for donors' projects but also the donors, whose ideas have to be vindicated by the local interest. Ethical standards, it is argued by another participant, have to be applied not only to the NGOs but also to the donors themselves. Iaryna Borenko noted: "Donors are responsible as professionals to have ethical norms; in their professional behavior they have to adhere to certain ethical principles."[12] Some concerns are even voiced as to whether or not the concept of "professional ethics" should be applied to NGOs at all. Another participant explained:

> If we aim at adopting the professional ethics code, it means that we exclude certain kinds of people, for example, those who work in the civil society aside to a different kind of job. This would mean that we choose to enhance the current tendency of professionalization of the civil society, but maybe we need mechanisms to keep civil society more open as a sector.[13]

The notion of "world/international community" is re-thought in that it is no longer primarily seen as a prescription to be followed but rather as a way to qualify and become eligible. This means that once Ukrainians felt they had gained that status, they started to create more openings around the questions of what priorities to follow and which assistance programs should continue in the longer term. The need to learn the concepts and procedures of "assistance" is legitimized with the concept of "world/international community"; however, the applicability of those concepts and procedures is kept an open question. Another participant of the ethics conference argued:

> The *knowledge* that has been accumulated in the world is so big. Maybe the ideas that the donors introduce do not work for Ukraine now but we will get there; maybe in a year, maybe more we will want to use this knowledge. However, we always have to ask the donors why they think this is a good thing for Ukraine.[14]

Here again, the connection to the "world/international community" is a way to present particular ideas (note that they are here referred to as knowledge) as important; however, their relevance and applicability to the context are left open. It is up to Ukrainians to develop at their own speed and to see whether or not and when these ideas will fit them. In the next section I look at whether or not the core concepts that define civil society were accepted, transformed, or rejected altogether as they "traveled" from Washington, DC to Kiev.

Civil Society: Insiders or Outsiders?

The following sub-section analyzes whether and how the concepts of capacity-building, empowerment, and sustainability are accepted and used by different actors who operate in Kiev as implementers as well as recipients of assistance.

Capacity-building: How to Become "Professional"

The fact that NGOs in Ukraine first had to be created and then supported led to particular developments. Initially, civil society assistance budgets were not meant to be spent on one big project. In line with the "thousand flowers" metaphor as discussed above, the idea was to reach out to as many recipients as possible and to support as many small activities as possible. To accommodate this idea within the assistance bureaucracy USAID relies on intermediaries who receive an annual budget to be

distributed in this way. For example, in the early 1990s, the U.S. government established the Eurasia Foundation, through which it was distributing most of its small grants geared towards civil society. The idea was to extend small amounts of money to many different groups.

One of the core activities of Winrock International in the 1990s was also the distribution of seed grants to women's NGOs in the NIS. Starting in 1994 the Seed Grants program was run by Winrock in Moscow on the basis of a USD 95,000 grant from the Eurasia Foundation and later a grant of around half a million dollars from USAID. Seed grants were ranging in size from USD 500 to USD 5,000. There were several application rounds per year that were assessed by a board comprised of Winrock staff and representatives of local women's NGOs with a ratio of 4:3 (local members on a rotation basis). To be eligible, an organization had to be a registered women's NGO, with special consideration given to applications "from the region," i.e., not based in the capital or a big city, and to NGOs that had never received a grant before. Giving priority to newly established organizations remained one of the key principles throughout the whole period of the NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium activities. The idea behind distributing seed grants was to give organizations a push, to spread the word among the groups with a potential to become a women's NGO rather than investing in long-term partnerships with a few organizations. Several Winrock coordinators highlighted that the rationale for seed grants was to support as many women's groups as possible "to be able to see who was there to work with."

So in Kiev the "thousand flowers" approach was also a matter of practicality: the subcontractors simply did not know with whom to work. As Katie Fox, one of the current NDI staff who worked in Ukraine in the early 1990s, explained: "The 'big seminar' approach was good: we used to invite up to forty people and then out of those there [would be] five or ten we could actually work with."[15] For the NDI as well as most other subcontractors, spreading support to many organizations was a way to "research" the field they knew nothing about and to establish local partners with whom they could continue working on more specific programs.

The meaning of the concept of "capacity-building" in Kiev are captured in the following quote:

> […]The Russian and Ukrainian women at the time had very little exposure to the outside – how could they? […] So our job was to *help these groups make connections and also make them more professional* so that they could hold their own with other Western women's

> coalitions, and that means that they had transparent operating procedures, that they could be *audited*, that they had democratic rules, vote on the president, have a budget, everybody would contribute and so a lot of it was *building the capacity of those organizations*. To work together through this umbrella organization and also by virtue of belonging to the umbrella organization, they would take some of the things that they were learning and apply them to their own organizations to make them *more fundable and more attractive* not only to foreign donors but also to what we hoped would be a growing group of Ukrainian philanthropists.[16]

In a recent evaluation of the "Strengthening Civil Society's Monitoring and Exposure of Corruption" component of the MCC-funded Program to Reduce Corruption in the Public Sector in Ukraine,[17] one finds a good illustration of the long-standing tension between the so-called "seeds" grants and targeting fewer initiatives with bigger and longer-term support.[18] In the words of its authors, the "seeds" approach may create the following difficulties for local NGOs:

> many grantees we spoke with referred to the challenging constraints in accomplishing their objectives under assistance with such modest funding and only several months of time to work.[19] This has sometimes caused grantees not to take modest additional steps that might magnify impact through broader dissemination, such as making a DVD that could be shown to additional audiences which would potentially have influence after the end of the project. […]An alternative design approach would have included an effort from the beginning to provide more focused support to foster the development of one or more issue-focused coalitions.[20]

In fact, one of the recommendations of this report suggests promoting stronger and deeper networking among the NGOs involved and some targeted longer-term financing, even beyond the ACTION project timeframe.

Seed grants are a tool for "capacity-building" with a socializing as well as technical effect. The guidelines and requirements for seed grants were largely borrowed from the small grants program of the Global Fund for Women. The idea was that during the application and selection procedure women would learn the appropriate procedures and could apply for grants from other foundations on their own. Moreover, with the permission of the applicant, proposals not selected for a seed grant but receiving a favorable review were forwarded to other grant-making agencies. In such a way, women's groups would be socialized into the

"assistance industry:" rules of operation for NGOs, fund-raising procedures, and so on.

> *Grants from the Consortium are not only infusions of funds but also educational tools*. The mere process of preparing a proposal is an opportunity for NIS women to learn […]. Receiving grants provides not only an opportunity to pay for an activity but also to learn the skills of grants managements and accountability.[21]

This remains a key component of civil society assistance up to date. For example the Ukraine Citizen Action Network (UCAN) project continues to work towards "strengthening the organizational capacity of a core group of leading Ukrainian NGOs […] in the areas of advocacy, organizational development, grant-making, and legal expertise."[22]

The idea of learning the skills of grants management is the most prominent one in the overall understanding of "capacity-building" in Kiev. It further connects to ideas of "professionalism" and managerialism. "Professionalism" is defined in Kiev through business-like categories, such as clients, competitive products and services, and effective management. A good example of the professionalism discourse are the criteria for ethical work of NGOs during election campaigns that were presented at another panel of the ethics conference, "Ethical Aspects of CSO Activities during the Election Period:" "honesty, transparency, professionalism, quality of the product that is being delivered, a strong self-evaluation component, corporate responsibility." Many Ukrainians felt that the donor-NGO relationship should be more business-like. In the words of Iakov Rogalin from the Charitable Foundation *Dobrota* (Kindness) in Donetsk: "Let us face it – there are few resources and many people who want to get them. This means that there is competition, which is a healthy and important quality because there is no progress without the competition."[23]

Business-like professionalism is also the notion that is used to define quality and is given precedence over the actual content of the social issues it deals with:

> If we say that we do social entrepreneurship, it means that we approach it gradually and seriously. We train people, we prepare *business plans*, and we enhance the understanding that *in the first place this should be business*; that first and foremost it has to be a *competitive product and then all the other social stuff* […]. We have good trainings on strategic management given by an American professor of a business school. He says that approaches to managing

> NGO projects are just like those in business. Only the profit is different. But *professionalism* in reaching the goals is the same.[24]

Another example of how business-like professionalism is used to define the purpose and the goal of an NGO is the discourse applied by the Counterpart Creative Center Charity Foundation (CCC):

> The mission of Counterpart Creative Center Charity Foundation is to lead civil society organizations to the successful *results* of meeting the *clients'* needs, to high standards of work and high quality *services*, which will make these organizations a leading force of the civil society […]; we support the development of civil society through quick response to *clients'* needs.[25]

Under the heading of how to take advantage of CCC trainings one of the options reads: "you can order individual and corporate trainings;" the web site is also marked by an abundance of business-like marketing slogans: "We love the work we do. We help others grow."[26]

This reinvention of "capacity-building" in terms of building up "professionalism" is connected to another significant transformation in meaning. In the next section I show how it enabled a locally driven contestation of the concept of "empowerment."

Empowerment: Which "Mentality" Is Wrong After All?

The concept of "empowerment" is very important in Kiev and it has acquired some new meanings as a result of different interactions. As I argued in the previous chapter, "empowerment" is believed to be about changing the way people think about themselves, their opportunities as well as their responsibilities and helping people overcome what is believed to be the wrong Soviet mentality. This concept plays a crucial role in several projects in Kiev. As the UCAN Program Director Larisa Tatarinova explained to me:

> Our project has an implicit goal to change the mentality and the culture. We want to help people switch from just demanding – you owe me something – to doing things yourself – you can [here a play on words with the title of the program UCAN].[27] This can only be learned by doing, it cannot be written down or explained and it is all a matter of time.[28]

Thus, in continuity with the interpretation emanating from Washington, DC, "empowerment" means teaching people to be more pro-active in their everyday lives.

However, when narrowed down to the issues that concern civil society groups in Ukraine, the meaning of these concepts changes. The "wrong mentality" that has to be overcome is defined as a much more recent phenomenon rather than a Soviet legacy. It can be called "new wrong mentality" and is seen as the result of the early donor interventions that were conducted in an erratic and badly informed manner. Thus, empowerment is defined in terms of improving the assistance practices themselves in a joint effort between the Western and the Ukrainian partners.

> In the beginning, when they [the donors] just came, nobody knew what it would lead to – neither the NGOs that were literally mushrooming, nor the donors. Everything was done at random, without thinking; […] it was all a mess. I've seen this receipt written in the early 1990s: "I have received 20,000 dollars to promote democracy in Ukraine. Signature." That's it. And all the money was coming in cash. It was an orgy![29]

Here a heavy portion of the blame is placed on the donors for the way in which they were distributing the resources. Inconsistency in NGO agendas is also blamed on donor programming. The director of the Ukrainian Women's Fund, Natalka Karbowska, referred to the early assistance practice to illustrate this fact:

> Women's organizations at the time were exclusively oriented towards donors' priorities. If one day a donor announced a grant competition on reproductive health, everyone was doing reproductive health. If the next day the competition was on economic empowerment of women, everyone would start doing economic empowerment projects. As a result, the quality suffered because NGOs were not focused. Now this is changing a lot. NGOs are becoming more specialized and more focused, and thus the quality of their work increases.[30]

What is particularly important in the quote above is the emphasis on the "quality" of NGO work that is believed to be key to the empowerment of the NGO sector as a whole. It is also claimed that, due to a lack of clear direction as well as transparency and accountability, the assistance was encouraging tension, competitive behavior, and corrupt practices:

> Gradually *we* are managing to change things and what is very uplifting is that people are changing […]; what is most important is that there is no place anymore for all those "grantoïds" [grant-eaters] and "pocket NGOs." The donors are gradually withdrawing, so there is less assistance and it is much more focused and aimed at results […]; we have to change something inside ourselves. The assistance created many problems in its early years – fights for resources, competition; people did not know how to work together, they did not want to share information.[31]

What is very important here is that the agency for mentality change is attributed to Ukrainians working at and with NGOs and that this change is seen as occurring in spite of rather than thanks to the assistance. Again, the blame is placed on the wrong assistance practices and not on legacies from the Soviet or even earlier times.

This new meaning of the "wrong mentality" has implications for two other concepts – "professionalism" and "sustainability." For "professionalism" it means that this notion is turned around and applied to assistance practices themselves. This is a recent shift in meaning, and it has also to do with the fact that more administrative responsibility was shifted to Kiev in the late 1990s. In addition, an increasing number of Ukrainians are working to administer and implement assistance now as compared to the early and mid-1990s. The new meaning of "professionalism" suggests that learning is not just something expected from the assistance recipients but is also indispensable for administering and distributing assistance. For example, in my interviews at the USAID mission in Kiev two respondents emphasized that the mission's approach became "more focused" and that the communication between the different divisions of the mission as well as between different donors improved, so that there is now more oversight and coordination.[32]

The design of a more recent USAID-funded civil society program UCAN also reflects some of these changes within assistance in Kiev:

> This was already much more professional also for the USAID and its staff […]. We have worked for several months on Monitoring and Evaluation […]; we had to develop all the indicators, the measurements, the control groups. We have never worked like that before [on a USAID project].[33]

At the panel on "Ethics of Relationships between Donors and CSOs" a discussion took place about whether or not it is ethical to accept funding from donors in certain situations. However, together with the "new wrong mentality" idea, a new way to look at this issue was

raised. It is also unethical – it was argued – on the part of the donors to offer funds for certain purposes or in certain ways. Olena Suslova, who has had a long experience in assistance projects, stated this very explicitly:

> The donors have been very negative about the level of corruption in Ukraine, especially in the beginning. However, I always felt so furious about the way they operated themselves. They were working in cash and did not bother to ask for any serious proofs on how the money was spent. They were clearly tempting people. They were tempting people with a bribe, which is a crime in itself, you know![34]

These attitudes are emerging not only in Ukraine. A Georgian civic leader expressed a very similar concern in his recent article in an NGO newsletter: "Many international organizations also ignore Georgian law: they do not bother to register their offices properly or to register their staff in the government's taxpayer list. To avoid taxes, they use the personal accounts of their expatriate employees to pay salaries to their local employees."[35] These and other similar statements point to a discrepancy between donors' proclaimed professional norms and their modes of operation on the ground.

Such a critical attitude towards "assistance" is different from either suspicious and negative or uninformed but positive attitudes towards it that were typical of the early 1990s. I argue that it became possible due to the close interaction between Ukrainians and Americans in Kiev and to the standards of "professionalism" shared – even if on different terms – by both sides. In the next section I investigate whether these changes in meaning also led to the transformation of the concept of "sustainability."

Sustainability: Who Takes Over?

Although "sustainability" has always been an important concept in the discourse of assistance, in Kiev its use peaked recently, when many major donors and especially USAID faced the need to "phase out" soon. The concept of "sustainability" as the basis for a "phase out," which (as discussed in Chapter 5) was introduced in Washington, DC, can also be found in Kiev. Here, for many Ukrainians mediating the assistance it is important to become like their Western partners. They are eager to learn the skills of those partners because they believe that they could be doing their jobs just as well. The story of a Ukrainian organization, CURE –

the Center for Ukrainian Reform Education, is indicative of the workings of "sustainability" and its implications.

CURE is registered as an international charitable organization that is active not only in Ukraine but also in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Its goals are "to provide information support to economic, political, and social reforms in Ukraine and to increase Ukrainian citizen involvement in the process of reforms that promote the development of civil society and a market oriented democracy."[36] It was created on the basis of the Ukraine Market Reform Education Program (UMREP), one of the bigger USAID projects in Ukraine since 1993 (Ukrainian Reform Education Program/UREP since 2002). The U(M)REP was dedicated to conducting public information and education campaigns on the national and local level. It was particularly well known for its TV and radio programs concerning privatization and other market reforms; its overall purpose was to popularize the reforms among the Ukrainian population. The U(M)REP was established as a joint project of the governments of Ukraine and the United States through USAID and was no different in its structure and mode of operation from other USAID projects. As usual, it was implemented by subcontracting organizations, such as PricewaterhouseCoopers and Gavin Anderson (at different times and together with other subcontractors). The fact that this project is now implemented by CURE signifies more than just a change of abbreviation, for CURE is one of the first subcontractors organized and run by Ukrainians. One of its long-standing coordinators, Victoria Marchenko, now with USAID Media and Civil Society Programs, recalls:

> In the beginning there were many foreign experts working on the project because we had no proper expertise. Then, gradually, we were pushing out the foreigners because we became more *professional*. I have an MBA in marketing communications myself, you know. So we started with 12 foreign experts in 1993 and we ended with none.[37]

Now the Center is one of the few Ukrainian organizations that receive direct funds from such donors as USAID, the Charles Steward Mott Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the International Renaissance Foundation, because its financial management and audit procedures meet donors' requirements. CURE is a "success story" that reflects the ideas and aspirations of many Ukrainian assistance professionals in Kiev, while at the same time it serves as an embodiment of the concept of "sustainability/phase out." This is significant because the donor-driven understanding of "sustainability"

has converged with locally shared notions of success, and has materialized in particular organizational forms that are "sustained" exclusively by Ukrainians.

Another example of assistance tasks being delegated to a new Ukrainian organization is the Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF). The UWF was founded when the Network Women's Program[38] run by the Soros Foundation[39] in Ukraine was phasing out and had as its primary goal to take over that Program's tasks. This development was part of the general "phase-out" strategy that the Soros Foundations are currently implementing in most of the former Soviet countries. With start-up funding from the Global Fund for Women (U.S.), the UWF was founded in 2000 and is mostly engaged in fund-raising and grant-giving. It provides grants to women's NGO projects that vary considerably in their goals and financial needs – from a USD 94,162 project to buy a mammography scanner to the (typical) series of trainings of up to USD 2,000 and trips abroad to attend conferences on topics related to NGO activities.

An important addition to the structure of grants is a special category of grants for newly formed and start-up NGOs. Since 2001 the UWF even provides funding for women's organizations to register as NGOs. There is also additional funding for UWF grantees that would like to become hubs of information for their respective region and to reach out to NGOs from smaller cities and villages. In this way the UWF aims to spread the NGO network throughout the country and, thus, in a way revives the "capacity-building" approach of "letting a thousand flowers bloom" from the early 1990s, which I discussed in Chapter 5. This time, however, the "thousand flowers" approach is much more about building up an effective network than just encouraging NGO growth. The UWF director Natalia Karbowska explained to me: "When we receive grant applications, we do not always know where they come from, nor do we have an opportunity to travel every time to meet this NGO." Bigger NGOs that act as information centers are envisioned as "contact persons" for the UWF in different regions of the country. Women's NGOs seem to be picking up on this initiative: Out of 22 projects supported in the spring of 2005, about one-third are aimed at working with smaller and newly registered organizations.[40]

The UWF is another Ukrainian NGO whose rationale and operations fit organizational requirements of assistance. In other words, this is a Ukrainian initiative that received its impetus from both Ukrainian and American concerns to preserve assistance projects to women. It uses its relative independence to draw more on Ukrainian experiences with assistance and the lessons learned but it maintains the

overall discursive and organizational structure of assistance as shaped from abroad.

Another important example is the "Empowering Education" program: "Empowering education is a pedagogy of empowerment that prepares boys and girls for their roles of mutual support, civic activism, and state building on the basis of partnership models."[41] Its methodology relates to other approaches in pedagogy, such as feminist pedagogy, civic education, critical thinking, and debate.[42] It is thus a mixture of approaches that were introduced as part of alternative methodologies and trainings for assistance, especially by the Soros Foundation. Its founder explains the impetus for developing such a program in the following way:

> When I first visited a training [on women's leadership organized by Winrock International] in 1995, I liked it a lot. However, lots of other Ukrainian women did not like it at all. They were saying: "again those Americans are pushing something on us!" or "this is not our thing, all this sitting in a circle and discussing stuff, it contradicts our mentality."[43] I was trying to understand why we have such different impressions. […] We started our program ["empowering education"] in order to show that this can be something for us. […] This was both, thanks to and despite of American influence. We wanted to find those best things we could borrow for ourselves.[44]

In 1997, the all-Ukrainian Association of Empowering Education and Communication was registered. In 1999 it became one of the Soros Foundation Network programs. Through the Soros network it has spread into the following countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The program has also conducted trainings for trainers in Afghanistan, Burma, and Indonesia. Currently, the theme and the methodology of "Empowering Education" are widely known both to NGOs and to donors. For the Soros Foundation it has become the only network program that originated in a former Soviet country. Different women's NGOs apply for grants to implement "empowering education" in the same way they used to apply for donor-initiated programs. For example, in 2004 the Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF) supported six NGO projects aimed at "conducting trainings on empowering education" or "implementing empowering education programs," and even at "creating networks between NGOs working on empowering education."[45] Whereas in the examples of CURE and the UWF Ukrainians took over an assistance project, what is significant about the Empowering Education program is that Ukrainian women themselves created a

project that is now being exported as part of assistance elsewhere around the world.

The donor-driven understanding of achieving "sustainability" through establishing assistance-like organizations also found its application in the concept and practice of creating and supporting Resource Centers throughout the country. The Eurasia Foundation[46] is implementing the biggest resource center's initiative funded by the USAID. According to the criteria of the Eurasia Foundation, Resource Centers grew from the NGOs that by 1996 had already demonstrated a track record in working on donor projects, had experience in training NGO leaders on a broad range of issues concerning organizational management, and had their own libraries with specialized literature. They were meant to represent or even replace donors on the ground in that they would be conducting most of the work connected with administering grants, such as "professional support to NGOs including information provision, assistance in program design and their expertise, modeling development strategies for NGOs in the region, their effective management, consultations on writing projects, and choosing the potential donors to receive grants."[47] In addition, the resource centers could take over some of the technical and legal responsibilities for projects proposed by groups that are not yet registered as NGOs and, thus, help them become NGOs in the future. Although this project was also meant to help donors reach the smaller NGOs in the region, what it did was to strengthen a few better-established NGOs and turn them into local replicas of their foreign donors' organizational set-up.

Another element of the idea of "sustainability" that is shared among both Ukrainians and Americans in Kiev concerns financial independence from the donor. Whereas in the early 1990s assistance administrators were reporting on activities they supported financially, now it is considered a sign of improved "sustainability" to report on activities that were not supported and could take place anyway. Instead of saying "we paid for this and this and that," nowadays the assistance implementers say "we *only* paid for brochures, or for rent; the rest NGOs did themselves." This is also visible in the recent campaign to promote Corporate Social Responsibility launched by East Europe Foundation (local partner of Eurasia Foundation) in 2008.[48]

> International aid agencies are turning their attention to more needy countries, so non-profit organizations are looking increasingly to corporations and domestic foundations to support their important development and charitable programs. Deeper ties need to be established between the private and non-profit sectors. Companies and

> emerging foundations have the desire to meet social needs, but they lack the knowledge and expertise to develop and manage effective CSR and philanthropic policies. It is vital that society as a whole understands, supports and stimulates greater CSR commitment and private philanthropy in Ukraine.[49]

Another initiative that embodies this "entrepreneurial" trend is Ukraine National Initiatives to Enhance Reforms (UNITER), a five-year program launched on January 3, 2009, and implemented with USAID funding by Pact, Inc. Pact is an organization founded in 1971 with an explicit aim of distributing USAID small grants to private and voluntary organizations working in relief and development assistance and transformed into a non-profit corporation in 1992. It has strong expertise in organizational and institutional strengthening around the world, which consists in helping local organizations, be those civic, public, or private, to learn the skills of basic operational competence, such as how to craft a budget and account for funds, supervise staff and administer an office, strengthen boards, design, execute and evaluate action plans, and so on. Pact argues that such activities "take local organizations to new levels of managerial and financial competence."[50] The UNITER project strives to build the long-term sustainability of civil society organizations, which is believed to be attainable by its integrated efforts to strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of civil society, while improving the legal and economic enabling environment.[51]

One of the UNITER flagship initiatives is "creating a capacity-building 'marketplace'" which replicates Pact's experience as a founding member of the Impact Alliance, a global marketplace for capacity-building service providers and those seeking their services.[52] The Capacity-building Marketplace that will exist both as an internet-based platform and an annual fair, is meant to establish direct connections between service providers and NGOs in need of training services "based on the marketplace approach."[53] It is argued that:

> Although Ukrainian NGOs have had extensive opportunities building organizational capacity through meetings, trainings, and workshops provided mostly by international donors, civil society as a sector still lacks sustainable demand-based mechanism to unleash endogenous potential for capacity development. […in order to] shift the responsibility toward local actors for their own capacity-building.[54]

Active involvement of Ukrainian professionals in running assistance programs in Kiev played an important role in transforming the meaning of "sustainability." This concept became more specific and its new

meaning reflects the tensions between the foreigners and the Ukrainians and their conflicting visions for the future. These tensions are also evident from the negotiations of meaning of the other two concepts: "capacity-building" and "empowerment." In the following section I focus on the specific realm of gender and women's issues and show how the dialogue between the foreigners and the Ukrainians transformed the meaning of such concepts as "women as a target group," "women's empowerment," and "gender."

Gender and Women's Issues: How Are They Mediated?

As I have highlighted above, Kiev is a site in which the direct dialogue between "Westerners" and "Ukrainians" is most intense. In the early to mid-1990s, most of the "Western" women who came to establish contacts with local women's groups stayed in Kiev; and up to the present day most foreigners are based in the capital, although their visits to other cities have increased substantially. Many Ukrainian women I interviewed in Kiev complained about the initial lack of understanding between the two sides. Overall, the feeling was that the foreigners who came knew little about the situations and the concerns of Ukrainian women and yet acted in a fairly authoritarian and self-confident way. Ukrainians, who lacked any previous contacts with foreigners, mostly did not know English and felt particularly self-conscious in front of the guests from the "civilized" world, were not very outspoken and, thus, did not help bridge the gap in communication. Olena Suslova, one of the veterans of the Ukrainian women's movement, recalls:

> There was a group of women from the United States [back in 1992 – 1993] and we were to meet them in the library. Very few of us knew English, and so there were boys and girls interpreting, which was difficult because they were trained in Soviet universities and also *did not know many of those terms*. We were invited to discuss women's issues but *we were quite shy* in the beginning. So those American women started explaining to us what they do back at home. They said they were working on changing the welfare system because, for example, at the time medical insurances were not covering important services like dentists, which is too expensive for many women and so on. I was looking at myself and at other women – we could not buy food at the time, our whole political, social, and economic life went completely upside down. And so we were listening to those ladies *as if they flew in from Mars*.[55]

This recollection points to important features of the early dialogue between American and Ukrainian women-activists. Americans assumed that women-activists are the same everywhere and are preoccupied with similar issues or at least can relate easily to other women's concerns. They were not conscious of the lack of similar terminology and of the inappropriateness of certain formats for interaction. This inhibited the ability of Ukrainian women to contribute to those exchanges freely and on equal footing. Such interactions on women's issues had the same features as other civil society interactions I have addressed in the previous section.

Women as a Target Group: "At Risk" of What?

I begin by exploring further the (re)interpretation of the concept of "women as a target group" by looking in more detail at the USAID Anti-Trafficking Initiative in Ukraine. This Initiative consisted of three key components: prevention, protection, and prosecution. These included such measures as "public education and outreach," implemented through USAID media programs as in the Community Response to Trafficking and Domestic Violence Program (DOS), and work with enforcement and prosecution personnel as implemented through the International Organization for Migration (IOM). There were also projects directly connected to women and implemented by Winrock International, namely the Trafficking Prevention Program (TPP) and the Women's Economic Empowerment program (WEE). These two programs are seen as mutually reinforcing components that address the issue of trafficking.

While the initial push to develop a program on trafficking came from Washington, DC, the initiative and its components were mostly designed in Kiev as a result of collaboration between several external American experts, the USAID Mission in Kiev, and Winrock International. The issue was new and relatively unexplored, and those who designed the initiative had a mandate to develop a new model and use new tools.

The Trafficking Prevention Program (TPP) started in 1998 as a pilot project and continued with additional funding till 2004; it established seven Trafficking Prevention Centers, called "Women for Women Centers" (WfW), in the country on the basis of existing women's NGOs that were members of the NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium. The selection criteria for those NGOs were "demonstrated experience in cooperating with other NGOs, health providers, and the legal community, as well as with the local government."[56] These centers were conducting three types of activities: the job skills program, the crisis prevention program,

and provision of legal services. A year later, in February 1999, the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) program started and continued untill July 2004. It established six Women's Business Support Centers that offered business training to women and cooperate with affiliated credit unions to support their students in starting up their own businesses. Both TPP and WEE were conceived as "preventive" programs aimed at working with "women as a target group," namely their aim was to identify and work with "women at risk" of being trafficked rather than with actual cases or victims of trafficking. As I will show later on, their connection to trafficking remained very loose, and the notion of "women at risk" was reinterpreted to a considerable extent.

The third component – "prosecution" – was addressed through another project, Community Response to Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Humans (DOS), which continued from 1999 to 2002. This project was funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and was aimed at conducting research into domestic violence and trafficking, working with NGOs and community leaders, conducting public awareness campaigns, and cooperating with government officials, law enforcement, court systems, and medical institutions. Therefore, its main goals and objectives were not only defined on the basis of "women as a target group" but included other target groups as well.

This component is now part of the new project funded by the USAID and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). One of its core goals is:

> Increasing awareness by ensuring that governmental and community leaders, service providers and the general public are well informed about the problem of trafficking in persons, and that *at-risk groups* are knowledgeable about how to protect themselves and *are motivated* to do so.[57]

The concept "women as a target group" is at the core of all these programs; however, its meaning is not the same in each of them.

The "preventive" nature of TPP and WEE does not mean that they work to stop those who perpetrate trafficking but that they prevent those women judged likely to fall victim to trafficking from finding themselves in that predicament. One may argue that this is not the most logical interpretation of the idea of "prevention" and that there are other methods of combating trafficking. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I choose not to go into that debate; instead, I analyze the

effects this idea of "prevention" has had on the meaning of "women as a target group." Namely, it implied that certain factors expose women to the dangers of trafficking and there are things that can be done to diminish the risk of their exposure. In other words, the question is who are those women that have to be "prevented" from being trafficked and why *they* are "at risk" of being trafficked.

A broad definition of "women as a target group" in both TPP and WEE implied that potentially all women are "at risk" of being trafficked; their susceptibility was explained by their psychological and physical weakness as well as by ignorance, lack of experience, and an overall disadvantaged position in society. The concept "women as a target group" that developed in Washington, DC was reiterated – women are generally disadvantaged because they are women and compose a marginalized group. For example, the need for an economic empowerment program for women in Ukraine is described as follows:

> Ukraine's transition from a centralized to a market economy has brought progress as well as problems. *Women have been left out of the process or alienated* by the closing of state enterprises, with women constituting seventy percent of the newly unemployed. Grossly under-represented in public institution leadership, they are *less likely than men* to be elected to decision-making positions.[58]

Here the general idea is that women as a whole experience transition differently from men and are generally more likely than men to lose out. Thus, they need to benefit from women-specific interventions. This means that women are already, by virtue of being women, at greater risk of falling victim to both domestic and external threats.

In terms of domestic conditions, a connection was made to two issues: domestic violence and the lack of women-entrepreneurs. In both cases, it was argued that women are treated unfairly because they do not believe in their own powers and have internalized the status of being oppressed. This meaning of "women as a target group" is developed through the idea of crisis prevention implemented by Women for Women Centers. Crisis prevention trainings, walk-in services, and telephone hotlines focused on the following themes: women's leadership, women's human rights, prevention and dealing with instances of trafficking. An important element of the program was to support groups that consisted of women dealing with similar situations and were led by a professional psychologist. Interactive trainings that took place within TPP were said to be aimed at "increasing self-

confidence of women, and helping women develop basic practical life skills."[59]

Another component of the TPP program addressed the issue of domestic violence. What is interesting here is that, despite a seeming coherence of the TPP program, there is hardly any evidence that establishes a direct connection between domestic violence and trafficking in women. Moreover, the vagueness of this connection is recognized by program implementers themselves.[60] One of the respondents suggested that this connection was first introduced in a study of trafficking and domestic violence conducted by the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (commissioned by the U.S. Department of State and completed in 2000). Although this connection remains unclear for people who deal with the issue of trafficking, TPP made its contribution in naturalizing it. The TPP program speculated that victims of trafficking often come from dysfunctional families or have suffered from abusive husbands, in other words, that the target group originates in an oppressive context. These experiences were said to have aggravated psychological problems of those women, in particular the so-called victim syndrome. What is important here are the discursive shifts from defining women in their entirety as "at risk" to searching for specific pathologies that increase women's susceptibility to trafficking. In other words, there is a tension between the fact that women are defined as one uniform target group and the specificity of the issue.

For TPP, women are "at risk" because they are "in crisis." The TPP crisis prevention component suggested the following symptoms of women in crisis: lack of self-confidence, feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and negative attitudes towards life, thus adding a highly psychologized and medicalized quality to the target group. This reiterated the idea of inadequacy and lack of agency on the part of women and constructed the target group as the locus of abnormality. The Crisis Prevention Program was repeatedly reported to have been capable of fighting these feelings in women through a series of trainings, consultations, and sessions in self-help groups.

The idea that women lack self-confidence, and that these psychological problems prevent them from seizing the opportunities there are for them, is strong in the Anti-Trafficking Initiative as a whole. For example, the target group of Women Business Support Centers (WBSC) funded through Winrock International as part of the WEE program was defined as "women who, while motivated, lack funds, self-confidence, training, and experience." It as argued that women are constrained by their "preconceptions about the difficulty and even impossibility of starting a business." As a result, one of the important

components of WBSC's activities was seen to be "the interactive training method and atmosphere, where participants develop relationships that last beyond the course."[61] One of the core trainings delivered by WEE on "how to start your own business" read: "The aim of the training is to increase *inner women's potential* to resolve vital problems, to raise the *motivation* of self-occupation, to provide *basic* knowledge on entrepreneurship, and to *acquaint women with realities* of running their own business in contemporary Ukraine."[62] Here the emphasis was put on psychological intervention, helping to adapt and building self-confidence. At the same time, the practical knowledge that was to be provided through training is only "basic," as if such a level were more than enough for women to get started. In addition, the need to introduce women to the realities of running a business implies that they do not have an idea (or have the wrong one) about how things "really" work in their own country.

This meaning of "women as a target group" that is "at risk" because of their ignorance and lack of experience is most prominent in discussions that are directly related to the issue of trafficking. This is, first and foremost, visible in the awareness-raising component of the project. The image that comes across in most of the trafficking stories and, most vividly, in the USAID-funded three-part fictional docudrama *If I Do Not Return* features naïve inexperienced girls who are deceitfully lured into trafficking by criminals in disguise. These young women are shown as not taking the responsibility for their lives, as captured by dreams of easy and flamboyant futures. Their experiences are ultimately the experiences of having been turned into a commodity within a highly criminalized context.

Ideas of the incompetence and inadequacy of women are prominent in the stories that report the actual instances of trafficking. For example, Julia, 24 years old and single, is said to have "[…]dreamed her life would turn into a fairy tale – that a prince in shining armor would whisk her off her feet and take her away from all her problems." Her story continues with the experience of being trafficked through an Internet marriage arrangement. "Dreaming about the shiny world out there" is a persistent metaphor in descriptions of instances of trafficking. These representations overemphasize the irrational and emotional side of women who end up as victims of trafficking. Too often are these women portrayed as incapable of thinking for themselves. Another victim of trafficking presented in *Women's Stories* is said to have been put on the ferry and told that "the ship would take her to the United States, where she would be met. Of course, the boat was not bound for the U.S. but for Turkey. L. found it out too late – she was already en route when she

learned of the ferry's destination."[63] Not calling into doubt the instance of trafficking itself, it is still difficult to comprehend how a 24 year old woman in her own country could get on a ferry without knowing its destination, not to mention the fact that there cannot be any direct ferries from Ukrainian shores to the U.S. for the mere reason of geographical distance. Interestingly, the study conducted by Winrock International itself reveals some puzzling figures that contradict the constructions discussed above. According to this study, up to 12 percent of Ukrainian victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation admitted knowing they would be in the sex industry prior to their departure.[64]

TPP program constructed "women as a target group" as ignorant and, thus, being particularly "at risk" should they cross their country's borders. A recent assessment conducted by Development Alternatives Inc. recommends targeting anti-trafficking more effectively and identifying "at-risk" groups in a more informed way. It contests the current understanding of target groups "at risk" as those who are highly interested in going overseas for work or marriage and those willing to break rules or take risks to do so.[65] More has to be done to improve our knowledge about factors that create the difference between successful migration and instances of trafficking. The assessment emphasizes that those people willing to take risks or break rules may be more likely to migrate but they are not necessarily more likely to be trafficked. In addition, it points to the fact that an unspecified treatment of "women as a target group" leads to overlooking particular categories of cases.

> One *particularly at risk group* that does not seem to be the focus of many prevention programs includes women who are already involved in prostitution in their countries of origin. […] In addition, many such women may already be victims of internal trafficking. Yet, in many countries of the region, few programs are targeting the prevention of internal trafficking into the sex industry.[66]

Further, methods and tools of anti-trafficking programs have to be tailored to particular forms of trafficking, as, for example, children of certain ethnic minorities are at higher risk of being trafficked for begging. This "target group" clearly needs a different type of assistance than highly educated but currently unemployed Ukrainian women. Thus, the assessment further expresses concern about a remarkable silence over victims of trafficking for other than sexual exploitation, especially concerning the trafficking of men and exploitation of male migrants: "In fact, possibly as a result of the style and content of trafficking awareness

campaigns, there is widespread belief that trafficking in persons is synonymous with trafficking for prostitution."[67]

The increasing awareness of these inconsistencies and problems in defining "women as a target group" in the context of the issue of trafficking has led to important shifts in the meaning of this concept. The subsequent Anti-Trafficking Project incorporated many important changes that respond to criticisms and reinterpretations discussed above. USAID started to fund "Countering Trafficking in Persons" (TIP) initiative in Ukraine in July 2004. This project is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Ukraine. Technically, the project differs from those implemented by Winrock in important ways. It builds upon the existing partner network of NGOs in 25 different oblasts of Ukraine, including seven "Women for Women" Centers. Its main tool is funding NGO projects through microgrants. Such direct support constitutes 92 percent of the operational budget. Overall, IOM can support up to 40 such NGO projects. NGOs can apply with their own projects for funding on a rolling basis. In practical terms, this means that, rather than being a coherent program with centrally developed components as used to be the case with TPP, TIP is more of an umbrella structure to a varied set of NGOs that propose to address one or several of the TIP priorities. These priorities are (1) increasing awareness about the issue of trafficking; (2) assisting victims and insuring their rehabilitation; and (3) strengthening coordination of national and regional counter-trafficking programs.[68]

The TIP program is the result of the changing approach that USAID/Ukraine developed towards the problem of trafficking. The agency chose a project that allows it to substantially cut administration costs, while at the same time providing a framework for more focused initiatives and covering all the regions of Ukraine. The NGO members that form this network obtain the funding to maintain and expand their own activities rather than to start a new project. This is evident from the variety of approaches and tools that are reported by participating NGOs. For example, the former "Women for Women" Center in Donetsk continues to work according to the methodology developed for the TPP project. Another NGO, "Salus" Charity Foundation based in Lviv, has been providing medical, diagnostic, and information services to victims of rape and violence since 1996. The Foundation keeps this more specialized medical focus also in the framework of TIP. It provides consultations before and after HIV testing, ultrasound gynecological examinations, venerological consultations, and monitoring of medical treatment and other related medical services.[69] Such a focus would not have been funded within the framework of previous USAID Anti-

Trafficking Initiatives, and yet it is one of the services much needed in the context of victim rehabilitation.

In response to the criticism[70] that all the previous components of the Anti-Trafficking Initiative had no focus on providing practical assistance to the actual victims of trafficking, TIP explicitly aims at "assisting victims and ensuring their dignified reintegration."

> Reintegration assistance helps trafficking victims rebuild their lives. Rehabilitation support not only helps victims of trafficking, but also the families who *lose mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers to trafficking*. These victims are able to return to their families and become healthy and productive members of their communities.[71]

Not only does this program introduce a new component of reintegration, but it also redefines and broadens its "target group" in significant ways. It defines women in a broader context of their social relations. A more open and less prescriptive discursive structure of this new program also enables alternative ideas of "target groups." One such proposition that would not have fit any of the previous USAID trafficking programs came from the Coordinator of USAID trafficking programs, Tetyana Tymoshenko: "We also have to pay attention to the *demand side* of the trafficking problem. It is important to understand who those clients are and how we could target them. This is a very interesting issue, which is completely under-researched."[72]

TIP is also less exclusively oriented towards issues of slavery in the sex industry and includes other forms of exploitation into its area of concern. The example below illustrates this shift. A victim of trafficking from Donetsk, a big industrial city in the east of Ukraine, is said to have had a degree in economics and yet to have been unable to find a full-time job. She opted for taking up a seasonal construction job in Russia, which she arranged through a representative, paying a USD 50 fee. However, in Russia her passport was confiscated and she was forced to work seven days a week on construction sites. This example cited on the home page of the USAID Mission in Kiev is important for its apparent lack of resemblance to more "juicy" and sensational stories I quoted above. The victim is neither too young nor from a small rural place. The work abroad she chooses does not seem lucrative in any way; moreover, the "abroad" itself is practically next door. Her choice of destination is not clouded by romanticized images of the distant Promised Land. Coming from a mostly Russian-speaking city, she is unlikely to face any linguistic or cultural hurdles. She ends up doing the job she planned but without any pay or opportunity to complain, rather than getting into the

plot of a crime novel. Unfortunately, this is something that could have also happened within her own country.

The IOM is increasingly focusing on different forms of exploitation; for example, it organized a workshop titled *Development of Counter-Trafficking Mechanisms in Ukraine; Non-Sexual Forms of Exploitation* in Kiev on February 16, 2006. In the following section, I discuss the implications of such (re)enactments of "women as a target group" for the issue of "women's empowerment."

Women's Empowerment: Gender or "Ladies' Trifles"?

Surprisingly, Kiev is the only site of interaction in which the concept of "gender" is employed in significant ways. The term "gender" is widely used among Ukrainians in Kiev (by now also in other bigger cities like Kharkov or Dnepropetrovsk) despite – and in fact thanks to – its clearly foreign origin. Larisa Tatarinova, UCAN Program Director, explained this dynamic in the following way:

> When gender equality projects started, *they were brought in from the outside*; there was no need for them. But those were *world-recognized* approaches and so they were important to know. Now that many people have been trained, we can start thinking whether we need it at all. Maybe Ukraine does not need this but *it is good that people know this terminology well* and understand different approaches.[73]

What is very important in this quote is the alignment of the concept of "gender" with that of "world/international community:" These concepts matter because knowing them allows one to qualify for participation in the "world/international community." In fact, it is in this context that "gender" has gained more prominence in Kiev than it did in Washington, DC, even though its origins are clearly with the latter. And yet, the meaning of "gender" in Kiev is not the same as that employed by most assistance professionals or trainers in/from Washington, DC. Larisa Tatarinova explained further: "Gender does not mean fighting for women's rights, whereas 99 percent of people, including those who do gender trainings, think this is one and the same thing. This is absolutely incorrect! […] For us, gender is about a proper balance between sexes, about their synergy."[74] She explained to me why her project does not address either women's issues or gender education:

> Our project [UCAN] is *oriented towards local needs* […]. We conducted many polls and roundtables and we understood that this topic is of no priority to our NGOs. Moreover, they already know a lot

> about it. There have been so many trainings on this topic; every second NGO leader has been trained. So we have decided not to do it.[75]

In other words, "gender" is utilized by Ukrainian women who mediate assistance to justify their lack of interest in women-specific programs. They point to the convergence between "gender" and "women's issues" that is typical of most assistance policies in order to show how the "proper" meaning of "gender" is being misunderstood in assistance.

Another Ukrainian respondent, who asked not to be quoted by name, restated this idea in a much more critical tone:

> As far as technical assistance is concerned, I think that all the money spent on gender trainings and all these other *ladies' trifles* is money wasted. People have simply learned how to say not a "chair*man*" but a "chair*woman*" […] people have received salaries, there is no harm in it, of course, but these ideas will not live on.

"Ladies' trifles" (*zhenskie shtuchki*) is a somewhat derogatory term that simultaneously refers to little tricks and ladies' bijoux and has a diminutive connotation. The phrase is colloquial and is commonly used in private contexts. In the context of women's programs, its original meaning as well as its misplaced usage point to the uselessness and empty nature of those programs.

The fact that the NGO sector is highly feminized is stressed to further ridicule the notion of the oppression and discrimination of women. The notions of "professionalism" and the emphasis on delivering a competitive product or service that I have discussed above contradict the idea of civil society as a "safe haven" for marginalized groups that is popular in Washington, DC. Instead, Ukrainian women emphasize that in NGO work it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman as long as you are professional enough.

Conclusion

Below I discuss the main findings emerging from the analysis of civil society assistance discourse in Kiev by answering the following core questions: (1) what does it mean to mediate assistance; (2) what does it mean to mediate between civil society and assistance; (3) what does it mean to empower women?

What Does It Mean to Mediate Assistance?

In Kiev the actual content and method of the assistance discourse is (re)interpreted through the interaction between Americans and Ukrainians. This interaction is facilitated through a new concept, that of a "world/international community." Even though this concept has an external origin, it connects to the local Ukrainian aspirations, especially among the professional elites in Kiev, to bridge the gap between Ukraine and the rest of the "civilized world." However, the notion of "community" is somewhat misleading here, since in the context of "assistance" this space is not shared between its members in the same way. Rather than having equal status within the community, Americans and Ukrainians are related hierarchically as teachers and students, and this division is maintained through the boundaries of expertise. Moreover, the goal of teaching is not to develop the capacity of the recipients of aid per se but to enable them to work efficiently on the tasks defined by "assistance."

As I have discussed in Chapter 2, some researchers have rightly argued that the new assistance elite has a stake in sustaining assistance rather than alleviating the problems for which it is given.[76] And yet, my own findings show that becoming part of the assistance machinery has also granted agency to that elite. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not this agency is going to make local knowledge matter more in the assistance discourse. In other words, giving the locals more voice does not directly translate into more locally relevant assistance programs. If this local agency is driven by the survival concerns that are shared between Ukrainian and American assistance professionals, it may help solidify the existing assistance discourse and practice rather than substantially transform it. On the other hand, if new meanings of mediating "assistance" gain more prominence, assistance discourse and practice in Kiev may indeed change.

What Does It Mean to Mediate Between Civil Society and Assistance?

In Kiev the dynamic of "capacity-building" is largely shaped by the interaction between different mediators of assistance, both American and Ukrainian. Acting together in the shared space provided by the concept of the "world/international community," both sides work to mediate the ideas of "assistance" that come from Washington, DC and the Ukrainian ideas of what "assistance" can do. As I indicated earlier, this is not an interaction of equals, although the two sides need each

other for "assistance" to take place. Americans are the ones who know how assistance works and see their task in teaching this to their Ukrainian counterparts. "Capacity-building" means that Ukrainians are taught how to apply for assistance, manage grants, do reporting, and so on. The Ukrainians who have gone through this training are supposed to become trainers themselves and to disseminate this knowledge further, to smaller NGOs and outside of the capital. In this way, "capacity-building" has the meaning of socializing Ukrainian counterparts into the "assistance" world. The important components of "capacity-building" on this level are "seed grants" and "trainings;" the former is the practical embodiment of the "thousand flowers" idea and the latter is the socialization tool.

The success of socialization (as defined by the assistance discourse) is particularly visible in the example of the "Empowering Education" program, which was developed by Ukrainians according to the "assistance" rules and now travels back along the assistance chain and is incorporated into the "assistance/aid" package that is offered to other countries or "regions." Other examples of successful socialization would be the increase in Ukrainian staff within various grant-giving agencies and the appearance of fully Ukrainian organizations that have become eligible for implementing and administering "assistance" projects that were previously given only to their American counterparts.

The assumption of socialization into a shared space gives an interesting tilt to the notion of "empowerment." For Ukrainians mediating the assistance the issue of the "wrong mentality" inherited from the Soviet period is believed to have been overcome early on through the "capacity-building" efforts. These Ukrainians are positioned as the "enlightened" group, the ones whose task is to spread the word further. Ukrainians are considering themselves as just as "professional" as their American counterparts, and just as suited to doing the assistance job. From this perspective, instances of corruption and misallocation of resources are understood by Ukrainians in a new way. Rather than blaming them on the Soviet legacy, they attribute these problems to the failures of assistance itself. An opening embodied in the notion of the "new wrong mentality" has emerged that recognizes the problem of mentality but attributes it to the malfunctioning of assistance itself. Due to the understanding of assistance as a "community" of which the new Ukrainian assistance professionals see themselves as part, "empowerment" is defined in terms of improving the assistance itself. Thus, even though the assistance discourse itself is not questioned, some room is created for its change from within by Ukrainians.

Along the same lines, the notion of "sustainability" acquires an additional meaning. Although the idea of leaving behind a set of organizations that would be capable of managing assistance on their own is not questioned directly, a debate is opened on what organizational forms and activities can realistically live on beyond the assistance cycle. This debate opens up the meaning of assistance and introduces questions as to whether assistance is conducive to "sustainability" at all.

What Does It Mean to Empower Women?

In Kiev the meaning of the concept of "women as a target group" has undergone substantial transformation over the cause of the last decade. This is particularly visible in the changes incorporated into the most recent Anti-Trafficking Initiative – the Countering Trafficking in Persons program implemented by IOM. The concept "women as a target group" is redefined both to make it more specific and to include other potential target groups, such as family members, male migrants, or trafficked children. Particularly visible are the attempts to redefine the issue of trafficking so as to include various other forms of exploitation rather than just slavery in the sex industry.

The idea of providing women with a women-specific space and programs that is developed in Washington, DC, is often treated with skepticism, if not with overt hostility, in Kiev. Pejorative terms such as "*zhenskie shtuchki"* (ladies' trifles or tricks) are used to point to what Ukrainians believe to be a simplistic view of women's empowerment. Moreover, in Kiev the notions of "women as victims" and "women's empowerment" are perceived as largely incompatible. In other words, women are believed to be empowered not by receiving a special status of an oppressed and underprivileged group but by denying them that status and showing that women do not have to be treated any differently than men. It is emphasized that gender roles, divisions, and conflicts encumber both men and women equally.

Interestingly, Ukrainian women who have undergone assistance training mobilize the term "gender" to open up the meaning of "women/ women's issues". Although "gender" remains a specialized term with no equivalent in Russian or Ukrainian, some Ukrainian women perceive that it allows them to dispute the assistance on its own terms by showing their proficiency in the assistance language and, thus, their own "professionalism." In the next chapter I move to the other site of interaction – within local NGOs. By taking the same three steps – from assistance, to civil society, to women's NGOs – I elicit the stability as

well as transformations of core concepts of the civil society assistance discourse.

Notes

[1] USAID, "Fact Sheet: USAID NIS Task Force Activities in the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union," (Washington, DC: USAID, Office of External Affairs, June 1993).

[2] The contracts (including indefinite quantity contracts) are contracts for doing specific types and amounts of work that are awarded to (mostly) for-profit organizations after a bidding procedure; cooperative agreements are essentially grants.

[3] Counterpart International, "Counterpart Millennium Report," (Washington, DC: Counterpart International, 2000).

[4] Tisch, interview by the author, August 23, 2004, emphasis added.

[5] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005.

[6] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005, emphasis added.

[7] Tisch, interview by the author, August 23, 2004.

[8] Scott, interview by the author, October 1, 2004.

[9] Suslova, interview by the author, April 11, 2005.

[10] UCAN, "Ukrainian National Conference Ethics Guidelines for the Third Sector (CD)," (Kiev: UCAN, September 29–30, 2004), emphasis in the original.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., emphasis added.

[15] Fox, interview by the author, August 9, 2004.

[16] Tisch, interview by the author, August 23, 2004, emphasis added.

[17] James Fremming and Lawrence Robertson, "Ukraine MCC Threshold Country Plan – Component 1. Mid-Term Evaluation Report,"(USAID by Democracy International, Inc., 2008).

[18] The civil society strengthening component, which is called Promoting Active Citizen Engagement (ACTION), took the seeds grant approach awarding small grants to approximately 200 NGOs across the country in the first year of the program.

[19] NGOs received on the average USD 16, 754 for a period of less than a year.

[20] James Fremming and Lawrence Robertson, "Ukraine MCC Threshold Country Plan," p. 9.

[21] NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium, "Strategic Plan (Internal Document)" (November 7, 1995), emphasis added.

[22] USAID/Kiev, "Civil Society and Media. Fact Sheet," (Kiev: USAID/Kiev, 2009).

[23] UCAN, "Ukrainian National Conference."

[24] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005, emphasis added.

[25] Counterpart Creative Center, *About Us* [cited 15 June 2005. Available from http://www.ccc.kiev.ua], emphasis added.

[26] Ibid.

[27] This play on words, however, makes sense only in English and is in no way reflected in the Russian or Ukrainian name of the program. This is one of the many examples of English being the first language for NGO projects in Kiev.

[28] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005.

[29] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005.

[30] Karbowska, interview by the author, April 13, 2005.

[31] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005, emphasis added.

[32] Tymoshenko-Yakunina, interview by the author, April 14, 2005; Ivantcheva, interview by the author, April 27, 2005.

[33] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005.

[34] Suslova, interview by the author, April 11, 2005.

[35] David Usupashvili, "NGO Lessons from Georgia: Failed Expectations, New Cooperation," *Give & Take: A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia* 4, no. 4: (Winter 2002): p. 10.

[36] CURE, *Home Page*, (March 19, 2003), [cited July 20, 2005. Available from http://www.cure.org.ua/eng].

[37] Marchenko, interview by the author, April 27, 2005, emphasis added.

[38] At the Soros Foundation/Open Society Institute "Network Programs" are thematic programs that are administered either from the headquarters in New York or from the country branch that has established a particular program; other countries' branches join in the program depending on their priorities and available funding.

[39] The branch of the Soros Foundation in Ukraine is called *Fond Vidrodzhennia* (the Renaissance Foundation).

[40] Karbowska, interview by the author, April 13, 2005.

[41] Women's Information Consultative Center, *Empowering Education: About Us* [cited 7 June 2005. Available from http://empedu.civicua.org/ukrainian/1-pronas/page1.htm].

[42] Women's Information Consultative Center, *Upovnovazhuval'na Osvita: Posibnyk Dlia Treneriv [Empowering Education: Trainer's Manual]* (Kiev: Women's Information Consultative Center, 2002), pp. 12–13.

[43] The word "mentality" was particularly popular in the 1990s, it was widely evoked in the discussions relating *sovok* to a rapidly changing present or different projected futures. It is another example of a new post-Soviet language.

[44] Suslova, interview by the author, April 11, 2005.

[45] UWF, *Projects Supported by UWF in 2004* (UWF, 2004), [cited 20 June 2005. Available from http://www.uwf.kiev.ua/].

[46] In 2007 the Eurasia Foundation got transformed into a Eurasia Foundation Network with a number of regional foundation-partners. The foundation operating in Ukraine is called East Europe Foundation, more information is available from http://www.eef.org.ua/.

[47] League of Resource Centers, *History of the League* (December 4, 2003) [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua/].

[48] More information is available from the initiative's web site http://www.csrukraine.org.ua.

[49] East Europe Foundation, "Programs: Corporate Social Responsibility and Responsible Philanthropy" [cited May 6, 2010. Available from http://www.eef.org.ua/index.php?page=catalog&id=26].

[50] Pact, "Who We Are: What We Do," [cited May 4, 2010. Available from http://www.pactworld.org/cs/who_we_are/what_we_do].

[51] UNITER, "What We Do," [cited May 4, 2010. Available from http://www.uniter.org.ua/en/special_initiatives.html].

[52] Pact, "Who We Are: History," [cited May 4, 2010. Available from http://www.pactworld.org/cs/who_we_are/history].

[53] For additional background documents see the web site of Ukrainian implementing partner Resource Center GURT at http://gurt.org.ua/marketplace/.

[54] UNITER, "Building Capacity," [cited May 4, 2010. Available from http://www.uniter.org.ua/en/building_capacity.html].

[55] Suslova, interview by the author, April 11, 2004, emphasis added.

[56] Winrock International, "Trafficking Prevention in Ukraine: A Pilot Program," (Winrock International, July 1998).

[57] USAID/Kiev, *USAID Is Launching "Countering Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine" Project* [cited 28 April 2005. Available from http://www.usaid.kiev.ua].

[58] Winrock International, "Project Fact Sheet: Women's Economic Empowerment: Ukraine," (Kiev: Winrock International, 1999), emphasis added.

[59] Winrock International, "Project Fact Sheet: Trafficking Prevention Program: Ukraine," (Kiev: Winrock International, 1998).

[60] Tymoshenko-Yakunina, interviews by the author, February 18, 2003, April 14, 2005; Samolevska, interview by the author, February 4, 2003.

[61] Winrock International, "Women's Economic Empowerment, Final Report," (Winrock International, July 31, 2004), p. 5.

[62] Winrock International, *Short-Term Business Training* (Winrock International, 2000), [cited 23 March 2004. Available from www.winrock.org.ua/WEE].

[63] Winrock International, *Women's Stories* (Kiev: Winrock International/ TPP, 2002).

[64] Winrock International, *Statistical Analysis of Surveys of Human Trafficking Victims Who Sought Assistance at the Seven Regional Women for Women Centers of the Trafficking Prevention Project* (Kiev: Winrock International, 2004).

[65] As was previously argued, for example, by Jane Ruud in "Report on Trafficking Prevention Efforts in Ukraine: Impact of the Women for Women Centers on at-Risk Teen and Adult Women," (Winrock International, USAID: Regional Mission to Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, 2001) and in "Summary Report of Trafficking of Women in Ukraine," (Winrock International, USAID: Regional Mission to Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, 2002).

[66] Ruth Rosenberg, Sebastian Lazaroiu, and Elena Tyuryukanova, "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings in Europe and Eurasia," (Development Alternatives, Inc., September 2004), p. 43, emphasis added.

[67] Rosenberg, Lazaroiu, and Tyuryukanova, "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings," p. 45.

[68] USAID/Kiev, "Countering Trafficking in Persons: Executive Summary (Internal Document)," (Kiev: USAID, 2004).

[69] IOM/Ukraine, *Ukrainian NGO Counter-Trafficking Newsletter*, no. 3. (Kiev, May 2004).

[70] Voiced for example in Rosenberg, Lazaroiu, and Tyuryukanova, "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings."

[71] USAID/Kiev, *USAID Is Launching "Countering Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine."*

[72] Tymoshenko-Yakunina, interview by the author, April 14, 2005.

[73] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005, emphasis added.

[74] Tatarinova, interview by the author, April 28, 2005.

[75] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.

[76] For the general argument see, for example, Cooley and Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action," specifically in the post-socialist context, Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society."

7
Local Women's NGOs as Aid Recipients

This chapter explores what sustains the civil society assistance discourse on the ground and more specifically within women's NGOs located outside of the Ukrainian capital.[1] As with the previous chapters, the goal is to bring out the interaction between actors as well as between concepts. I answer three related questions: what it means to be assisted, what it means to be(come) an NGO, and what it means to be addressing a gender or women's issue.

This site of interaction is characterized by fewer immediate encounters. This means that, especially on the most general questions of the meanings of assistance, the interaction takes place more on the level of the symbolic and the imaginary rather than on the level of practical rules of the game (as in Kiev). Moreover, this site of interaction is the most fragmented one – geographically as well as discursively. Given this complexity of the site, my primary focus in this chapter remains on capturing local responses to and understandings of the civil society assistance discourse – a more modest task than reconstructing the whole range of discourses that characterize this site of interaction. I answer the following related questions: What does it meant to be assisted, what does it mean to become and to be civil society with the help of assistance, and what does it mean to empower women?

Assistance: "The West Is the Best?"

The purpose of this section is to explore what it means for local women's NGOs to be assisted as described so far. I show how this meaning is sustained through the convergence between assistance as teaching and the home-grown opposition between the "West" and *sovok* (Soviet legacy).

In the local Ukrainian discourse the "West" is not a reference to specific countries; rather it is an idealized notion of what (post-)Soviet

Ukraine is not, but would like to become. In this sense it is different from the concept of "world/international community" that developed in Kiev, which refers to the actual interactions with professional actors from countries like the U.S. or EU member states. The concept of the "West" is loaded with ideas of prosperity, of opportunity, and of being accepted by the "world community," and of being recognized as one of the "developed and civilized countries." It is not prescriptive in the sense that it does not promote a particular model of development; rather, it embodies the aspiration to change and the willingness to accommodate many different models that come from the outside. These ideas of "catching up" and of "progress" converge to a certain degree with the donors' discourse of "assistance"/"transition." The "West" is considered a standard to look up to, a "civilized world." Historically, it has a certain positive ring about it because during the Soviet period Ukrainians were deprived of direct access to it, and were often led to believe it was an antipode to everything that was bad about the Soviet system. After the collapse of the Soviet system, synchronizing with the "West" is seen as a way to bridge this gap and to prove that Ukrainians are capable of leading a "civilized life" according to "proper" standards. In many interactions that I had in Ukraine, the "West" was identified as a reference point on many levels – from the functioning of political institutions to the quality of consumer goods.

This local discourse has facilitated the convergence between the Western discourse on "assistance" as top-down teaching of Ukraine by the "West" and the local discourses and practices, thus making assistance part of the local reality rather than just an import. The resulting locally negotiated meaning of assistance emphasizes the need and the importance of adopting Western models and developing the ties with the Western world. One should not underestimate the significance of these concepts for the way in which the interaction between assistance agencies and the local NGO leaders has developed. These meanings facilitated the acceptance of being influenced from the outside, and they stand for the locally attributed legitimation of "being assisted." This argument, however, should not be read as claiming that the locals were naïve in their interpretation of assistance or blind to its drawbacks. On the contrary, they have taken up different meanings of "assistance" in creative ways. If we want to understand the effects of assistance on local NGOs, it is key to look at what forms and meanings assistance takes as it goes outside of the donor's office.

In order to understand the encounter between the U.S. assistance and Ukrainians, one first has to look into some concepts through which the latter had related to the "West" before the collapse of the Soviet

Union. As some personal accounts I collected in Ukraine indicate, seven decades of the Soviet state in Ukraine[2] were marked by a rigid opposition between this socialist country and the capitalist "West" that was constantly reinforced through ideological propaganda as well as the complete impossibility of immediate access to the reality of the "West." In the popular perception, however, the "West" became an embodiment of everything the Soviet state was not. Moreover, as people were becoming disillusioned with the Soviet system, the "West" acquired a positive connotation (although, of course, not for everyone in the same way). The "West" was imagined as a land of plenty, a "really existing"[3] example of a truly functioning democracy and market economy, the place where all the wished for things not conceivable under socialism could easily come true. The increasing disillusionment with the Soviet system and the belief that the alternative could be looked up in the "West" can actually be seen as some of the factors that facilitated the collapse of the Soviet Union. Well before the actual encounter, the idea of the "West" held a significant place in the (post-)Soviet symbolic order.

As my fieldwork experience indicates, developments in Ukraine are widely discussed in relation to the actual or imagined situation in the "West" also today. Interestingly, knowing that I was coming from a Western institution, some people I interviewed referred to the (perceived) difference between Ukraine and the "West." Sometimes when asking for an explanation for why things function one way or another, I would be told that it was "simply because here it is not the West, you know." In other words, people measured Ukrainian problems in terms of the overall distance of the Ukrainian situation from that in the "West." The concept of the "West" also holds one of the central places in the visions of an alternative future, of things that should come now that socialism has withered away. These ideas are directly linked to a new post-Soviet notion of "professionalism," which is a notion that captures the post-Soviet inspirations to learn new skills and acquire new professions. I will explore the workings of the notion of "professionalism" in more detail in the next section.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "West's" opposite, the notion of socialism transformed from something that defined people's existence in very real ways to a symbolic notion of a historical legacy. It received a derogatory name – *sovok*[4] – that was used to refer to everything that people saw as typical of the socialist system and were hoping to overcome – from the old consumer goods and services to the mentality associated with the system. The notion of *sovok* embodied a widely shared belief and aspiration that new models had to be

introduced and old ways extirpated. Thinking in terms of this opposition is widespread in Ukraine even now, since everyone in their thirties or older has experienced the Soviet system and its collapse.

This discourse is also very visible among NGOs. For example, the Memorandum of the League of Resource Centers reads: "The level of awareness of Ukrainian citizens remains post-totalitarian: the values of civic responsibility have not been formed and the traditions that would help develop civil society in Ukraine are absent."[5] Here the values and the mentality of Ukrainians are presented as backward, and the development of civil society is seen as impeded by them. The quote below introduces the solutions and the source of learning for Ukrainians that are supposed to help overcome this legacy. As one of the NGO activists trained at the Counterpart Creative Center Trainer School put it: "If we want to be a part of Europe, to become a *world accepted* country, world accepted nation, we need employees that have *international worldwide vision*. And the trainings help us prepare such people."[6] This quote introduces two important ideas: the aspiration to become a "world accepted" country, in which the "world" means first and foremost developed countries, and the construction of an "international worldwide vision" as a new mentality for which the "West" serves as a reference point.

In this way, the propagandistic Soviet opposition between capitalism and socialism was not given up after the collapse of the Soviet Union but reinvested with new meaning. The new meaning of the "West" is based on the aspiration to catch up and to re-enter the world community. Much significance is attributed to proving that "we are not like some developing country, we are good enough to be part of the civilized world." Adopting the Western models and making them work in Ukraine is an important part of the new meaning of the "West." This optimistic view is of course not the only one that can be found in Ukraine, and it clearly has a stronger call for younger professionals based in metropolitan areas. Thus, the positive notion of the "West" is not an idea that exhausts the complex world of present-day Ukraine; rather it is the one that proved vital in the life of assistance on the ground. The "West," although not clearly worked out, is a concept that helps accommodate the idea of assistance as teaching and holds together the discourse of being assisted.

Being assisted in terms of learning from the "West" means that NGOs have to look up to their foreign donors and their Western counterparts to receive guidance as to their identities and possible and meaningful activities. The history of one of the women's NGO that I

visited is illustrative. Its director, Liliia Kim, recalled the following beginnings:

> We had our first conference, and our mayor at the time suggested me as a president of the Women's Fund. That was in 1994, and I really had no clue what we were going to do in the beginning. Then in 1995 I went to Beijing, where I met lots of women and I understood that *we were really lagging behind over here*. So I started to explore, to ask about the foundations, how to write grant proposals, and so we started to write projects, started working.[7]

This NGO was initiated by a new team of civil servants as part of a democracy reform package that, as I discussed earlier, had a strong NGO component. However, the activities of this NGO only gained form and content after its leader was exposed to similar practices in the "West;" and for her, "working" itself became synonymous with applying for grants and interacting with foreign donors. Thus, the innovation here comes from the "West," or rather from the local understanding of what the "West" is.

Similar framings of assistance can be found, for example, in the description of the history of the League of Resource Centers:

> The experience of civil society development in Western countries has long ago been generalized and the state and development of the Third Sector researched. Educational courses on different aspects of NGO management have been designed on the basis of such research. Since 1993 this *knowledge* together with the financial support has started coming to Ukraine.[8]

As is evident from the quoted paragraph, the development of civil society in Western countries is assumed to be an appropriate model also for Ukraine. The interchangeability of the term "civil society" with the "Third Sector" that is increasingly common in the assistance discourse is also taken for granted. Moreover, a slight frustration slips through in the text – since the "West" has had these experiences before and done its "homework" by writing them up in neat guidelines, why would one want to reinvent the wheel? In other words, the fact that the "West" holds the appropriate knowledge is framed as widely accepted. The legitimacy granted to Western models is enhanced by the choice of the word "knowledge" and its position in the sentence – it is mentioned first, as something of higher importance than, in this case, financial resources.

These ideas area also captured in the quote below: "While in *other countries* the Third Sector is well developed, and non-governmental

non-profit organizations *act professionally* to tackle certain social issues, in Ukraine they have been developing mostly in an *amateurish* way."[9] What is constructed in this quote is an opposition between the outside – "other countries" – and Ukraine, in which the former is defined as "well developed" and "professional," while the latter is "developing" and "amateurish." From this opposition comes the justification for learning and "catching up."

Introducing things that come from the outside has a strong legitimacy. This, however, does not mean that these things really exist in the "West" – talking of "import" is somewhat misleading here. The relevant models were not brought back into the country by Ukrainians with a thorough knowledge of the Western context. Instead, they originate in the *imaginary* "West." Quite telling in this context is another notion, the use of which goes far beyond the realm of NGOs or of assistance. It is the notion of "euro". Contrary to what an English speaker would assume, it has very little to do with Europe. "Euro"-offices, "euro"-standards, "euro"-services are not copied from the standards and services that exist in various European contexts. Instead, the prefix "euro" is meant to signify that the things it defines belong to a new, non-*sovok* lifestyle. The distinction between these notions and the actual practices in Western or European countries is important. It highlights the fact that the locally perceived legitimacy of introducing Western practices into the Ukrainian context is divorced from the actual Western practices and has more to do with the home-grown discourse of catching up with the imaginary "West."

I argue that the opposition between the "West" and the *sovok* has proven crucial in the interaction between Western donors and local recipients of assistance. The discourse of assistance as a transfer of knowledge has been enhanced by the local ideas about the "West." They have allowed Ukrainians to share with foreign donors in the belief that models had to be imported from the "West," and that foreigners had something to say that was of value for Ukrainians. This finding is important because it shows that the idea of introducing Western models into the Ukrainian society was seen as valuable and legitimate not only by foreign donors but also by Ukrainians. It adds a new dimension to the story of the "locals" making pragmatic use of Western resources by pointing out that assistance has not only a material but also a symbolic significance for its recipients. However, as the discourse and practice of "being assisted" developed, a tension emerged between the idealistic notions of the "West" and the actual practices of receiving assistance. To explore this further, I look into the specific case of assistance to NGOs.

Civil Society: "Professionals Without a Profession"

This section explores what "being assisted" means for a particular subset of assistance recipients – NGOs. It investigates what it means to be(come) an NGO in Ukraine and examines the reinterpretations on the ground of the concepts that I have identified as key for civil society assistance: "capacity-building," "empowerment," and "sustainability." In order to understand these reinterpretations I look into the meaning of a local notion of "professionalism" that has simultaneously facilitated the acceptance of American civil society assistance discourse and prepared the ground for the main transformations in the meaning of its key concepts, taking them away from their "original" meaning. I explore these transformations by identifying and analyzing the workings of such key notions as "trainings" and "information."

As I have shown in the previous section, the notion of *sovok* as a "wrong mentality" has justified a certain degree of acceptance of Western models; it has also facilitated the emergence of another important concept, that of "professionalism" seen as the "right" kind of mentality. Adhering to ideals of "professionalism" has made people more self-critical and more open to learning and training. It has also meant that successfully synchronizing with some "Western" ways is perceived as an achievement in and of itself.

As some Ukrainians emphasized in their conversations with me, "professionalism" as a notion did not exist back in the Soviet days. People were expected to work because it was ideologically right. They were seen as little mechanisms within the large machine of the socialist state. Individuals were subordinated to the bigger authority of the "system" in both their private and public lives. At the workplace there was little incentive to perform beyond the expected minimum (or rather "maximum") or to innovate. One of the Soviet sayings is illustrative: "Initiative is punishable." In the post-Soviet period, the notion of "professionalism" became one of the key anti-*sovok* notions, a way to break away from the constraints of the old system and to put the individual back into the symbolic order of the post-Soviet society.

The convergence of "professionalism" with the discourse of assistance is important for understanding the direction in which Ukrainian NGOs developed. In the early 1990s Ukrainians were eager (but also forced by difficult circumstances) to acquire new qualifications, to learn new, better marketable techniques, and to master new professions. In this context, many also perceived NGOs as a new form of employment. This convergence enabled the creation of a whole infrastructure of NGOs whose sole purpose is claimed to be the

improvement of "professionalism" of NGOs as well as of networks of NGO experts and professionals. An example is the network of resource centers, which is defined in the language of managerial effectiveness: "The *ineffective management* of the increasing number of NGOs in Ukraine called for the creation of organizations that would aim at delivering professional assistance to other NGOs." A related idea is that for these goals to be achieved real "NGO specialists" are needed: "Creating resource centers in Ukraine will yield the biggest *effect* if they combine in a national network and increase their *specialization* in the functions in which the *specialists* of respective centers have reached the highest level of *professionalism*."[10]

The centers position themselves in business-like terms:

> The League of Resource Centers of Ukraine connects organizations that work *professionally* on the development of the Third Sector in Ukraine. This means that the Kirovograd Creative Initiatives Support Center *offers its clients a full package of services* that are characteristic of an NGO resource center.[11]

The corporate language of "services" and "clients" turns NGO activities into technical operations. The actual "clients" with their concerns and in their diversity are absent from the reports of these NGOs. They are left anonymous, and their possible uses of the "services" offered remain obscure. The Resource Center for the Development of Civil Society Organizations "GURT" (Kiev) lists the following "services" it offers: "trainings and seminars, consultations, looking for partners, disseminating information about social events, and administering events and programs."[12] What is striking is that these "services" are presented in a way that makes them completely devoid of their own content. I illustrate this tendency further in the next sub-section dedicated to the notion of "trainings."

Capacity-building Though Trainings

"Professionalism" of NGOs is attained through certain tools, the most prominent of which is "trainings." As I have shown in the previous chapter, in Kiev "trainings" are one of the key tools that fall under the notion of "capacity-building." At local women's NGOs, however, they transform into a powerful in and of itself concept. I argue that this is illustrative of an important impact of assistance locally – technical tools acquire a life and a meaning of their own and often push out other more specific notions or ideas.

The early experience of Ukrainians with "trainings" was not unproblematic. Many women felt ill at ease with sitting in a circle, doing team-building and "ice-breaking" exercises, having a round-about discussion instead of getting directly to the point. Others thought it childish and school-like that Americans were fond of drawing little schemes on those portable boards they brought to every meeting or training. Not only were these formats not commonly used for other public meetings organized by the locals, but they did not fit with the teaching methods and educational formats in which Ukrainian audiences were trained. This disconnect made it easy for many Ukrainians to dismiss the whole message as "stupid" and "primitive," adding to somewhat pejorative attitudes towards American culture in general. Nonetheless, these formats were conflated with "assistance" itself, and being assisted was understood as learning these formats.

The notion of "trainings" embodies more than just a kind of activity: It defines the skills and tools that have to be attained for the purposes of establishing and successfully running an NGO, thus implying that there is a well-defined way to be(come) an NGO. I argue that the notion of "trainings" has a strong prescriptive influence on how NGOs emerge and function. In this subsection I explore the "life" of trainings within a local NGO.

"Trainings" include a multitude of mostly technical rather than substantive topics, such as training modules on planning, financial management, public relations, fund-raising, project design, project management, report writing, etc. The idea of delivering a training is disembodied from a specific problematic or a target group; almost any interactive exchange can be framed as a training. "Trainings" are meant to give (potential) NGO personnel certain tools for establishing and running an NGO; the elaborate programs of these trainings emphasize the importance of expertise in the technicalities of setting up and managing an NGO. The biggest emphasis is placed on acquiring new skills, learning new techniques, and taking up new formats. Through trainings on organizational capacity an NGO is constructed not as a means to an end but as an intricate prescription that has to be adhered to regardless of the ends. The way training modules are spread around the country reveals the assumption that the format of NGO activities should be the same regardless of the kind of work they do. There is a core of techniques that are believed to be universally important.

"Trainings" are meant to deliver the basic skills that are believed to be the basis for qualifying as an NGO in the first place. The assumption is that succeeding in having an NGO is an achievement in and of itself. Thus, establishing an NGO is seen as a tangible outcome of various

projects (as opposed to focusing on what those projects did for local communities, for example). One of the key results often presented at the end of trainings or other projects is the creation of a new NGO. This is, for example, the case with the Youth City Council project in Rivne funded by the Counterpart Partnership Alliance and now registered as a youth NGO, "Youth Council," in the city of Rivne. At the end of a Eurasia Foundation Resource Centers project as well, two members of the League of Resource Centers are reported to have registered two new organizations.

The aim of a training is not to make new skills and techniques work in a certain environment but to spread them further. For example, the Volyn Resource Center has a project called "The School of Developing Local Resources for NGOs," in which it conducts trainings of 20 competitively selected NGOs throughout Ukraine. The main goal is to turn the trained NGOs into "models" for developing local resources and make them capable of training others themselves. Thus, the goal of the project is not to apply a particular methodology to some local issues but to replicate it within other organizations. This points to a significant tendency in the development of NGOs in Ukraine. The emphasis that is placed on the importance of acquiring technical skills and on successful management has an impact not only on the content and form of the trainings themselves but also on the direction in which trainings are taken afterwards, i.e., their after-project life.

One of the significant outcomes is that Ukrainians are first of all trained to train others rather than trained to apply the new skills elsewhere. The director of the GURT Resource Center Vasylyna Dybaylo is quoted as saying the following about her participation in the "train-the-trainer" program organized by UCAN for its grantees: "The training and coaching I received was the most unique and effective I have ever received. It will profoundly and concretely affect my work as a trainer. I have learned how to use innovative teaching techniques and how to teach fresh materials."[13] This quote reflects the rationale of trainings that are meant to improve trainings. It refers to the vast experience Dybaylo has already had with trainings and shows her commitment to continue offering trainings further.

The need for organizational capacity trainings is framed as a commonsensical idea that there has to be an NGO in place before meaningful civic action can happen. The idea that NGOs have to be preceding their initiatives created a phenomenon that I term an "NGO set" – several organizations in one created by the same leader(s) to cater to different types of projects with different eligibility criteria. One such set that I have researched counts seven different organizations run by the

core personnel of five women working together since 1994. The agenda of the respective NGOs in this set reflects the shifts in the funding priorities of major donors. Among other projects, the set features a women's credit union since 1997, a women's crisis center and a shelter for victims of domestic violence since 1998, and a recently formed youth club.

"Trainings" connect directly to the discourse of assistance as teaching. One of their most important functions is the construction of learning and expertise. The skills necessary to run an NGO cannot be developed on the basis of experience in a certain area; they have to be taught by qualified experts. Thus, the role of "NGO experts" is significant. "Trainers" are the people who have not only been trained themselves on specific topics but also passed through "trainings of trainers," thus acquiring a new marketable qualification. Conducting a "training" is a skill in high demand in the NGO world. Again, the implication is that trainings are not seen as a means to acquire a tool that could be utilized in some future activities; they are themselves valuable skills that can be turned into an activity in its own right. There also emerges a professional divide on the basis of trainings. Being proficient in "trainings" creates a certain affinity among the groups that belong to the "training" network. In this sense, "trainings" work as a kind of gate-keeping mechanism towards the groups and NGOs that have not had this kind of experience and cannot demonstrate the same skills.

From the beginning, training services were offered at a rate higher than the actual demand for them. Simultaneously a discourse developed on why it is important to pass through a training, thus, justifying the importance of newly acquired skills. "Trainings" were hooked into the idea of "professionalism," in a way creating a divide between the "ins" and "outs" of the training world, a socialization pattern that would define the "right" trajectory of NGO development. For example, the League of Resource Centers and its members position themselves counter the first civil society organizations that are said to have had "badly concealed political goals" from the very beginning and to have engaged mainly in protest actions. The organizations that grew out of these earlier civil society groups and

> […]their leaders received the experience and the skills of running an organization *only* through the actual day-to-day experience, from their personal life experience, and drawing on their previous education. *Expert knowledge* of NGO *management* was practically inaccessible in Ukraine at the time.[14]

Here indigenous concerns and daily experiences are subordinated to the "expert knowledge" that is framed as a much sought-after resource.

The importance of technical expertise is spread through the language itself, which employs a great deal of jargon, making it at times impenetrable for a lay person. Here my own fieldwork experience is illustrative. Many of my interviews conducted in Russian and Ukrainian were transcribed by a Ukrainian research assistant, who had done this kind of work before but not with interviews on this particular topic. As I got back to my office and started listening to the interviews, I was surprised to discover many passages either missing or full of mistakes that, at times, changed the meaning to its complete opposite. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the person simply could not follow some of the interviewees whose speech was heavy with technical terms and English words. Frustrated at first, I then became excited about being pointed by an outsider to something that my informants and I – steeped in our common language of NGO expertise – were both taking for granted. The lack of intelligibility of the NGO language came through at once.

To illustrate this issue, I offer the following quote from one of the NGO web sites, which reads: "Civil society organizations need increasingly more services ranging from very simple ones (technical assistance, trainings) to more significant ones (facilitation, lobbying)."[15] Here, "technical assistance" is a term that is not self-evident for outsiders to the assistance world; one would need to explain what kind of assistance is meant. Also, most people would connect lobbying to U.S. politics and would not see its applicability to the Ukrainian context. "Trainings" and "facilitation" are transliterated English words that have no meaning at all outside of the NGO–donor community. The use of cryptic language that sounds vague and supposedly clever and the proliferation of technical terms and English words create a boundary of "professionalism," an insider jargon that keeps at a distance those who have not mastered it. This tendency sits uncomfortably with the idea of self-sustainability or even independence of NGOs. Ironically, both are the key objectives of many donor programs.

The transformations of the concepts described above show how the same concept can change its meaning in significant ways when it is employed in a different site of interaction. However, these transformations do not make these notion less powerful. For example, the impact of "trainings" can be seen in the way NGOs absorb the format and allow it to substitute for other kinds of activities that they can be performing. In this sense, the format of what an NGO should be and how it should function has taken over the NGO world at the expense of

the content. This tendency is also visible in the way the meaning of "empowerment" has changed tremendously compared to its understanding in Washington, DC.

Empowerment Through Information

Another donor-introduced concept – "empowerment" and specifically the idea of empowerment through information – is substantially transformed within local NGOs. "Information" is constructed as something that has a value in and of itself, regardless of what kind of information it is and through what kinds of channels it is disseminated. Just to illustrate this point: Out of 31 projects supported by grants that were administered by the Creative Center Counterpart (a Kiev-based NGO that among other activities administered the grants from EU Tacis and the EU-U.S. Transatlantic Initiative) in 1996–1997, 18 mention as their goal or their primary activity "information and consultation services," "to create information-methodology center," "to increase information flow," "to improve knowledge," "to provide information," "to spread ideas," "to conduct seminars and trainings," "to create information-education center," "to share information."[16] The following quote shows that information is believed to be a sufficient means of civic intervention: "To promote citizen participation we have published seven brochures dedicated to the activities of the Third Sector and two 'Guides of Chernihiv NGOs' that contain exhaustive information about fifty active city NGOs," says the AHALAR Resource Center in Chernihiv.[17]

For the majority of NGOs whose work I researched, acting on an issue involves first and foremost disseminating information on that issue. Moreover, very often the information does not have to be connected to a specific issue at all. The idea that NGOs are there to be hubs of information is so naturalized that no explanation of the purpose of that information is required. NGOs engage in a range of activities aimed at disseminating information, such as at consultations, seminars, and roundtables and in institutions dedicated to disseminating information, such as resource centers. The League of Resource Centers sees its role in "disseminating the information about *the role of the Third Sector in a developed society* among broader public, private and public structures."[18] Here the information is important not because of the work that NGOs do but because the Third Sector plays an important role in any "developed society." Here one can again see the connection to the notion of the "West" as an embodiment of the state of being "developed."

Framing NGO activities in terms of "information" facilitates increased flexibility for people working in an NGO in terms of their priorities and activities. It supports the practice of diversifying agendas (and, thus, sources of income) as much as possible, while at the same time ensuring maximum continuity in NGO structures and personnel. To ensure inflow of grants, NGOs have to follow donors' priorities rather closely. To make sure they don't miss the boat, NGOs invest in the stability of the format of their activities at the expense of the content of what they do. For example, a woman told me during one of my first interviews back in 2001: "Strange you are interested in women's NGOs: really, you see, you don't do women these days, now all the funding is going to youth programs." Acting on her own advice, she is now the head of a youth NGO that often combines work on women's issues with the theme of youth by, for example, organizing education activities for girls.

NGOs do not have to have expertise in a certain issue area to be able to disseminate information on it. Since every new topical interest of the donors comes with funds available for supporting the associated "information and awareness campaigns" throughout the country, there is always a way to claim eligibility for those funds. In the case of the USAID-supported nation-wide anti-trafficking initiative, the topic became so popular in the late 1990s that roughly half of all women's NGOs introduced it onto their agendas. For example, an NGO dating back to 1995 started off by conducting mainly humanitarian, social safety net activities; then in 1998 the organization initiated a crisis center for women who suffer from domestic violence. Currently, its agenda is summarized as follows:

> DANA is currently focusing on civic education, emphasizing human rights, legislative activity, and a program directed against trafficking in women. It has raised public interest in this problem and created much press and TV attention on the issue. Thanks to DANA, a compulsory course in human rights was introduced into Ukraine's schools as a result of its efforts.[19]

Another organization says its goal is "to promote democratization in Ukraine; to provide help to women and children that suffer from domestic violence; [and] to facilitate the growth of women's NGOs in Ukraine."[20] Among its many varied activities, the NGO reports to be offering legal, psychological, and medical services to battered women and their children; organizing lunches and concerts for the disabled, veterans, and orphans; working with mass media and publishing

newsletters and brochures; reading lectures to teenagers on prevention of trafficking and on the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs; and doing psychological trainings with women-prisoners.

Such eclectic NGO agendas make it sound like some of them are really inducing a profound change in several important fields (although the sheer range of activities seems an overstretch for any one NGO). In fact, they are disseminating "information" on every funding-eligible topic they come across. The implication is that NGOs do not develop expertise in a particular area or deepen their knowledge of a particular problem. Instead, they find it possible and meaningful to be doing everything and nothing at the same time.

To summarize, concepts of "capacity-building" and "empowerment" have found embodiment in two core notions of "trainings" and "information" that define the discourse on the ground on what an NGO should and can possibly do. The workings of the notion "trainings" are such that it inflates the space and the importance attributed to the format and the technicalities of managing an NGO and performing NGO-related activities. This prevents the NGOs from putting the format at the service of the content and the goals of activities. At the same time, the notion of "information," instead of deepening the knowledge of NGOs, has translated into the idea and practice of having eclectic agendas and of not focusing on results. This brings me to the third core concept of the civil society assistance discourse – "sustainability." As I have shown, both "trainings" and "information" work in a way that kidnaps/hijacks the incentive of NGOs to define the purpose of their activities and to aim at tangible results. This promotes short-term thinking about the plans and aspirations of a particular NGO. These tendencies conflict with the volatility of the socio-economic context in Ukraine that, to the contrary, makes people over-emphasize the importance of "securing the future" and "ensuring stability". I explore this tension further in the next sub-section dedicated to local understandings of "sustainability."

Sustainability: Sitting on Suitcases or Finding the Right Business?

The donor-supported idea of "sustainability" is tightly connected to reproducing NGOs and enhancing their dialogue with the donors. The incentive to reproduce NGOs is strengthened by the services that are made available to them. For example, the Volyn Resource Center reports on having offered

> 568 consultation and information services to NGOs of Rivne and Volyn oblast in 2000 on the following issues: information about the programs of donor organizations, strategic planning for NGOs, writing projects to international donor organizations, accounting, and forming and registering an NGO.[21]

This is a list of what one might need to know to be able to qualify for receiving NGO grants from various donors. In addition, the same resource center reports to be

> regularly organizing presentation meetings between foreign funds' representatives and NGOs, spreading information that it receives from the funds, researching the Internet, and consulting other NGOs on the expediency of applying to particular funding structures. An additional service is offered to ease the communication between NGOs and foreign partners – the translation of projects, letters, and general information about the activities of a particular fund.[22]

This naturalizes the idea that NGOs become successful and meaningful first and foremost through their connection to the donors. As a result, sustainability is defined in terms of proximity to the world of assistance, and the way to help NGOs is believed to be to socialize them into the culture of donor projects. This points to the power of the assistance discourse in that it managed to introduce "being assisted" as the only way forward for local NGOs. However, this donor-inspired meaning of sustainability is largely contested on the ground. It is admitted here that the activities that are funded in the name of sustainability – such as the Resource Centers – are not only limited in ensuring sustainability but are also often unsustainable themselves.

> The League of Resource Centers in its present form is not well fit to exercise a systematic influence on the activities of the Third Sector in Ukraine. The potential of separate organizations is not sufficient since the coordination mechanism between them is underdeveloped.[23]

There are conflicting ideas about the sustainability of resource centers. According to Svitlana Suprun, Civil Society Consultant at the Mott Foundation:

> We sincerely hope that in the next phase of their development, the NGOs served by these resource centers will continue to substantially contribute to the strengthening of the civil society in Ukraine. We recognize that many centers will select new routes to advance their goals and *may no longer exist as resource centers*. Some will

> transform into training centers; some will become charitable foundations. Some resource centers *may even close down* as their personnel shift to other NGOs, businesses, or local government. All this reflects the evolutionary trends facing the development of Ukrainian civil society.[24]

What creeps into these quotes is a doubt as to how sustainable these centers are once left to their own devices. Since practically all the funding was invested into strengthening the capacity of those particular NGOs and links between them, expressing such doubt means more than just speculating about the future. It puts in question more than a decade of assistance specifically to resource centers as well as the idea that they have to be assisted at all as a means to improve the "sustainability" of Ukrainian civil society. While the proximity to donors' procedures and agendas (as ensured by "trainings" and "information") and donors' funds improves the short-term sustainability of NGOs to a significant extent, it stands in conflict with ideas about their long-term sustainability.

The homegrown notion of sustainability is very different from that of the donors and, in fact, does not depend on either "trainings" or "information." t is also rarely embedded in the idea of an NGO itself. In fact, very few NGO activists I met see the NGO itself as their main focus of activity for the coming decade or beyond. They are either constantly "sitting on their suitcases,"[25] despairing about the lack of clarity about the future, or complementing their activities with other "side businesses" (*pobochniy biznes*).

An example of the former is one of the Women for Women Centers that I visited in 2003, i.e., roughly one year before the funding for the Winrock Trafficking Prevention Project (TPP) was due to run out. The biggest concern of the organization back then was what they could possibly do in the after-funding phase. One of its leaders explained to me that it was most unlikely that other grants would give them an opportunity to function on the same scale, to maintain their personnel and their office space. The range of reactions the NGO was contemplating went from hoping the funding would continue to doing something completely different from trafficking prevention to giving up the idea of having an NGO altogether (at least in that form). Clearly, these concerns were not helpful for developing a strong identity and a clear vision for the future of that NGO.

An example of the latter is an NGO that I encountered in Kharkov run by a former business woman and partly funded through the other Winrock program on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Apart

from being a City Council deputy and in close contact with the region and the city administrations, its leader opened her own consulting company, which is now offering some of the training modules that were developed under the Winrock program. More specifically, the company bids for tenders at the City Employment Office to provide employment and business trainings throughout the whole of the Kharkov region, making around UAH 50,000–60,000 per month[26] and employing around 30 people as trainers. In addition, it sells specialized courses to entrepreneurs, such as on business writing, business ethics, etiquette, etc. "We understand how we can make money," the director proudly stated.[27] She had plans to open a Business Internet Center that would offer information and consultancy services to businesses and connecting it to other similar centers around Ukraine. "Consulting is not very well developed yet, and for those who understand, this is a very good business. I really found my own business! All these restaurants I was doing before, I don't want to be bothered anymore."[28]

Thus, the more NGOs adhere to the discourse of "trainings" and "information," the more their activities contradict the homegrown idea of being a sustainable and long-term arrangement. The dominant discourse creates conditions of possibility for particular kinds of NGOs: formalized business-like structures, a source of employment for their staff, whose technical expertise is prioritized over the issues they address. These NGOs are characterized by eclectic and frequently shifting agendas; they also find it difficult to be clear in their purpose and their future goals. Assistance was particularly successful at producing certain types of NGOs – ones that closely resembled their American counterparts which were implementing donor programs in Ukraine. These concepts do not exhaust the story of what NGOs in Ukraine are like and what they do; however, they point best to the tendencies in NGO development that can be attributed to the impact of foreign assistance. What is striking is that, although NGOs remain central to the discourse, the discussions about the democratic role of civil society have moved out of reach.

Gender and Women's Issues: What Do They Mean Locally?

In this section I examine two concepts: "women as a target group" and "women's empowerment" that have structured the assistance discourse on gender and women's issues in Washington, DC and in Kiev. Similarly to what I found in Kiev, both concepts are extensively questioned and transformed. However, the notion of "gender" is not employed in these transformations and openings; in fact, its use at local

NGOs is limited. Although the term is used by local NGOs in grant projects alongside other "assistance" terms, such as "trainings" or "information," I have not found other ways of employment of "gender." For example, an NGO from Vinnitsa is implementing a project with the support of the Ukrainian Women's Fund that is aimed at "spreading the gender culture among the population of the region by organizing trainings with representatives of mass media, press clubs, and publication of information materials."[29] However, this term does not feature beyond such specialized "trainings."

Women as a Target Group: Is There Really Such a Thing?

As I have shown in Chapters 4 and 5, an important component of the concept "women as a target group" is the idea that women are generally oppressed, discriminated against, and tend to fall victim to violence. Trafficking and domestic violence are interesting because "assistance" played a significant role in constructing them as central women's issues. Especially with the issue of trafficking, donors' interference has made a whole world of difference, and one could safely argue that it actually created the awareness and the infrastructure aimed at resolving the problem, even if not all donor programs were equally effective in addressing it. Despite this external push that was given to raising these issues, their relevance is hardly contested locally. Most Ukrainians are genuinely concerned about these problems and do not deny or downplay their significance for Ukrainian women and society as a whole. However, what involves much negotiation and contestation are the suggested causes of these problems and the proposed solutions to them.

While in Washington, DC the discourse on these issues grounds itself in the concept "women as victims" and makes an unambiguous connection to the supposedly universal idea of women's subjugation and marginalization, local women go to great lengths to argue that these problems are not about women but about structural socio-economic failures in the society. Local women are particularly ill at ease with the idea that "any woman can become a victim of trafficking." This construction was forcefully imposed during the USAID-funded national awareness campaign. Ironically, these kinds of representations prompted the women working on trafficking projects to construct alternative stories, which downplay women's susceptibility to trafficking, as in the following example.

> I have a friend who went in search for work to Italy; she had to stay in that square before she found a family to work for as a babysitter. She

> said she saw those people offering this kind of job, but if you don't want to, you won't get into trouble. Of course, you have to be careful.[30]

The argument is that women are not vulnerable because they are women or because they travel abroad. There is strong resistance to the tendency to view any international migration of women as equal to trafficking.

Local reinterpretation of the discourse on trafficking has involved the substitution of this issue with a broader issue of migration. This is a way to ensure that the criminalizing and sensationalist framing of trafficking does not impact on other women who travel abroad, especially since increasing numbers of women travel abroad for work these days. It is a way to protect them from being stigmatized because of the power of the trafficking discourse. To these ends, a different locally coined term – "women returning from working abroad" – is introduced by some women's NGOs, especially those working in the areas hardest hit by illegal emigration for work purposes.

To counterbalance the trafficking discourse, much space is given to discussing other experiences abroad and the importance of helping these women reconnect to their local communities when they come back. In many interviews that I conducted in Ukraine, the reasons for leaving the country for work are constructed in terms of difficult choices that people make and costs they pay, but also, importantly, in terms of pride they take in succeeding in these difficult struggles. For example, women taking care of the elderly in Italy are proud of what they are doing: "Thanks to Ukrainian women Italian elderly are taken care of; […] we have basically solved welfare problems of the Italian state." "My *Signora* is 82, and I have virtually raised her to her feet again because I need work. I have been consulting with my sister who is a doctor in Ukraine. My *Signora*'s children see this."[31] The difficulties connected with working illegally and in a strange environment often get quoted as examples of women's stamina and strength. Women are presented as the ones who took up the challenge of finding the money to feed and educate their children in times of economic despair, because women are stronger, whereas men have shown to be unable to quickly adapt to the changing situation in the country.

> Women migrate in bigger numbers; this is due to the demands on the labor market abroad but also due to Ukrainian feminine mentality. It is the mentality of a *berehynia*; [32] she would always rush to help, take the responsibility for her family; […]she goes to save her family but when she comes back the problems begin.[33]

The concept of "women returning from working abroad" helps redress the problem definition of trafficking and constructs new ideas about such notions as "vulnerability" and "trauma." It is argued by women's NGOs that "women returning from working abroad" often need assistance for dealing with traumas resulting from their experiences abroad. The "trauma," however, is being re-positioned from beyond the country's borders to the local and familiar settings. WfW staff quotes a so-called "post-immigration syndrome" – mostly psychological difficulties of reintegrating into one's own society after having spent a considerable amount of time in a different country with a higher level of economic development. This "syndrome" is believed to be aggravated by the lack of information that migrant women receive about their home countries while abroad. These women often feel unfit for re-employment in their hometowns, first, because they are often seen as lacking some basic skills and knowledge that are currently in demand on the labor market, and second, due to the dubious, almost indecent, character that is being locally ascribed to their employment abroad. "They say: we know what you've been doing there!"[34] This other "trauma" is not a part of a woman's body, like sickness; neither it is something that everyone is subjected to by the mere fact of crossing the border at her own risk (as the concept of "women as victims" implies). Rather it is something that is inflicted at home and, therefore, women should not be prevented from going but helped to stay abroad safely and assisted in coming back.

The contestations of the concept "women as victims" are also strong when it comes to the issue of domestic violence. Women who work on this issue argue that this notion often creates more problems than it helps resolve. In one of my interviews it was explained to me that

> the law on domestic violence has this article on the so-called "victim" behavior. Just today we have had a visit from a woman who went to the police to report violence against her, and they told her she had been provoking the violence herself. In cases like this, the law turns against the victim and so we want to lobby for an amendment. This has to be done with several NGOs and we've already made an agreement with the others, and passed a resolution on this.[35]

The solutions to domestic violence suggested are also closely related to the understanding of who should be helped and why. For example, most of the donor-funded activities to combat domestic violence involve various kinds of consultations and services to battered women, thus seeing them more as patients rather than as active agents. In contrast, the local agenda is often about giving the battered women

tools to safeguard their positions by, for example, finding legal ways to ensure that battered women are not deprived of their homes or forced to relocate.

Remarkable is the example of an NGO coalition that is emerging in Kharkov to lobby for a change in the regulation concerning domestic violence. One of my respondents shared the following:

> Currently, the law on domestic violence says that battered women have a right to be provided with a shelter. We want to raise the question why those are women who have to leave together with their children, while the perpetrator stays in their common flat. What we suggest is that there should be a rehabilitation center for such men.[36]

Undoubtedly, the nature of issues like domestic violence and trafficking in women is such that it involves criminal activities against women. However, what remains open to negotiation is the definition of causes of and solutions to these problems. Local women are disturbed by the way the "women as victims" discourse naturalizes the marginal status of women; instead, in the home-grown discourse more emphasis is placed on structural gender misbalances, lack of appropriate services, and the difficult economic situation in the country.

The problematic impact of the concept "women as a target group" as it is defined in Washington, DC is that women are often defined in negative ways as those who lack something, who are subjugated and marginalized. This further creates a tension between women as a target group and women working at NGOs. Since the NGO sector in Ukraine is highly feminized, representations of Ukrainian women generally are of direct relevance for the image and identity of the NGO staff, and local women's NGOs are very conscious of this fact.

Women's Empowerment Is Not Only About Women

Another way in which the concept "women as a target group" is reinvented locally is through questioning the existence of such a target group altogether. The discourse that is sustained by local NGOs breaks this notion up into multiple sub-groups that can be targeted. This move is based on the assumption that women differ according to their demographics and social backgrounds, and that each of the resulting sub-groups is affected by different issues and in different ways. Between June 1999 and March 2002, Winrock International supported 13 women's organizations working on the theme of women's economic empowerment (WEE project). These projects defined a variety of target

groups: unemployed women enrolled at local Employment Centers; women who were not satisfied with their salaries; women-mothers of children who suffer from consequences of the Chernobyl disaster; women from rural areas; women-farmers; women-entrepreneurs who just started their own businesses; and high school and university students. Depending on which target group an NGO worked with, it developed its own definition of the problem of women's economic empowerment and the ways in which it can be addressed.

The problem of employment is argued by women's NGOs to have regionally specific features and, therefore, to demand tailored approaches and context-sensitive definitions of target groups. For example, the Union of Rural Green Tourism in Simferopol developed an educational program tailored to promoting self-employment in the Bilohorodskiy rayon of Crimea, an area that is distinguished from other parts of Ukraine by the highest level of unemployment and the biggest number of repatriates. The Mykolayiv Women Business Support Center points out that each *rayon* of its *oblast* is characterized by a different set of problems as well as potentials; for example, Ochakiv is a resort area, Pervomaysk is mostly inhabited by the military, and Novy Bug is largely agricultural.

Another attempt at specifying the target group is evident from the work of one Women for Women Center, which targets teenagers from orphanage establishments. This is a particular group that, due to the circumstances of being brought up in a relatively closed environment, has different head start opportunities than other young people of the same age. The definition of a target group that carries the characteristics of innocence and incompetence is narrowed down to a particular case, whereas the definition of the problem that has to be addressed is broadened to include not only trafficking, and not only illegal labor migration, but also opportunities for starting one's own life in Ukraine: "These are a group at risk indeed because they are not only unready to go abroad; they are not even ready to do anything outside of the orphanage."[37] It is through this construction of variety that the concept "women as a target group" falls apart on the local level of women's NGOs. This is also evident in the way the Anti-Trafficking Initiative turns from one whole project as it is envisioned in Kiev into several (almost) unrelated sets of activities.

While in Kiev the Trafficking Prevention Program (TPP) and the Women's Economic Empowerment Program (WEE) are seen as two components of the same bigger initiative, they work with different target groups on the ground. Women Business Support Centers (WBSC) are mostly reporting on their work with women from *oblast* centers with

higher education, aged between 30 and 40. Again, the selection criteria for most business training programs are such that they are more favorable to women with life experience and clear goals rather than to innocent and ignorant girls who are often described in the TPP project.

Some of the success stories reported by Winrock International are illustrative of this bias. By the time Tetyana Aginina from Crimea came to the business training, she had already had a small hotel business in Phoros, one of the most luxurious places on the Crimean southern coast. She had gone from simply buying and renovating a house in Phoros to taking up a more proactive managerial position and turning it into a successful business. After the training, Tetyana organized a union of entrepreneurs and took up plans to include a conference hall in her hotel complex. Another training participant, Valentyna O. from Lubny in Poltava *oblast*, had had an impressive administrative career from being a doctor-assistant to becoming the head of a local clinic. She used the knowledge from the training to start a private clinic.[38]

In fact, contrary to the idea that "women as a target group" have to be supported in their entirety, most women's NGOs that implement women's economic empowerment programs report having conducted selection procedures among the women-candidates for their trainings. Some NGOs even took pride in developing selection procedures rigorous enough to admit only the most promising candidates. For example, a women's association in Makiivka, *Zhinochiy Dar* ("Women's Gift"), developed a two-day training for women on how to find a job that is especially designed for women with university education. Other NGOs included the presentation of a business idea in their selection interviews. Such components of the women's economic empowerment program changed its focus from women-specific empowerment to the socialization of women into the business world alongside men. Many Women Business Support Centers (WBSC) also did not offer their services exclusively to women, and although men remained a minority among those who received trainings, this further impacted local definitions of "women as a target group" as well as the identities of WBSCs themselves.

These tendencies deepened after the funding from Winrock International had run out in 2004. Many of the NGOs that used to work on the women's economic empowerment program now seek to increase their after-funding sustainability by offering competitive training services to a wide range of groups, first-time entrepreneurs as well as those who need more advanced training on specific topics. Some of the WBSCs started working with the concept of a family business, for example the Chernihiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Simferopol WBSCs. They

report the growth of family business, especially in small towns and villages, and suggest more work has to be done to tailor the trainings to their particular needs.

Overall, the idea of economic empowerment itself is connected to notions of economic success and entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is argued to be shared by both men and women, a resource they have equal access to. Contrary to the idea that "women as a target group" are particularly disadvantaged due to their subjugated status as women, many women's NGOs argue that women face the same problems as men and, therefore, it is not women who have to be empowered personally but structural problems that have to be resolved. The "Kharkiv Institute of Community Development" reports on the following findings of its survey conducted among women-entrepreneurs, representatives of women's business associations, and civil servants in departments that deal with economic development and enterprise registration. According to the Institute, the problems that impede the development of small business in general are the same as those faced by women-entrepreneurs in particular. These problems fall into two broad categories: first, imperfections of public institutions, such as legislative frameworks, bureaucracy, and corruption; second, lack of personal training of entrepreneurs in such areas as marketing, strategic business planning, etc.

In another survey conducted by Winrock International itself, Women Business Support Centers were asked to name the most common obstacles that women face when starting a business. Out of a long list of obstacles that were reported,[39] only a few were directly attributable to their status as women, such as births and lack of family support. In the stories that are told about the experiences of women-entrepreneurs obstacles are discussed in terms of structural and institutional failures that affect small business development in Ukraine as a whole. A business training participant, Iryna Kharchenko from Kiev *oblast*, came to the training with a long entrepreneurial experience. She had started her business in 1991 and reported that the main obstacles to her work were unfair interferences from the local government. Motivated by possible bribes and black profit, departments of the town administration terrorized her with endless inspections, a lawsuit, and unfair fines. Iryna recalled that "this led to a crash of confidence to such an extent that I stopped my work. […] Disappointment, dissatisfaction, and despair were my constant feelings."[40] Iryna saw corruption as a major factor and did not perceive it as affecting her more or differently because she was a woman.

The local discourse on "women's empowerment" through more opportunities and gender equality is quite strong, and many women like to emphasize that they are not discriminated against. In fact, the whole idea of discrimination against women is often perceived as a Western import: "They have that problem there." Rather than seeing this as some kind of denial and false consciousness, I argue that these ideas point to an alternative discourse on gender and women's issues in Ukrainian civil society. Thus, tension arises between the concept "women as victims" of oppression and the homegrown concerns with structural factors and gender misbalance as well as with "women's empowerment."

Conclusion

Below I discuss the main findings emerging from the analysis of civil society assistance discourse at local NGOs – especially women's NGOs – recipients of assistance, by asnwering the following core questions: (1) what does it mean to be assisted; (2) what does it mean to be(come) civil society through assistance; (3) what does it mean to empower women?

What Does It Mean to Be Assisted?

Due to the lack of direct contact with the outside world, the understanding of the assistance relationship developed locally within an NGO is more rigid than in Kiev – it draws a clearer line between "us" and "them," between Ukraine and the "outside." Local perceptions of assistance come closer to those in Washington, DC not in terms of meaning but in terms of the rigidity of the us/them opposition that is at their basis. On the local level, the opposition is between the ideal West and the Soviet legacies embodied in the notion of *sovok*. Here the notion of the West is rarely used to refer to a knowledge of actual practices in other countries; rather, it represents an ideal of what Ukraine could become should the postcommunist changes lead in the right direction.

This opposition was re-invented on the basis of Soviet ideas that were reversed into their exact opposite; or, rather, of the ideas that developed in the "parallel" society during the Soviet period and were the opposite of the official Soviet ideology. In this reversed Soviet discourse, the West was not the mean capitalist oppressor but the embodiment of the world of opportunities for everyone, the world that could offer everything the Soviet state could not, economically, politically, and culturally. As a direct consequence of the insularity of the Soviet Union, this idealistic notion of the West was not combined

with much direct exposure to different aspects of life in the West. Its domestic opposite was captured by a pejorative term *sovok* – everything that was of bad quality or in bad taste in the Soviet world. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the notion of *sovok* gained even more prominence – it not only embodied dissatisfaction but also the aspiration and the perceived opportunities of change. The notion of the West, however, is only gradually losing its imaginary quality and turning into an empirical notion.

The re-invention of the East-West opposition is a complex process that develops along a whole spectrum of possible perceptions of the West and the *sovok*. What is important for assistance is that this symbolic opposition between East and West remains at the core of the discursive map that defines the "new" assistance relationship. The rigidity of the opposition and its polarity are shared between both the providers and the recipients of assistance. Moreover, the relationship between the former and the latter replicates the West-East opposition. This accounts for a certain degree of convergence between Ukraine and its foreign donors on what had to happen with the beginning of assistance: The East and the legacies of its socialist past had to be abandoned and the West would serve as a model towards which the post-socialist East should strive.

This shared understanding (or so it is assumed to be) facilitates an agreement between different sides that the West is the source of knowledge and a legitimate example for the possible trajectory of the East. It facilitates the acceptance on the part of the Ukrainians of being assisted in the sense of being taught.

What Does It Mean to Be(come) Civil Society Through Assistance?

The understanding of "capacity-building" as teaching technical skills has a strong impact on the developments within local NGOs; however, this notion takes an unexpected turn on the ground. The goals of "capacity-building" shift from the institutional to the individual level. The idea of teaching technical skills is taken to its logical conclusion that these skills are an individual quality rather than an organizational component.

Local NGO leaders who have already passed a number of "trainings" comprise a new profession – that of NGO experts and specialists connected through a network. In this way, "capacity-building" works to empower a select number of individuals and to maintain the boundaries of expertise between different local NGOs and their activists. In this way, "trainings" serve as one of the core gate-

keeping mechanisms; not only do they fail to contribute to the development of civil society within local contexts, but they also enhance the divisions and inequalities therein. The shift from institutional to individual "capacity-building" perpetuates the fragmentation, the rivalries, and the fragility of local civil society. Whereas in Washington, DC "assistance" is defined as a guarantor of "sustainability," locally it is increasingly perceived as a factor that induces volatility.

In addition, the elements that formed part of the notion of "empowerment," such as information campaigns and education, work to redirect NGOs' priorities from long-term survival to short-term gains. This happens because the idea of educating and disseminating information is disembodied from a specific issue. The choice to "raise public awareness" on a certain issue does not come from the expertise the NGO holds but from the temporary donor driven interest in that issue. The way "information dissemination" programs are set up allows one NGO to apply for all of them without having to prove any knowledge about the issues at stake. These kinds of "empowerment" programs are a way for NGOs to tap into donors' resources by closely following the donors' shifting agendas, and so they constantly reinvent themselves at the expense of specializing in a certain area. This has eventually led to a whole local infrastructure consisting of consultations, seminars, roundtables, and resource centers. Contrary to the belief endorsed in Washington, DC, the more these NGOs specialize in these kinds of programs, the more their long-term sustainability outside of "assistance" becomes questionable on the local level. In stark contrast to what is argued in Washington, DC, local NGOs often frame "sustainability" as something that can only be fully attained in spite of rather than thanks to "assistance." There is a shared belief locally that many NGOs will disappear if they drop out of the "assistance" cycle. This has a strong impact on the overall political sustainability of this kind of civil society.

What Does It Mean to Empower Women?

The concept "women as a target group" is transformed locally in two ways. First, it is argued that this is not a meaningful category because it does not refer to a real-life group; instead, different women belong to different social and demographic groups and therefore face different problems and require different forms of assistance. Consequently, the first point of transformation is the breaking up of the category of "women as a target group" into many different sub-categories. These ideas of regional specificity and of focused definitions of target groups

are both prominent in the most recent USAID anti-trafficking project, "Countering Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine," implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which I have discussed in Chapter 5. This is an example of how "local" ideas discussed above are incorporated at the Kiev level.

In a second transformation, the concept "women as a target group" is altogether substituted with other concepts that are based not on the idea of a target group but on the identification of different social issues that have to be addressed. In other words, the agenda is not defined in terms of who has to be helped but in terms of what problem has to be tackled. This second transformation often leads to a different construction of women's situations, which is close to the concept of "gender" as it emerged in Kiev. Agendas are defined as relevant for both men and women, and the view that women face the same problems as men, rather than being subjected to particular women's grievances, empowers women because it assumes their equality to men. Issues that are directly connected to crimes against women are often rethought by NGO activists in terms of structural gender problems rather than as problems of women's oppression. Even though the term "gender" does not exist locally, most of the reinterpretations created by local women can be described by it. In other words, there is a concern with problems that men *and* women face as a result of gendered divisions and stereotypes.

Women's issues as conceived of in Washington, DC have reached a high degree of institutionalization locally in the form of multiple crisis and consultation centers for women, all based on the assistance ideas supporting women's issues. However, the long-term sustainability of these activities is just as questionable as the sustainability of the NGOs themselves. Many are likely to abandon women's programs once the donors stop funding them. This does not add to the local legitimacy of that particular women's agenda. To increase the sustainability and the legitimacy of a women's agenda locally, women's NGOs tend to either make it more specific or to open it up to the general social support of different groups. In the next, concluding chapter I elaborate at greater length on how different reinterpretations of core concepts travel across the three sites of interaction.

Notes

[1] Even though NGOs both in Kiev and outside of the capital have different levels of access to the various resources available from foreign donors, their location (in Kiev or outside) remains crucial for their development.

[2] Here 70 years are counted from the first proclamation of the Soviet state, which initially included the east of Ukraine and a few years later Kiev. Other parts in the west of Ukraine were annexed to the Soviet Ukraine later, on the basis of the secret Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact of 1939 and after the Second World War.

[3] "Really existing" is a reference to a cliché widely used in official Soviet propaganda on "really existing socialism."

[4] In addition to the phonetic similarity between the words *sovok* and Soviet, the literal meaning of *sovok* is "dustpan." It is this parallel with a dull household object that gives the word its derogatory connotation.

[5] League of Resource Centers, *Memorandum of the League of Resource Centers* (October 15, 2003), [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua].

[6] Counterpart Creative Center, *Trainings* [cited 20 July 2005. Available from http://www.ccc.kiev.ua], emphasis added.

[7] Kim, interview by the author, April 20, 2005, emphasis added.

[8] League of Resource Centers, *History of the League* (December 4, 2003), [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua/], emphasis added.

[9] Mykola Deichakivskiy, Oleksandr Sydorenko, and Natalia Iasko, *Tretii Sektor V Ukraini Ta Organizatsii Shcho Rozbudovuiut' Ioho Infrastrukturu [Third Sector in Ukraine and the Organizations That Build up Its Infrastructure]* (Kiev, 1996).

[10] League of Resource Centers, *History of the League*.

[11] League of Resource Centers, *Members of the League* (2002) [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua/], emphasis added

[12] Ibid.

[13] UCAN, *Working for a Stronger Ukraine: Practical Resources to Help Civil Society Organizations Succeed* (Kiev: UCAN, 2003).

[14] League of Resource Centers, *History of the League*, emphasis added.

[15] Volyn Resource Center, *About Us* (February 17, 2005), [cited 11 June 2005. Available from www.vrc.rv.ua].

[16] Counterpart Creative Center, "Activity Report for 1996–2001," (Kiev: CCC, 2002).

[17] League of Resource Centers, *Members of the League*.

[18] League of Resource Centers, *About Us* (2002) [cited 17 July 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua].

[19] DANA, *About Dana* [cited 29 June 2005. Available from http://www.civilsoc.org/nisorgs/ukraine/dana.htm].

[20] Mir Zhenshchin, *The History of Our Organization*, (Kharkov: Unpublished Brochure, 2001).

[21] League of Resource Centers, *Members of the League*.

[22] Ibid.

[23] League of Resource Centers, *History of the League*.

[24] Suprun, interview quoted in Eurasia Foundation, *Eurasia News, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine. NGO Resource Centers: Time of Changes*, no. 4, (Kiev: Eurasia Foundation, Winter 2003–2004), emphasis added.

[25] *Sidet' na chemodanah* is an expression that means one lives with an idea that one might need to move at any moment.

[26] Around USD 6,000–7,500 as of May, 2010.

[27] Kim, interview by the author, April 20, 2005.

[28] Kim, interview by author, April 20, 2005.

[29] UWF, *Projects Supported by UWF in 2004*.

[30] From an interview by the author at one of the Women for Women Centers, March 3, 2003.

[31] From a documentary by Viacheslav Khabailo, *Zamky Na Pisku [Castles on the Sand]* Ukraine, 2002.

[32] "Guardian-lady" in Ukrainian, a term especially widely used in national historiography and epos.

[33] Mruchkovska, interview by the author, March 3, 2003.

[34] Myhaylyuk, interview by the author, March 4, 2003.

[35] Kovtun, interview by the author, April 20, 2005.

[36] Kovtun, interview by the author, April 20, 2005.

[37] Mruchkovska, interview by the author, March 3, 2003.

[38] Winrock International, "Women's Economic Empowerment, Final Report."

[39] The obstacles named were: family situation; lack of start-up funds; fear of using property as collateral, or lack of collateral; high interest rates; small amounts lenders lend to first-time businesses; changing, unstable legal framework for businesses; lack of a business partner; daunting registration process; lack of character to pursue business or lack of business idea; pension reform that drives even existing businesses into the shadows.

[40] Winrock International, "Women's Economic Empowerment, Final Report," p. 28.

8
Civil Society Assistance Discourse and Its Impact

There are different ways to understand and conceptualize the effects and power of foreign involvement depending on the theoretical and epistemological positions one takes. There can be the overtly coercive power of military threat or economic sanctions, which have often been referred to as the "sticks" of international relations. There are also other forms of power, which are exerted via various systems of benefits and incentives, often labeled as "carrots" that some states offer to others and even more subtle ones – the "soft" power of convincing and making others internalize certain norms, values and rules of behavior.[1] Another way to look at political dynamics is by analytically separating material from ideational forms of power. Simply put, material power is imbedded in, for example, money flows or military troops – something visible and easily quantifiable; ideational power is visible in the domination of certain ideas, norms, and values over others – a form of domination that is less measurable. However, the effects of ideational power can be as clear and explicit as those of material power. The division between ideational and material power is, after all, more of an analytical tool than an empirical reality. Both "sticks" and "carrots" are always a combination of acts of exerting material power and the ideas, norms, and values that define, guide, and often defend them. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War led to a shift in both ideas and practices of international and transnational relations. New ideas, including those about the value of democracy and the role of civil society, became the cornerstones of relations between "Western" countries and the former Soviet Republics. They became constitutive of new relations of power and their material effects.

The interpretative-constructivist (meta)theory is based on the idea that the ideational realm of meanings, ideas, and discourse is intertwined with material reality in that it is simultaneously constituted by it and constitutive of it. This implies that, even though ontologically material

phenomena can have an existence of their own, epistemologically they cannot be separated from the meanings and ideas we invest into them. One cannot conceive of political and social reality outside of the structures of meaning and discourses within which it is embedded and which it constantly reproduces.

Following this perspective, this book looked at civil society assistance discourse enacted through interactions between American donors and Ukrainian recipients of assistance in different relevant "sites," such as U.S. governmental agencies in Washington, DC, USAID Mission as well as various implementing partners in Kiev, and local NGOs in various Ukrainian cities. By comparing the meanings of several core concepts and notions across these different sites, I demonstrate how different actors in different contexts have different understandings of what assistanance to civil society means. Having accounted for a number of transformations in meaning, however, I conclude that the core of the assistance discourse remains intact in each of the sites. After presenting these findings in detail, I discuss main social and political implications of the dominace of foreign assistance for the nature and development of the Ukrainian civil society as well as for the assistance to civil society beyond Ukraine.

The Findings: Unpacking the Civil Society Assistance Discourse

Below I discuss the main findings emerging from the analysis of civil society assistance discourse across three main "sites" of interaction – (1) Washington, DC, (2) Kiev, (3) local NGOs – recipients of assistance – by answering the following core questions: (1) what does "assistance" mean; (2) what does it mean to assist civil society; (3) what does it mean to empower women? These findings are summarized in Table 2 on pp. 199–201 below.

What Does "Assistance" Mean?

As I have shown in the previous chapters, scholars with direct research experience at different sites of assistance have skillfully exposed the inherent tensions and contradictions in civil society assistance.[2] There is a vast body of literature available that shows the contradictions in how donors operate and draws attention to a whole range of (un)intended consequences that they produce in recipient societies. Having exposed the problems, however, this literature tells us little about how it is possible that these are established practices rather than one-time failures. This led me to raise the following provocative questions: Are the donors

blind or do they just not care? Are the locals wicked or just plain stupid? How is it that both sides continue doing what they are doing?

The analysis presented in this book shows that assistance should not be simply seen as hegemony imposed from the outside. Even though its origin is external to Ukraine, its existence is enabled through and dependent upon interactions between Americans and Ukrainians. Assistance would not have become a well-established political practice if it had remained an imposition of American policy-makers. What makes assistance politically significant is precisely the fact that very different actors adhere to it, and even if they choose to do something that contradicts the original ideas from Washington, DC, they make sense of their activities in terms of "assistance" and not in other terms.

The assistance discourse I have examined is organized around the core idea of teaching and expertise transfer. This is the "face" of assistance that is often overlooked by institutionalist or materialist accounts of assistance as a transfer of material resources. The prevalence of the idea of teaching and knowledge transfer implies that interactions between providers, mediators, and recipients of assistance are based on a clear division of roles between the side that holds the knowledge and expertise and the side that is to be taught. This teaching is top-down and unidirectional because it is believed that those who are taught have no knowledge to contribute to the exchange.

As I have shown, the core ideas of the assistance discourse are a combination of new and old themes.[3] The old theme helps legitimize the discourse by building on widely accepted and well-known ideas, whereas the new theme helps position the discourse as an up-to-date response to significant political changes. In Washington, DC it is extensively emphasized that the organizational history of aid or assistance extends much beyond the case of civil society assistance to the former Soviet Union and to Ukraine more specifically, and USAID is positioned not only as the source of knowledge or the teacher in this particular interaction but also as the side that has had long-term teaching experience across different time periods and contexts. Frequent references to the Marshall Plan reconstruction effort are an example of this legitimating discursive move. An organizational teleology is evoked as a historical basis for defining assistance in terms of teaching and for identifying USAID as the legitimate teacher.

The emergence of "assistance" was driven by ideas of urgency, novelty, and difference from "aid." As a consequence, ideas about who should be providing "assistance" to whom and why it was important were (re)defined and supported by legislative and institutional measures, such as the SEED and FSA Acts and the new regional bureaus within

the U.S. Department of State and USAID. The assistance discourse went to great lengths to explain the unprecedented nature of the political, social, and economic developments taking place in the former socialist countries, all of which were referred to by the newly coined term of "transition." The rationale for assisting the new "region" was constructed in terms of teaching and expertise transfer from the democratic and economically developed "West" to the formerly Soviet "East," which was believed to be capable of catching up with the "West" within a relatively short timeframe. However, the urgency with which the assistance discourse emerged also came at the expense of defining how exactly assistance should take place. Being conceived as a short-term effort, "assistance" also had few mechanisms for (or some would say, little interest in) learning from the recipients of "assistance" and introducing innovative changes within it. In other words, defining "assistance" as a quick transfer of expertise meant that questions of how it could become relevant for the local context were not only overlooked at the initial stage but were altogether excluded from the discussion. Given the lack of knowledge about the new "region" of assistance, the combination of urgency with lack of focus came at a social and political cost that I discuss in more detail below. Overall, "assistance" can be understood as a powerful discursive frame with little specific content, whose "emptiness" was of a deliberate rather than accidental nature.

These processes of constructing the assistance discourse are not entirely confined to the site of its origin; instead, the discourse is constantly transformed and adapted across different sites of its (re)enactment. In Kiev the discourse of assistance as teaching was transformed to accommodate the higher heterogeneity of actors involved in designing and implementing assistance. In addition to American experts working at the USAID Mission in Kiev, there are also their Ukrainian colleagues (even though they mostly hold lower ranking positions), different implementing partner NGOs, both American and Ukrainian, and women's NGOs that receive assistance. In other words, Kiev is a meeting point between those who provide assistance and those who receive it. In Kiev the discourse of assistance as teaching is strengthened by the concept of the "world/international community." Clearly, this concept evokes the idea of a more inclusive and egalitarian framework for interaction. While still being engaged in the "teaching," the mediators of assistance from the West and from Ukraine reinvent it as a shared endeavor. Yet the meaning of the "world/international community" is not exactly the same for the two sides. The Westerners perceive it as a chance to reinvent themselves as experts on a global scale: The "world/international community" is themselves, and they

constitute it through their interactions with multiple local sites of assistance around the world. Mediating assistance to different regions of the world, as became possible after the end of Cold War, is a format that enables such a reinvention. The Ukrainians, on the other hand, see the "world/international community" as a space from which they have been excluded. However, the interaction with the Westerners and the acquisition of Western expertise are believed to be key for entering into that space and being recognized there.

On the level of local NGOs, the interaction with Westerners is less direct; in fact in certain places it hardly exists, even today. Although a similar process of alignment of the "new" with the "old" occurs, these interactions take place more on the level of the "imaginary." The civil society assistance discourse is strengthened by its convergence with a home-grown discourse that defines the "West" as an ideal to be aspired to and the Soviet legacy (*sovok*) as a constraint to be overcome. The concept of *sovok* serves as a kind of a contrast space: Since its rejection is widely perceived as necessary, the new alternative embodied in the concept of the "West" is legitimized. In other words, it helps naturalize the idea of learning from the "West." Thus, in both sites of interaction – in Kiev and within local NGOs – the discourse of assistance as teaching remains intact through adaptations to the locally relevant notions that take place in the course of interactions in these sites. In other words, in each site of interaction the same assistance discourse continues to make sense, although its meaning becomes substantively different. This helps us understand why the idea of civil society embodied within a local NGO comes to mean something quite different from the ideas that were initially proclaimed in Washington, DC, and yet the overall assistance discourse remains stable.

Overall, the assistance discourse has a highly prescriptive character: It promotes particular organizational forms and procedures in a top-down manner through its thematic priorities, assistance procedures, eligibility criteria, and timeframes. Having defined themselves from the position of "the ones in the know" and the teachers, USAID and its American partners reserve for themselves the possibility to define the content and the format of teaching. The fact that the actors who are doing the teaching are outsiders is a problematic starting point. Their strength – material and political independence from local power struggles and patterns of resource distribution – is also their weakness. Having no stake in local struggles, outsiders are also having a more difficult time proving their commitment, which is key to any attempts to reach a common understanding on the best possible course of action. By adopting the discourse of short-term technical intervention, USAID

excludes possibilities for transforming the terms of the dialogue it has with the local civil society. This in turn undermines the effort of assisting civil society altogether, because heralding ideas of civil society comes with a responsibility for the ways in which these ideas are communicated.

What Does It Mean to Assist Civil Society?

According to the assistance discourse, support to civil society is aimed at promoting the growth of specific organizational forms, namely non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are trained in basic procedures necessary for qualifying for assistance grants and implementing assistance projects. In the course of such trainings, the form(at) of NGOs is overemphasized at the expense of the content and purpose of NGO activities. This formalistic and technicalized character of civil society assistance is conveyed by concepts of "capacity-building" and "sustainability." Both define civil society building in terms of tools and skills that are necessary to sustain the assistance industry or to create organizational structures that will be capable of replacing it should the assistance institutions themselves, such as the USAID Mission in Kiev, withdraw from the country. The relevance of NGOs for the local context is not the key concern of assistance; instead, its main goal is to reproduce structures that are compatible with the assistance itself. Such a bias in the civil society assistance discourse leads to the broad-scale creation of what I call "professionals without a profession." In a way that is similar to training a doctor on how to maintain state-of-the-art equipment without teaching her how to treat people, foreign assistance facilitates the training of thousands of NGO specialists without making a connection between their new skills and the democratic purposes of civil society.

To understand this idea of teaching a comparison with corporate trainings is useful. Namely, the assistance industry can be seen as offering corporate trainings to select candidates that allow the latter to pursue their careers within the industry, thus ensuring the proper skill acquisition of the industry's employees and its improved operation in the country in question. To a certain degree, of course, the personal gains acquired through such trainings contribute to the overall well-being of the society in question, and some of the transferred skills are made useful in other spheres. However, even if there is a certain degree of spill-over into the society as a whole, it does not translate into building a civil society. Essentially, the assistance discourse does not function in a way that would provide for anything but running the

assistance industry itself. In terms of the content and format of teaching, the difference between assistance trainings and sustainable knowledge creation is similar to that between corporate trainings and university education. Whereas the former is aimed at training employees in the skills the company needs them to apply, the latter exists to give people access to the knowledge they want to acquire in accordance with their personal vision and idea(l)s. Both are useful in their own way, but if the former replaces the latter and becomes the only way to get education, long-terms effect on individuals and society as a whole can be detrimental.

The recent wave of "color" revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan presents some further insights into limits of "teaching" and "training" approach. In all four cases civic protests and acts of non-violent civic disobedience were facilitated by activities of "professional revolutionaries" and of highly sophisticated analysis by think tanks and expert groups supported by foreign donors. Professionally trained youth groups such as *Otpor* in Serbia or *Pora* in Ukraine formed the avant-garde of civic protests, worked to mobilize the population, and "branded" the symbols and slogans for the revolution. In addition, exit polling conducted as part of the "parallel vote tabulation" by election monitoring groups mostly trained and funded by the U.S. government through its democracy programs proved vital for mobilizing opposition against fraud and vote-rigging. These and other technical tools were important for the success of the respective revolutions. However, they should not be seen as the recipe for their success. Although the same trainings and technical programs were implemented in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asian countries, the outcomes of their respective elections turned out very different.[4] Russia presents an even more puzzling case: The revolutionary "cookbook" and the tools it offers are appropriated by both pro-Putin regime and opposition supporters.[5] The example of Russia clearly shows that by itself "technical expertise" on creating democratic change can yield both democratic and undemocratic effects. If assistance is about "expertise transfer," one cannot indiscriminately attribute democratic effects to that expertise.

Defining assistance as a transfer of "technical" expertise allows USAID to defend itself against two potentially problematic accusations: of political partisanship and of disrespect for local choices. In other words, it allows USAID to say that it is not supporting particular organizations but "civil society" in general and that it remains up to the local civic leaders to determine how the newly acquired technical expertise could become beneficial for the development of their organizations specifically and of civil society in general. However, I

have shown that this "strategy" engendered opposite effects because it determined the development of particular types of civic organizations and predefined a range of activities that these organizations can be performing.

In addition to "capacity-building," the concept of "empowerment" defined in terms of changing individual "mentality" emerged as a means to respond to the longer-term concerns and structural problems in Ukraine while at the same time preserving the technical nature of "assistance" and its core rational of "teaching and expertise transfer." Even though there is nothing wrong with the idea of individual "empowerment" per se, its employment within the assistance discourse resulted in the further empowerment of assistance rather than of Ukrainian civil society. The idea of "empowerment" – contrary to what one might infer from the label – does not help overcome these shortcomings of assistance. The concept of "empowerment" suggests a change of individual attitudes and values to ones that are more democratic, egalitarian, and reciprocal; it is said to be about building trust in oneself, in others, and in new institutions. Yet, civil society assistance projects aimed at "empowerment" are hierarchical, bureaucratic, competitive, and distrustful towards both the assistance world itself and the recipients of assistance. This irony of "empowerment" does not escape those Ukrainians who are acquainted with assistance. In the words of one of the local civic leaders: "Few foreigners are able to demonstrate, by their words and actions, that their efforts […] are not directed more toward securing privileges for themselves than to insuring fair competition, the rule of law, and security for everyone."[6] Here the point is not to blame the foreigners for being self-interested and definitely not to overlook those partnerships between the locals and the Westerners that have been able to establish a relationship based on trust. Instead, I would like to emphasize that the terms of the dialogue matter as much as its proclaimed goals. Democracy cannot be built through undemocratic practices, especially not when it concerns civil society, an institutional field whose entire rationale for existence is predicated on democratic participation.

The issue of trust is also crucial on the institutional level. As I have shown in Chapter 6 by analyzing the notion of the "new wrong mentality," many Ukrainians are concerned with the fact that "assistance" is supportive of the corrupt institutional practices that it is supposed to help overcome. The practices of assistance on the ground are far less different from those that dominate local "ways" than its practitioners would like to admit. Its reliance on favors and closed networks of "professionals," its non-meritocratic distribution of material

resources, and sometimes even its unlawful practices, such as tax evasion, are all signs of its convergence with local ways to "get things done." I suggest that this is a troublesome tendency rather than a temporary shortcoming because the donors are building the capacity of local institutions with one hand and are undermining it with the other. They demand transparency and accountability from the local institutions, while their own actions reveal distrust in those institutions. Moreover, these practices make it clear that the donors' own transparency and accountability are not directed towards the people of the country they assist.

In Kiev "capacity-building" is redefined through the notion of "professionalism." Ukrainian "assistance professionals" argue that it is assistance itself that has to be transformed so that they could be empowered through improved "professionalism." In addition, "sustainability" is defined as a successful take-over of assistance by Ukrainian professional elites. However, the standard of "professionalism" remains the one that is set by Western colleagues. Altogether, the discursive transformations of the conception of civil society in Kiev are all undertaken within the framework of the civil society assistance discourse and do not open it up to alternative conceptions. In fact, a certain convergence of interests seems to develop between the "Westerners" and the Ukrainians on making the NGO sector that developed as a result of assistance a sustainable socially and politically relevant structure.

On the local level, the most important difference is the absence of such a commitment to the NGO sector as a whole. The idea of "capacity-building" that is aimed at increasing "professionalism" is here redefined in private individualist terms – acquiring professional skills is important for one's individual economic success. The relevance of these skills is judged by the demand on the local labor market rather than by their contribution to sustaining the NGO sector. In other words, NGO activists invest time and effort into building up expertise and skills that they could also market elsewhere rather than into developing their NGOs. A tight financial dependence on assistance and the constant threat of its withdrawal lead to conflicting interpretations of the concept of "sustainability." For what is sustainable for assistance is not sustainable outside of it. While, for example, assistance invests in the creation of NGO resource centers as future upholders of assistance and thus organizations with long-term prospects, the Ukrainians working at some of NGOs define them as unsustainable, short-term administrative arrangements that will have to be changed once the assistance "is over." Locally, "sustainability" is ensured through the privatization of the tools

and skills acquired through NGOs and their instrumentalization towards increasing individual gains.

The issue of "sustainability" is also problematic, and the sustainability of civil society organizations is in fact seriously undermined by assistance despite its claims to the contrary. Due to the impact of the civil society assistance discourse, civil society in Ukraine is equated with a professionalized NGO sector that provides mostly administrative services either to foreign donors or to other actors, such as local authorities or, more recently, private organizations. As such, this sector is a source of relatively stable and well-paid employment in the capital of Ukraine. However, in other parts of Ukraine, especially small cities, such services face very little demand and, thus, NGOs are perceived as temporary and unsustainable. This is not true for every NGO, because their chances of survival also depend on how well their leaders manage to fit into the local context. Some NGOs represent success stories of establishing a good niche for themselves and finding alternative resources. Altogether, however, the commitment of civic activists to the NGO sector as a whole is low. Many NGO leaders choose to channel the resources and human capital they have acquired through their NGOs towards developing various forms of individual entrepreneurship, thus privatizing the resources they acquired at public expense. Therefore, these discursive features of assistance stand in the way of building a civil society that would be vibrant and committed to democracy building in Ukraine.

What Does It Mean to Empower Women?

Assistance has introduced many new concepts, most of which are not fully accepted within the NGO community and even less so outside of it; such is, for example, the case with the concepts that define gender and women's issues. As I have discussed in Chapters 5 to 7, the discourse on gender and women's issues is centered around two concepts – "women as a target group" and "women's empowerment." I have shown that, to a certain extent, the term "gender" is present in Washington, DC; interestingly, it is also mobilized by women's NGOs in Kiev to oppose the ideas associated with viewing "women as a target group." However, it has very little presence on the ground, both among local women's NGOs and broad public.[7]

In Washington, DC – largely due to the power of the "women in development" discourse – the concept "women as a target group" defines women as "victims" and "oppressed" and is based on the idea that women are underprivileged, subjugated, and marginalized on the

basis of their gender. They can therefore be singled out as a group that needs specific intervention and is comparable to powerless and marginalized minorities. In Kiev, the concept of "gender" is mobilized to contest this understanding and is used to communicate a concern with problems that both men and women face as a result of gendered divisions and stereotypes that exist in society. Here, women's issues are not seen as a result of the existence of females but as arising from socially constructed inequality between men and women. Therefore, the solution that is put forward is to eliminate the socio-economic causes of such inequality. In this sense, "gender" represents a concern with gendered division and inequality rather than with the oppression and subjugation of women. The fact that "gender" is an imported "Western" concept is important because, as Ukrainian women argue, it allows them to question the discourse of "assistance" on its own terms and with the help of a concept that donors brought to Ukraine themselves.

Within local NGOs throughout Ukraine (unlike big NGOs in Kiev) the concept of "gender" is not widely used; it remains a specialized term with no equivalent either in Russian or in Ukrainian. Here, the concept of "women as a target group" is contested by, first, questioning the existence and nature of this target group and, second, by redefining the meaning of "women's empowerment." Both in Kiev and locally, Ukrainian women express discontent with the Washington-driven meanings of "women as a target group." They contest implicit ideas that all women lack self-confidence, are potentially "at risk," in a perpetual psychological "crisis," exposed to domestic violence, and incapable of ensuring their economic independence. The shared discontent over these representations has led to redefining the notion of "women as a target group." More tailored and focused definitions of target groups have been brought forward; in addition, an emphasis has been introduced on other victims of domestic and transnational threats, for example male migrants or homeless children, and on other forms of exploitation as opposed to sexual exploitation exclusively. At local NGOs women invest considerable effort into negotiating more agency for women because they themselves feel threatened and offended by the meaning of "women as a target group" that is embedded in assistance programs.

Striking is also the difference in ideas across different sites about what the real obstacles are that women face when they want to change their economic situations either through new employment or by starting their own businesses. While in Kiev it is argued, notably by Winrock International, that women face psychological problems, such as a lack of self-confidence, that prevent them from changing their economic situations, local NGOs are mostly focused on increasing practical skills

of women and in general argue that women and men face similar structural problems when they try to start a business, especially for the first time. Such an emphasis on the absence of differences between men and women in the world of business can be understood as a way to stress that women are just as "good" as men and thus to empower them in this way.

New meanings and concepts that arise as a result of such transformations can sometimes travel between (related) sites of interaction. The evolution of the concepts of "women as a target group" in the context of the issue of trafficking is exemplary of the learning that takes place within the assistance discourse. New meanings have been incorporated into the most recent Anti-Trafficking Initiative implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This is a good example of how meanings can be transformed in a particular site of interaction in politically significant ways.

Overall, I have shown that notions of civil society acquire their political meaning through interactions in particular contexts. First, this means that the mere employment of the notion of civil society does not necessarily create the projected social and political effects. Second, in every new context the notion of civil society can come to mean something completely different from what was intended and, thus, lead to the emergence of discourses and practices that contradict the (initial) notions of civil society and the women's agenda.

Social and Political Effects of the Civil Society Assistance Discourse

The dominance of the civil society assistance discourse as described above has significant implications for social and political developments in Ukraine for two reasons. Firstly, civil society assistance discourse has become firmly embedded in local institutions and consolidated the support of the local elite of "NGO professionals." Secondly, it has effectively monopolized the space of civic activism at the expense of alternative organizational forms. On the basis of the analysis presented above, I argue that this dominance leads to more negative than positive effects. Not only does assistance fall short of the proclaimed goal of democracy-building, but it also impedes the development of indigenous civil society because the assistance discourse and practice introduce and help institutionalize undemocratic practices or are utilized towards undemocratic ends. Moreover, this latter effect (even if unintended) is endogenous to the assistance discourse itself rather than a result of processes external to it.

One could argue that, shortsighted as it seems, such an approach to civil society assistance does not cause any immediate harm to the societies that receive assistance: Even though the assistance practice falls short of the proclaimed goal of democracy-building, it does not prevent democracy from thriving. However, the dominance of the civil society assistance discourse that I have demonstrated leads me to conclude the opposite. Assistance discourse and practice should not be considered as yet another approach co-existing in some kind of peaceful heteroglossia with a few other alternative visions, each having their say in Ukrainian political and social life.

Table 2: Core notions of civil society assistance discourse at three levels of abstraction in three sites of interaction

	Washington, DC	**Kiev**	**NGOs**
Assistance	*What does it mean to assist?*	*What does it mean to mediate assistance?*	*What does it mean to be assisted?*
	"teaching" and expertise transfer: occurs in a top-down manner from the US(AID) to recipients; the goals of "assistance" are conditioned by the idea of "transition" as a temporary period of change with clearly established goals and content; characterized by short-term perspectives and anticipation of a "phase out"; the discourse is kept "empty."	**"teaching" and expertise transfer**: is mediated through the notion of "world/international community", which connects Ukrainian professional elites to their American assistance partners; this "community" is not shared by the two sides in the same way: the boundaries of knowledge and expertise maintain divisions between "teachers" and "students."	**"teaching" and expertise transfer**: the opposition between the imaginary "West" and the legacies of Soviet past (*sovok*) facilitates a certain degree of acceptance of assistance locally.

	Washington, DC	**Kiev**	**NGOs**
Civil society	*What does it mean to promote civil society through assistance?*	*What does it mean to mediate between civil society and assistance?*	*What does it mean to be(come) an NGO?*
	"capacity-building:" creating and supporting particular organizational forms (NGOs).	**"capacity-building:"** through socialization of Ukrainian professional elites into the assistance rules and procedures.	**"capacity-building:"** embedded in "trainings" that lead to formalization and professionalization of NGOs and to fragmentation and competitiveness of the NGO-sector as a whole.
	"empowerment:" providing access to information and psychological training to help people face "social transition issues" and overcome the "wrong" Soviet mentality.	**"empowerment:"** the "wrong mentality" idea and the role of assistance is questioned and assistance is seen as responsible for some negative tendencies.	**"empowerment:"** instrumentalized for the short-term survival goals of individual NGOs and their leaders.
	"sustainability:" through professionalization of the NGO elite, considered achieved when NGOs can perform assistance tasks on their own.	**"sustainability:"** the debate on what organizational forms and activities will survive beyond assistance is extended to include local perspectives.	**"sustainability:"** largely perceived in contradiction to assistance, something that is possible "in spite of" rather than "thanks to" assistance.

	Washington, DC	**Kiev**	**NGOs**
Gender women's issues	*What does it mean to empower women?*	*What does it mean to empower women?*	*What does it mean to empower women?*
	"women as a target group:" defined as generally underprivileged and marginalized and subjected to "threats;" rooted in the discourse on "women in development."	**"women as a target group:"** (and a related concept of "women as victims") is questioned; alternative target groups are suggested.	**"women as a target group:"** transformed by (1) being dismissed as not having a real-life basis and pluralized by showing multiple backgrounds of women; (2) altogether substituted by other concepts that focus on a specific issue rather than a target group.
	"women's empowerment:" said to take place through provision of women-specific spaces, of which the NGO sector is the most common one.	**"women's empowerment:"** seen as attainable through fighting gender misbalance and inequality rather than discrimination of women.	**"women's empowerment:"** seen in rejecting the idea of women's specificity as a group.
	"gender:" is present but not significant.	**"gender:"** often mobilized to phrase local views in "assistance"-friendly language and reinforced by the notion of "professionalism."	**"gender:"** not prominent at this site.

The relative dominance that the civil society assistance discourse has gained in Ukraine has enabled it to colonize a larger discursive space of democratic transition and has put it in a position to steer the debate and the political practice pertaining to civil society and democracy-building. Coming back to the observation discussed in the beginning of this book, the strange subculture of "public organizations" (*obshchestvennye organizatsii*) has become synonymous with civil society as a whole, both in the eyes of its members as well as in the public perception. This means that the power of the assistance discourse lies in the definition and institutionalization of a particular idea about what civil society is and how it should operate.

With respect to the idea about civil society as a democratic guarantor that was developed in Eastern Europe in 1970s and 80s, one could say that foreign assistance did exactly the opposite of what Eastern European intellectuals aspired to do. Different thinkers contended that civil society should represent a process of refining, sharing, and upholding democratic values. They saw the purpose of civil society in (re)creating and constantly developing a democratic public based on mutual trust and respect. Many of them were particularly suspicious of treating civil society as an end goal of social and political transformation. The lesson one learns from this scholarship is that the discussion of what civil society is and should be has to come before and to accompany any discussion of which technical tools are therefore important. Assistance to civil society after the collapse of socialism, however, took a very different course. Not only did it reverse this sequence, but it effectively precluded a discussion of substantive and normative questions regarding the meaning and role of civil society by developing a powerful discourse on *technical* assistance to civil society. By focusing exclusively on the pre-defined goals of "transition," it overlooked the local ideas laid out above and focused instead on introducing a set of technical tools that it deemed appropriate given its experience at home as well as in other parts of the world and the operational needs of donor institutions. Thus, despite proclaiming a democratic goal, it operated in what might be called an imperialistic fashion.

Foreign assistance to civil society has actually enabled the use of civil society concepts and practices in ways that do not relate to democracy-building or even lead to undemocratic political practices. Having been turned into a set of tools, "civil society" is utilized to serve various political interests that are not necessarily rooted in democratic values. This is the case with the assistance industry itself that prioritizes its own "sustainability" over that of the civil society it claims to build.

This is also the case with local political and business elites who have learned how to utilize such organizational forms as resource centers, think tanks, and other types of NGOs in order to exert political influence and consolidate resources.[8]

Overall, there are good reasons to conclude that the effects of assistance I have described are of a longer-term nature and may indeed impact on Ukrainian politics beyond the "phase out" of assistance. Thus, it seems that a distorted kind of "sustainability" of civil society has indeed been achieved. Its relationship with the goals of democratization is, however, precarious at best.

These conclusions have relevance beyond the specific case of U.S. civil society assistance to Ukraine. It is a cautionary tale to many other donor organizations that support civil society and promote democracy in third countries. Firstly, it is clear that the presence of well-organized NGOs is not a guarantor of sustained democratization. Moreover, if democracy-building is to be taken seriously, it cannot be done only by supporting NGOs through short-term projects but has to be conceived as a long-term engagement closely coordinated with a whole range of domestic actors. Secondly, the relationship between a domestic NGO and foreign donors cannot come at the expense of NGO's collaboration with other domestic civic organizations as well as its links to local constituencies. Thirdly, the logic of defining NGOs as mere "recipients" of assistance is flawed from the start. Empowerment and capacity-building lose their democratic sense if the agency of those who are claimed to be empowered is denied throughout all stages of democracy promotion initiatives.

Notes

[1] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[2] Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*; Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*; Hann and Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*; Mendelson and Glenn, eds., *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe*; Pushpa Sundar, *Foreign Aid for Indian NGOs: Problem or Solution?* (Routledge, 2010).

[3] This is similar to the "norm localization" argument developed in Amitav Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (2004).

[4] Sarah Mendelson, "The Seven Ingredients: When Democracy Promotion Works," *Harvard International Review*, no. Summer 2004 (2004).

[5] Alfred Evans, "Vladimir Putin's Design for Civil Society," in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Alfred Evans, Laura Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006).

[6] David Usupashvili, "NGO Lessons from Georgia: Failed Expectations, New Cooperation," *Give & Take: A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2002), p. 10.

[7] On development of Gender Studies in Ukraine see Alexandra Hrycak and Maria G. Rewakowicz, "Feminism, Intellectuals and the Formation of Micro-Publics in Postcommunist Ukraine," *Studies in East European Thought* 61, no. 4 (2009).

[8] Perhaps one of the most ironic examples is the initiative of the former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, who has founded *Blagodiina Organizatsiia Prezidentskyi Fond Leonida Kuchmy Ukraina* (Presidential Charity Fund of Leonid Kuchma "Ukraine"), an NGO aimed at supporting social and educational projects as well as providing independent analytical expertise. Even though the former president is infamous for endorsing corrupt and undemocratic practices and in fact, the charity fund featured in a major scandal as it allegedly served for laundering money coming from offshore zones, Kuchma's decision to join the world of civic organizations in Ukraine did not seem controversial either to Ukrainians or to foreign donors.

Appendix I: List of Interviews

Alekseenko, Maria, Information Coordinator, Ukrainian Women's Consortium, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003.[1]

Baziuk, Marta, Coordinator, Women's Economic Empowerment Program (WEE), Winrock International, telephone interview, August 10, 2004.

Belushkina, Svitlana, Program Manager, Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), February 19, 2003.

Biletska, Olga, Head of the Kharkiv Branch, International Organization "*Zhinocha Hromada*" (Women's Community), Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.

Black, David, Democracy and Governance Advisor, Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Unit, USAID, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 9, 2004.

Bodnarovska, Valentina, Director, International Humanitarian Center *Rozhrada*, Kiev (Ukraine), April 1, 2003.

Boichishin, Lubomyra, Director, Women's Information-Rehabilitation Center *Lubomyra*, Kiev (Ukraine), April 2, 2003.

Carothers, Thomas, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 6, 2004.

Chala, Galina, member of staff, Kharkiv Charity Fund "Public Initiatives," Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.

Demidenko, Anton, Deputy Director, U.S.-Ukraine Community Partnerships Project, Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.

Eisen, Samuel D., Democracy Programs, Office of the Coordinator for U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 5, 2004.

Fox, Katie, Deputy Director, Eurasia, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Washington, DC (U.S.), August 9, 2004.

Hansen, Gary, Chief, Civil Society Division, USAID, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 5, 2004.

Herman, Robert, Senior Associate, Management Systems International (MSI), Washington, DC (U.S.), August 19, 2004.

Gorovaya, Ludmila, Regional League of Business and Professional Women, Donetsk (Ukraine), April 20, 2005.

Jay, Susan, Deputy Director, Africa Division, International Republican Institute (IRI), Washington, DC (U.S.), August 4, 2004.

Ivantcheva, Assia, Deputy Director, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005.

Kachanova, Natalia, director, Kharkiv Charity Fund "Public Initiatives," Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.

Kapeliushna, Olga, Program Coordinator, Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), April 3, 2003.
Kapinus, Natalia, volunteer, Kharkiv Charity Fund "Public Initiatives," Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.
Karbowska, Natalka, Director, Ukrainian Women's Fund, Kiev (Ukraine), April 13, 2005.
Khmyz, Tanya, Project Officer, Partnership for Reform in Ukraine, Freedom House, Kiev (Ukraine), February 3, 2003.
Kim, Liliia, Director, Kharkov Women's City Fund, Kharkov (Ukraine), April 20, 2005.
Kobelyanska, Larysa, Project Manager, UNDP Equal Opportunities Program, United Nations Development Program in Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), April 26, 2005.
Kochemirovskaia, Olena, Director, Kharkov Region Organization "Youth Initiatives," formerly a coordinator at Kharkiv Center for Women's Studies, Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.
Kolesnyk, Artem, Information Coordinator, International Renaissance Foundation, Kharkov (Ukraine), April 4, 2003.
Kolesnyk, Svitlana, Program Management Assistant, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005.
Kopytko, Oleksii, Vise President, Association "Youth League," Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.
Kovtun, Olga, Kharkov City Public Organization "*Nadezhda*," Kharkov (Ukraine), April 20, 2005.
Kropivianska, Olena, Trainer-consultant, Project "*Toloka*," Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), April 3, 2003.
Kuchynska, Olga, Coordinator, Assistance in Further Strengthening Democratic Governance in Ukraine, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005.
Kuharenko, Tetyana, Women's Programs Coordinator, International Renaissance Foundation, Kiev (Ukraine), April 4, 2003.
Kulinich, Oleg, Head of the Committee for Family and Youth, Kharkiv Municipal Council, Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.
Levchenko, Kateryna, National Coordinator, Program Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Central and Eastern Europe, La Strada/Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), February 19, 2003.
Lyday, Corbin, formerly at WID/USAID, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 20, 2004.
Marchenko, Victoria, Media and Civil Society Programs, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005.
Mruchkovska, Elvira, Coordinator, Crisis Prevention Program, Chernivtsi Local NGO "Women's Center," Chernivtsi (Ukraine), March 14, 2003.
Myhaylyuk, Lesya, Assistant, Crisis Prevention Program, Chernivtsi Local NGO "Women's Center," Chernivtsi (Ukraine), March 14–15, 2003.
Mykhalniuk, Taras, Coordinator, Regional Bureau for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Kiev (Ukraine), April 13, 2005.
Nesterenko, Polina, Program Manager, Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003.

Noè, Sascha, Program Officer Eastern Europe, N(o)VIB/Oxfam Netherlands, the Hague (the Netherlands), April 15, 2002.

Novakivska, Dzvinka, Information Coordinator, Eurasia Foundation, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003.

Osovska, Olga, Director of the Center, Job Skills Training Coordinator, Chernivtsi Local NGO "Women's Center," Chernivtsi (Ukraine), March 14–15, 2003.

Ovdienko, Inga, Information/ External Affairs Coordinator, Ukrainian Women's People Democratic Association "*Diya*," Kiev (Ukraine), April 1, 2003.

Piñeiro Costas, Begoña, Anti-trafficking Project Officer, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005.

Pogrebinskiy, Mikhail, Director, Kiev Center of Political Studies and Conflictology**,** Kiev (Ukraine), February 3, 2003.

Pojman, Ruth Freedom, Anti-trafficking Advisor, Europe and Eurasia Region, USAID, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 16, 2004.

Propp, Brian, Vice President, Counterpart International, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 5, 2004.

Puglisi, Rosaria, Political Affairs Officer, Political, Press and Information Section, European Union Delegation of the European Commission, Kiev (Ukraine), April 12, 2005.

Rastrigina, Tatyana, Business Development Specialist, Office of Private Sector Development, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), February 18, 2003.

Rosenberg, Ruth, Consultant, Trafficking in Persons, Gender and Development, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 17, 2004.

Rudenko, Tetyana, Assistant/ Information Coordinator, Trafficking Prevention Project, Winrock International/ Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), March 11, 2003.

Samolevska, Natalka, Coordinator, Community Initiatives to Prevent Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Women (DOS), Winrock International/Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003.

Savich, Liliia, Vise President, Educational Programs Coordinator, La Strada/ Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), February 19, 2003.

Scott, Sheila, former (West) NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium Coordinator, telephone interview, October 1, 2004.

Shulga, Tetiana, Project Manager, Civil Society, European Union Delegation of the European Commission, Kiev (Ukraine), April 26, 2005.

Suslova, Olena, Gender Activity Coordinator, Indiana University Parliamentary Development Project, USAID Democratic Parliamentary Strengthening Program, also head of Women's Information Consultative Center, and a former coordinator of U.S.-West NIS Women's Consortium, Kiev (Ukraine), April 11, 2005.

Tarelin, Andriy, Program Director, Kharkiv Non-Governmental Center for Private Initiatives Assistance, Kharkov (Ukraine), June–July, 2002.

Tatarinova, Larisa, Program Director, Ukraine Citizen Action Network Program (UCAN), Kiev (Ukraine), April 28, 2005.

Tisch, Sarah, Chief of Party, dot-Gov Program of the USAID dot-Com Initiative, Internews Network, former Coordinator, West NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium, Winrock International, Washington, DC (U.S.), August 23, 2004.

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Note

[1] All interviews were conducted by the author; unless stated otherwise, positions and affiliations are current at the time of the interview. Transliteration of Ukrainian and Russian names is the one used by interviewees. Whenever English versions of the names were not available, the romanization table of the Library of Congress was used to transliterate them.

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