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**From Informal Social Capital to Public (Self)-Service:
Exploring Digital Civil Society in Post-2013 Ukraine**

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Abstract

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Over the past thirty years, Ukraine has seen three public protests that have come to be known as ‘revolutions’. Yet despite these repeated demonstrations of ‘people power’, Ukraine’s civil society has been too often underestimated or dismissed as ‘weak’ in academic literature. This thesis confronts this paradox, tracing the development of civil society in Ukraine and uncovering the roots of its vitality in ‘informal social capital’, a byproduct of statelessness and internal colonialism. Analysing the dataset of the European Social Survey (ESS) conducted in Ukraine biannually between 2002–2012, which illustrated that Ukrainians consistently sustained the ‘networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ at the heart of the classic definition of social capital (Putnam 1995, 67), I argue that Ukraine’s particular social capital resides not in strong democratic institutions, but in vibrant cultures of informal mutual self-help in local and professional communities. My discussion suggests that, in the case of Ukraine, neither democratic governance nor the rule of law represents the *sine qua non* for an impactful civil society.

To understand these cultures of informal mutual self-help, I offer four close readings of sustainable grassroots public service initiatives in post-Maidan Ukraine – *Hromadske*, *StopFake*, *Prometheus* and *ProZorro* – informed by semi-structured interviews with the activists who launched them. These civic entrepreneurs cite an ideational dedication to the common good and a keen understanding of the reform inefficiencies of the state as principal drivers for their emergence as activists. Since 2014, their initiatives have served millions of Ukrainians and cultivated Ukrainian civil society in the face of urgent economic, political and military crises. I explore the central role of social networks in mobilising pro bono professionals to compensate for inadequacies of the state and overcome a dramatic lack of financial resources and in achieving organisational sustainability over the long term.

Ultimately, I show that a motivation for volunteering and extensive social mutual self-help networks of cooperation and trust, coupled with the availability of the unpoliced and highly accessible digital media, have led to the development of a robust ‘digital civil society’ in Ukraine. Digital media affordances allow grassroots civic initiatives to gain scale and institutionalise themselves, retaining the horizontal ethos of co-production. The case of Ukraine thus contributes to a growing body of evidence of the strength of informal digital civic activism in post-Soviet and post-colonial societies, inviting us to revisit the presuppositions of the liberal paradigm in civil society studies, which have dominated the scholarly debate in Western Europe and Northern America since the early 2000s.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Redefining civil society.....	8
The significance beyond Ukraine	12
Thesis structure.....	16
I. The ‘Hegemony’ of Liberal Conceptions of Civil Society in Ukrainian Civil Society	
Research in the 1990s–2010s	24
Civil society in transitology.....	25
Exploring liberal theories of civil society	29
Seeking the Root-Cause for Putative ‘Incivility’	37
The U-Turn at Orange Light.....	47
Political Actors under the Guise of Civil Society.....	48
NGO networks behind the Orange Revolution	51
The ‘Unknowns’ of Ukraine’s Civil Society Studies.....	56
What Ukraine’s ‘Digital Civil Society’ Can Teach Us	63
II. ‘Expect-the-Unexpected-Nation’: Investigating Ukraine’s Informal Social Capital.....	65
The Brothers of Cossack Descent.....	66
A Parallel Polis	74
Breaking Through the Post-Soviet Transformation.....	76
Measuring Ukraine’s Social Capital.....	82
III. A New ‘Wild Field’: the Internet as Political Opportunity Structure	98
The Retreat of Formal Political Opportunity Structures	100
New Media as a Political Opportunity Structure.....	107
The Internet and Civic Mobilisation before the Maidan Revolution	114
The Maidan: Civil Society (r)Evolution.....	118
IV. Public (Self-)Service Initiatives in Post-Maidan Ukraine	125
Grassroots Public Service Media <i>Hromadske</i>	128
Grassroots Fact-Checking: <i>StopFake</i>	146
Building a Grassroots ‘MOOC’: The Rise of <i>Prometheus</i>	156
A Civic Initiative for E-Procurement: <i>ProZorro</i>	175
Conclusions: The Missing Piece of the Global Civil Society Studies.....	193
References	200
Primary sources	200
Secondary sources	224
Appendices	244

Introduction

In 2011 Ukrainian comedians ‘Chekhov’s Duet’ presented a scene dedicated to the marriage engagement traditions of different countries. What looked like an entertaining anecdote about two sweethearts suddenly turned into a sharp political parody. The scene sent viewers to nineteenth-century Ukraine, where a typical hero of Ukrainian romantic literature Andrii was declaring his love for Oksana. He said that he was being drafted into the army of the Russian Empire and asked Oksana to marry him. ‘Oh no, Andrii, I cannot! My mother is giving me away to be married to the nobleman!’ Oksana cried. ‘Oh no, Oksana! Let’s run away together then!’ Andrii suggested. ‘Oh no, no, Andrii, we cannot! Our parents suffered, our ancestors suffered, and we, Andrii, will suffer as well!’ Oksana replied. ‘But why Oksana, why should we be suffering, there are so many other possibilities!’ said Andrii, perplexed. ‘Because *this* is our fate, Andrii,’ Oksana answered gravely, ‘the fate of our Mother-Ukraine – to do *nothing*, and keep suffering!’

This preconception about a long-suffering, and yet politically inactive, Ukrainian nation, to which the sarcastic comedians alluded in 2011, was yet to be challenged by the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014. In the wake – and in aftermath – of this revolution, Ukraine would see an impactful informal civic mobilisation for public good led by a new generation of Ukrainian civic entrepreneurs, who mobilised volunteers through a mix of online and offline social networks to create and deliver free public services on a national scale. Four grassroots digital public service providers – an initially informal public service media outlets *Hromadske* and *StopFake*; free massive open online courses *Prometheus*; and a grassroots digital public procurement system *ProZorro* – were selected as case studies for this research to illustrate the potential of *informal* social capital to become a driving force behind the emergence of novel public service institutions. These initially informal public service providers subsequently reached a degree of formalisation necessary to achieve *sustainability*¹, whilst retaining their grassroots ethos, and became a precursor for *systemic* change in state public service delivery.

¹I define the sustainability of a civic initiative as its capacity and capability to continuously serve its target populations over extended period of time, maximising its impact by effectively utilising diversified sources of institutional and non-institutional support. As a basis for this definition, I use two definitions of sustainability in the civic sector: (1) the definition by Anna Benton and Alvaro Monroy (2004) developed for the USAID’s Commercial Market Strategies project; and (2) the definition by the Center of Strategic and International Studies (VanDyck 2017, Definition of Civil Society Sustainability).

But whence the roots of such impactful forms of civic activism in post-Maidan Ukraine? This question is among those this thesis seeks to answer. It is a question that appears particularly intriguing given that only two years earlier, in 2011, the ill-fated engagement of Andrii and Oksana seemed symbolic of the state of affairs with civic engagement in Ukraine. Even though 67.3% of Ukrainians in 2011 believed that the situation in Ukraine was advancing in the wrong direction (Razumkov Centre 2011), most of Ukrainians appeared to accept, in stoic fashion, their ‘national fate’ of doing nothing and continuing to suffer. According to polling data from the Razumkov Centre (2011), Ukrainian society appeared to be passive, lacking interpersonal trust and characterised by a perception of the powerlessness of the citizen in social affairs. Seventy-three percent of Ukrainian citizens felt that they could make no impact on the state of affairs in Ukraine (ibid). In 2011 only 5% of Ukrainians said they participated in NGO activities or supported them by volunteering or donating money (Lytsevych 2013, 4). But even among those who participated in NGOs, the percentage of citizens who felt at least partially capable of influencing the state only reached 44% (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2011). The principal burden for participation in NGO activities was the belief that the citizen is powerless to change anything: 27.3% of Ukrainians stated this fact as a primary reason why they do not participate (ibid). Another 24.7% said that they were not interested in participating; 22.2% did not know how to participate; and 20% claimed that they had no time for unpaid work (ibid).

Hence, international donors – including but not limited to the International Renaissance Foundation, the European Council, German aid organisations, the Swedish government, and the Canadian, UK and US Embassies (Dixit et al. 2017) – compensated for such an apparent lack of ‘participatory spirit’ in Ukraine by supporting the country’s state institutions and NGO network with substantial financial investment. Between 1990 and 2013, Ukraine received 11.35 billion USD² of international development aid (the World Bank n.d.a), bringing about gradual increases in international civil society development scores according to USAID and Freedom House reports (USAID 2014; Sushko and Prystayko 2013). Between 2006 and 2013, Ukrainian civil society’s performance improved from 3.00 in 2005 to 2.75 (on the scale between 1 or very developed to 5 or underdeveloped), outperforming the median score of 3.0 for other post-Soviet countries (Solonenko 2014, 222).

² The aggregate number of allocated funds was calculated by the author using the World Bank dataset available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ALLD.CD?locations=UA>.

While political scientist Thilo Bodenstein (2013) welcomed institution-focused international aid policy, arguing that strong political institutions are the necessary prerequisite for a sustainable civil society, sociologists relying on fieldwork studies in Ukraine doubted the efficacy of such approach. Instead of building on citizens' self-empowerment, Western funding arguably strengthened a perceived divide between a few well-established groups and 'ordinary citizens' in Ukraine (Lutsevych 2013; Allina-Pisano 2010; Helbig 2010; Pishchikova 2010; Pishchikova and Ogryzko 2014). As Orysia Lutsevych observed in early 2013, Ukrainian citizens remained isolated from public deliberations about important issues, because local NGOs could not help them formulate opinions and influence state policies that affected them. Western-funded organisations were not anchored in society and constituted a form of 'NGO-cracy' – a system in which professional NGO leaders use access to domestic policy-makers and Western donors to influence public policies without engaging with the local population (Lutsevych 2013, 4). Only 27% of NGO representatives described their organisation as an association of citizens, while most NGO employees saw citizens as their 'target audience' and beneficiaries of their services (Lutsevych 2013).

As NGOs had little social media presence (Lutsevych 2013), their activities often went unnoticed by the public. In 2011 over half of Ukrainians did not know what functions NGO performed (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2011), and only 3% of Ukrainians fully trusted NGOs with 31% more inclined to trust than distrust them (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2013a). Instead, Ukrainians tended to have faith in interpersonal networks to deal with the state and protect their rights: around 30% of Ukrainian citizens said they offered bribes in 2010 (Lutsevych 2013, 7–8). Thus, Lutsevych argued in 2013 – just months before the Maidan Revolution would engulf Ukraine – that 'the casual corruption and individual approaches to getting services from the state deprive [Ukrainian society] of the participatory spirit needed to propose systemic solutions to reform sectors such as healthcare, education and law enforcement. Citizens acquiesce in corruption in order to receive services from the state and accept these practices because they feel powerless to change the system' (2013, 8).

Less than a year after Lutsevych's remarks, the picture of Ukraine's civil society looked drastically different. Twenty-four per cent of Ukrainians engaged in volunteering in 2014 (GfK 2014), meaning that one in five Ukrainians undertook unpaid work for the public good. The divide between NGOs and citizens started to bridge: 45.7% of Ukrainians declared trust in civil society organisations in 2014 compared to 34% in 2011 (Razumkov Centre 2015). The upward trend persisted after the revolution. An absolute majority of Ukrainians

surveyed by a group of sociologists from the Ukrainian Catholic University in 2014 revealed proactive social attitudes: 94.2% said it was important to them to support other people; 69.5% declared the importance of taking part in political decision-making processes, and 58.8% claimed it was important to them to participate in civil society organisations. Moreover, 50.8% of Ukrainians said they participated in different forms of civic activism during the previous 18 months, including the six months *preceding* the Maidan Revolution (Sereda 2014).

There has since been a hasty international recognition of Ukraine's unexpected and remarkable 'civic awakening' (Pishchikova and Ogryzko 2014). As Mridula Ghosh observed:

In terms of number and variety of organisations, as well as levels and range of activities, civil society and free media in Ukraine are the richest in the former Soviet Union, despite difficult institutional conditions and irregular funding [...] Civil society in Ukraine is marked by spontaneous unity, commitment, and speedy mobilisation of resources, logistics and social capital. It benefits from a confluence of grassroots activism, social networks and formalised institutions (Ghosh 2014, 1).

But *how* did Ukraine make this step – from what looked like a largely passive, disempowered citizenry to a 'rich' civil society where 50.8% of respondents in one study were involved in civic activities in 2013–2014 (Sereda 2014)? Why did extensive Western financial support of professional non-governmental organisations or the mass mobilisation of the Orange Revolution of 2004–2005 fail to bring about such a rapid citizen empowerment, whilst 2013–2014 seemed to mark a break between overwhelming social passivity and sustainable civic activism? And finally, what accounts for such a high level of civic engagement in an extremely resource-poor society, despite the logic of resource mobilisation theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977)? This thesis addresses these questions and seeks to solve this conundrum.

I embarked on this project questioning whether civic culture had indeed changed drastically after the Maidan Revolution, or whether a change in the scientific method of studying Ukraine's civil society in the post-Maidan period created a perception of a revolutionary change in public consciousness, where new social conditions had accelerated, but not necessarily created, strong informal civic forces. Indeed, the arguably most impactful civic initiatives delivering public services in post-Maidan Ukraine did not emerge from the network of NGOs, but appeared from the grassroots. With the prominence of the grassroots volunteer movement during the Maidan Revolution, the scholarly focus has swiftly turned towards informal self-organisation of citizens for the public good, which was only sporadically studied before.

Having carefully gathered the unsystematic fragments of available data on informal civic practices in Ukraine before 2013 (Reznik 2009; 2011; 2013; 2015; Reznik and Malchevska 2010; Kuts and Palyvoda 2006), I saw inconclusive yet intriguing evidence of a high level of citizen engagement at the community level years before the Maidan Revolution. A survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences in 2005 found that 41.8% of Ukrainians coordinated with other people to solve both personal and social problems, while only 22% dealt with their problems alone (Reznik 2015, 177). The Community Surveys conducted for the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for Ukraine (n=400) in 2006 showed that only 16.5% of respondents thought that civil society organisations helped communities (a number that could have been used to argue for the weakness of Ukraine's civil society at the time). Yet 57% of respondents noted that *voluntary* organisations provided better services (Kuts and Palyvoda 2006). This study by Kuts and Palyvoda (2006) also provided a glimpse into what kinds of informal civic practices were predominant in the selected local communities: sixty-one per cent of the study's respondents regularly donated to charities, 49.25% actively provided support to other people informally, and 43% of respondents devoted on average 16 hours to volunteer work. Only 8.25%, however, volunteered for NGOs (ibid).

As illustrated above, both before and after the Maidan Revolution, Ukrainian respondents considered participation in formal civil society organisations to be less important than engagement in informal activities aimed at helping other people (Kuts and Palyvoda 2006; Sereda 2014). And yet, the primary focus of civil society studies in Ukraine was overwhelmingly placed on the former: as Mrindula Ghosh (2014, 1) observes, up until 2014 the notion of civil society as synonymous with NGOs and charity foundations dominated the civil society debate in Ukraine.

Although the uptick in civic activism in post-Maidan Ukraine demonstrated the limitations of such an approach in Ukraine, conceptual thinking about civil society as an aggregate of formalised citizen organisations has not yet been unequivocally rejected by scholars and policy makers globally. This notion permeates policies, research and public communications of the World Bank Group, for instance, which defines civil society as 'the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations that have a presence in public life, express the interests and values of their members and others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations' (The World Bank n.d.b). Although this definition rightly emphasises the key driver behind civic action – ethical,

cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations – the scope of this definition is nevertheless limiting. It fails to consider the particularities of the local context of countries *without* a long-standing tradition of public association with non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations. It fails to consider the particularities of countries like Ukraine.

This thesis presents four case studies from Ukraine to demonstrate how collective action for the public good can spring from the grassroots and take on a horizontal networked structure in a situation where the society accumulated vibrant ‘informal’ social capital to compensate for the lack of impactful formal citizen associations characteristic of Western liberal democracies. As we shall see, in terms of the particularity of its social capital and, as the result, the prevailing forms of civic activism, Ukrainian society bears resemblance to post-colonial countries across the globe – from Africa to India to Latin America – and stands in contrast to former imperial countries like the Russian Federation or the United Kingdom. It is often more productive in the case of Ukraine to adopt – and further adapt – conceptual thinking on civil society developed by scholars and policy makers in area studies and international development instead of those in Western social and political sciences, where the case studies from the Western liberal democracies have traditionally dominated scholarly debates.³

Let us consider, for example, the definitions provided by the EU Commission and, by contrast, the African Development Bank. As the 2012 European Commission report *The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe’s Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations* stated:

The EU considers CSOs [civil society organisations] to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. ... Among them, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, foundations, research institutions, gender and LGBT organisations, cooperatives, professional and business associations, and the not-for-profit media. Trade unions and employers’ organisations, the so-called social partners, constitute a specific category of CSOs. ... They comprise urban and rural, *formal and informal organisations* [emphasis mine]. The EU values CSOs’ diversity and specificities; it engages with accountable and transparent CSOs which share its commitment to social progress and to the fundamental values of peace, freedom, equal rights and human dignity (The European Commission 2012, para 1.2.).

³ For an analysis of the global ‘hegemony’ of Western social sciences, see, for example, Alatas, S. F. 2003. ‘Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences’, *Current Sociology*, 51 (6): 599–613; Beigel, F. 2014. ‘Publishing from the Periphery: Structural Heterogeneity and Segmented Circuits: The Evaluation of Scientific Publications for Tenure in Argentina’s CONICET’, *Current Sociology*, 62: 743–765; Gingras, Y. and Mosbah-Natanson, S. 2010. ‘Where Are Social Sciences Produced?’, *Europe*, 47 (43.8): 46–51.

This definition by the EU Commission represents a much-welcomed departure from the traditional approach to defining civil society as an aggregate of formal citizen organisations counterbalancing the state.⁴ Although the definition by the EU Commission similarly started from a traditional Western description of civil society actors (e.g. community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations...), it proceeded to acknowledge the existence of *informal* CSOs alongside formal ones. Yet formal organisations are still given much more attention in this definition, while informal ones are only briefly mentioned, without an explanation of which of them are in the scope of civil society.

By contrast, the African Development Bank has more radically redefined civil society. It avoids any mention of the possible form in which civic action can take place. Instead, their definition emphasizes voluntary collective action as the core concept of civil society:

Civil society encompasses a constellation of human and associational activities operating in the public sphere outside the market and the state. It is a voluntary expression of the interests and aspirations of citizens organised and united by common interests, goals, values or traditions, and mobilised into collective action either as beneficiaries or stakeholders of the development process. Though civil society stands apart from state and market forces, it is not necessarily in basic contradiction to them, and ultimately influences and is influenced by both (World Economic Forum 2013, 7).

Recognising the full spectrum of civic activities, which are independent of market and state forces, but do not necessarily oppose them, this definition by the African Development Bank rejects the notion of hard boundaries between the spaces of civic activism, market and the state. The possibility of violent action is also not excluded. Such conceptualisation of civil society, I would argue, rightly shifts the focus towards the dynamic *context* in which civic action takes place instead of attempting to define it through one settled meaning. The drawback of this definition also lies in the lack of a clear framework to assess whether a certain collective action qualifies as inside or outside the scope of civil society.

Redefining civil society

Such differing definitions make clear that there is no clear scholarly consensus of what constitutes ‘civil society’. To contribute to these centuries-long scholarly debates, I will build on the conceptual thinking at the core of the definition given by the African Development

⁴ For detailed account of the evolution of the concept of civil society from the 17th century philosophy to nowadays, please, see Chapter 1.

Bank, but will take it further by suggesting that the conceptual boundaries of the civil society should be defined by *the function* fulfilled by collective action.

Since collective action is a *behaviour*, I am borrowing from the domain of behavioural psychology; I am arguing that *the outcome*, or *function*, of behaviour is more important than its topology, or form (Cooper, Heron and Heward 2007, 65). Behavioural psychologists Cooper, Heron and Heward promoted function-based definitions in place of topological ones stating that ‘a function-based definition encompasses all relevant forms of the response class. However, target behaviour definitions based on a list of specific topographies might omit some relevant members of the response class and/or include irrelevant response topographies’ (2007, 66). In other words, if we were to ‘transfix’ the civil society concept by reducing it to an aggregate of forms, which has been a historical tendency in Western scholarship, we would miss relevant forms, which were not observed before, and include irrelevant ones, which had lost their function. Such a typological, ‘form-based’ definition of civil society vis-à-vis Ukraine has often limited the scope of research to networks of formalised NGOs, leading some political scientists and scholars of civil society to deem Ukrainian civil society ‘weak’.⁵ In my view, this conventional wisdom has impeded the ability of the scholarly community to foresee, for instance, the conditions for potent collective action during and after the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014.

By moving away from describing civil society *structures* and towards assessing how civic actions fulfil civil society’s *functions*, we are more able to recognise the ever-broadening variety of forms in which civil society can manifest itself. Such conceptualization would also enable scholars to perform cross-country comparative analyses of civic actions that fulfill similar functions, albeit through different mechanisms. The list of civil society functions, which I suggest to use as a frame of reference, was compiled for the World Economic Forum in 2013:

- Watchdog: holding institutions to account, promoting transparency and accountability;
- Advocate: raising awareness of societal issues and challenges and advocating for change;

⁵ See, for example, Howard, Marc Morjé. 2003. *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge UP; Gatskova, Ksenia and Gatskov, Maxim. 2012. ‘The Weakness of Civil Society in Ukraine: A Mechanism-Based Explanation.’ In *Working Papers* 323, Leibniz Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung (Institute for East and Southeast European Studies); Cleary, Laura. 2016. ‘Half Measures and Incomplete Reforms: The Breeding Ground for a Hybrid Civil Society in Ukraine.’ In *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 7–23.

- Service provider: delivering services to meet societal needs such as education, health, food and security; implementing disaster management, preparedness and emergency response;
- Expert: bringing unique knowledge and experience to shape policy and strategy, and identifying and building solutions;
- Capacity builder: providing education, training and other capacity building;
- Incubator: developing solutions that may require a long gestation or payback period;
- Representative: giving power to the voice of the marginalised or under-represented;
- Citizenship champion: encouraging citizen engagement and supporting the rights of citizens;
- Solidarity supporter: promoting fundamental and universal values;
- Definer of standards: creating norms that shape market and state activity (World Economic Forum 2013, 9).

Civil society changes dynamically in anticipation of, and in response to, changing social realities. But for a scholar defining civil society as an aggregate of traditional organisational *structures*, a static line between individual action for the public good, interpersonal self-help within communities, and organised political activism has to be drawn. For a scholar thinking in terms of the *function* of civic action, such boundaries are irrelevant, as civil society encompasses *all* actions that fulfill the functions attributed to a civil society regardless of their form (formal or informal), place (offline or online), or scope (interpersonal, community-level, national level). The service provision function of civil society, for example, could encompass all of the following: (1) an individual who creates free online courses for children who cannot go to school; (2) an individual who voluntarily delivers food to a vulnerable person during a national lockdown; (3) a group of neighbours who come together to rebuild a house for a local family suffering from the aftereffects of a fire; (4) an international NGO that collects donations to distribute goods in deprived areas of the developing world.

In this thesis, I therefore conceptualise civil society as the aggregate of voluntary individual and collective actions for the common good, which can take institutionalised or non-institutionalised form, and are enabled by social networks and shared norms that facilitate cooperation between individuals and groups. Civil society thus encompasses all activities that fulfil the functions of advocacy, capacity building and public service provision; disaster management and emergency response; knowledge building and developing solutions for societal problems; promoting accountability, citizen engagement, representation, solidarity and community cohesion; and (re)defining norms and standards that shape market and state activity.⁶ I suggest that the quality of a civil society, as an aggregate of all such individual and

⁶ This list of functions (and therefore the scope of civil society) can be updated and adapted to respond to significant social changes.

collective actions for public good over an extended period of time, should be assessed through its capacity and capability to perform those civil society functions which are the most relevant in a particular social context.

I posit that for the developing countries, a function-based definition of civil society is a long-awaited framework that would allow scholars and policymakers to recognise local functional equivalents for formal NGOs, trade unions and other formal citizen associations, which are more predominant in the West. For Western scholars, such a conceptualisation would open a new frontier of civil society research focusing on informal collective action. The latter has become increasingly impactful in the digital space. Indeed, online groups and social media movements have received increased scholarly recognition as civil society actors since 2010s (see, for example, World Economic Forum 2013, Deep Dive: Defining Civil Society, para. 2).

The World Economic Forum has acknowledged ‘informalisation’ and ‘localisation’ as two landmark trends that will define the development of civil societies globally until 2030:

...While mass protests are common at a national level, people increasingly turn to two distinct social groups for support and engagement. First, there is a rise in engagement around local societal issues, community development and local government. Volunteerism rises and local community life flourishes. Second, trust is built among ‘new tribes’ that emerge through new forms of social networks online, enabled by the fact that access to the Internet via mobile devices has been extended to more than three quarters of the world’s population (World Economic Forum 2013, The Path to 2030, p 28, para. 3–4)

In other words, a conceptual framework for civil society that enables scholars to study volunteer activities, the self-organisation of local communities, and informal self-organisation of citizens have never been more necessary. After all, as the World Economic Forum has rightly acknowledged, the ever-increasing number of ‘digital natives’ views online communities as a space for civic socialisation (World Economic Forum 2013, The Path to 2030, p 28, para. 5). For better or for worse⁷, such online communities often replace the need

⁷ There is currently a heated scholarly debate about whether digital media rather play a positive role for civic activism (e.g. by providing novel mechanisms for mobilising public despite physical distance between the actors; quickly and efficiently spreading information of public interest and raising awareness of the pressing social issues; challenging traditional funding models etc.) or a negative one (e.g. by discouraging people from getting involved in high-stake ‘real-activism’ and limiting their civic involvement to online ‘clicktivism’ or ‘slacktivism’. In my view, digital media should not be hailed as inherently good or bad for civic activism; it is merely a means to an end, which varies greatly from one instance of collective action to another. As much as digital can be used for public good, it can be used for public harm. I suggest that the role of digital media should be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on how instrumental it was in achieving the specific outcome pursued by the collective action in question.

for traditional organisational forms for their members, so it is reasonable to expect the growing prominence of non-formalised digitally-enabled citizen associations in the future.

The significance beyond Ukraine

The case of Ukraine is of great relevance to international political and social scientists occupied with studying changing mechanisms of civic mobilisation and collective action. The recent upsurge of civic activity in developing countries (e.g. the Arab Spring in the Gulf countries in 2010–2011, #resign movement in Bulgaria in 2013, and 2015–2016 anti-governmental protests in Brazil) have already called into question the role of financial capital as the *sine qua non* of social movements. Similarly, during the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014 in Ukraine, civic activists leveraged pro bono cause lawyering to counterbalance a lack of financial resources, demonstrating how value-driven mass civic participation can be an enabler for collective action in a financially poor environment (Wilson 2017). My case studies of informal public service institutions in post-Maidan Ukraine, enabled by free digital platforms, pro bono work and large-scale crowdsourcing, represent additional examples in an expanding array of contemporary forms of collective action, all of which defy Olson's collective action theory.

Mancur Olson (1965) analysed collective action through the prism of the collective good it produces and argued that if such collective good is 'non-excludable' – that is, impossible to withhold from non-participants of the collective action in question – then 'rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest' (Olson 1965, 2). Instead, the rational individual will seek to free-ride on the efforts of the others to produce the collective good, an argument that became known as the 'free-rider' dilemma (Olson 1965). Pamela Oliver criticised Olson's theory for overlooking the participants' ideational motives in this way:

If he had been a sociologist, Olson might have used this argument to launch a theory of the non-rational or non-individualist bases of collective action. But since he was an economist, he argued that collective action must be accompanied by private excludable selective incentives that reward participants or punish non-participants, and he devoted the rest of his book to defending the empirical claim that such selective incentives can be found in a variety of historical instances of collective action (Oliver 1993, 273).

Coming from an institutional economics perspective, Mancur Olson focused primarily on material incentives, such as salaries, insurance programmes and threats of physical or economic vengeance (Oliver 1993, 279). According to this logic, since financial incentives

are expected, collective action is unlikely in economically poor societies. Yet, as Pamela Oliver (1993) rightly argued, relying on the works of Olson's numerous critics⁸, private incentives can be unnecessary whenever interdependence and coordination between many individuals in the group influence individual decisions to participate in producing a collective good. 'Many collective goods can, in fact, be produced by a small number of individuals, who make large contributions through an appropriate technology (e.g. lobbying Congress),' Pamela Oliver posits (1993, 274). The case studies from Ukraine presented in Chapter 4 provide further empirical evidence for this argument. The appropriate technology in Ukraine's case is, however, unconventional: not classical political lobbying, but new media platforms.

Despite the growing body of evidence challenging Mancur Olson's collective action theory, presented by social movements of the twenty-first century (movements often resource-poor and distanced from formal organisations⁹) the importance of his contribution to social science is profound. Olson overturned the perspective from which social movement scholars viewed collective action. Before him, social scientists treated collective action as a natural, almost automatic response to social grievances. They were therefore perplexed by people's inability to act together for the common good, typically explaining the lack of collective action by references to social deficiencies – an absence of collective interests or communal deficit of resources, education, solidarity, organisational capacity etc. In this vein, a reluctance of Ukrainian citizens to participate in formalised civic activities to challenge the state was often explained by way of a deficiency of 'participatory spirit' rather than through a hypothesis that Ukrainian citizens had found alternative ways to satisfy their needs and counter-balance the state.

After Olson, the rational choice political scholarship assumed collective 'inaction' to be natural. Collective action was accordingly explained as arising from the availability of particular resources, organisational capacities, and political opportunities as central to determining which social grievances get acted upon (Oliver 1993, 273–274). Thus, these claims and observations invite us to reassess the conditions which promoted the creation of social resources and facilitated collective action in post-2013 Ukraine. Drawing on, and speaking to, the resource mobilisation and political opportunity theories of social movements,

⁸ See Frohlich and Oppenheimer 1970; Oliver 1980; Chamberlin 1974; Schofield 1975; Bonacich et al. 1976; Smith 1976; Hardin 1982; Oliver et al. 1985; Oliver and Marwell 1988; Kimura 1989.

⁹ For example, Bennet and Segerberg made a similar observation about the Spanish M15 movement, which was characterised by a predominantly informal organisation – offline and online – and 'seemed to operate with surprisingly light involvement from conventional organisations' (Bennet and Segerberg 2012, 741).

I explore the available and unavailable resources and political opportunity structures for civic mobilisation in Ukraine between 2004–2013. I proceed to discuss how digital assets – digital skills and technological infrastructure – became key enablers of collective action in Ukraine at the time. Above all, this study argues that the particularity of Ukraine’s informal social capital has become the crucial factor in promoting large-scale participation in producing collective goods in post-Maidan Ukraine. It acknowledges the affordances of digital media that have enabled the emergence of a ‘digital civil society’ in Ukraine and investigates how the internet helped individuals to self-organise and ‘connect’ their efforts for the public good, overcoming a pronounced lack of financial resources. Ultimately my thesis demonstrates the legitimacy and potential sustainability of informal civic cooperation for the public good and highlights the limitations of liberal theories – including classical liberalism, republicanism and liberal institutionalism – in understanding civil societies afflicted by hybrid regimes.

In addition to contributing to the global civic society debate, this thesis contributes to research in public service delivery by drawing on cases from four *impactful* (operationalised as serving hundreds of thousands of people monthly) and *sustainable* grassroots *public service*¹⁰ providers in post-2013 Ukraine. By sustainability, I understand the ability of a given civic initiative to continue its activities among target populations over an extended period of time, minimising its financial vulnerability through diversified sources of institutional and financial support, while maintaining its social mission by providing quality services and products (Benton and Monroy 2004). The civic initiatives within scope of this study achieved sustainability through different mechanisms, from building partnerships with local businesses and international NGOs to integrating into state organisations in order to contribute to the state’s capabilities to deliver systemic change in public service provision in Ukraine. Although the case studies discuss the mechanisms by which these public service providers achieved long-term sustainability, the focus of this study is not on the sustainability strategies per se, but on their grassroots *emergence* as well as the function and national impact of these initiatives. For a society traditionally deemed socially passive, politically illiterate and traumatised by post-totalitarian legacy, it is precisely this emergence that requires explanation.

¹⁰ By ‘public services’, I understand essential services made available to all citizens regardless of their income (Institute for Government n.d.). Here I look specifically at services in the domain of education and public information. Educational domain is represented by a case study of free massive open online courses provider Prometheus. As to public information, I focus on its three guises in post-2013 Ukraine: (1) as a public service media (Hromadske); (2) as a fact-checking service (StopFake); (3) as an initiative giving all citizens an access to public information on all public procurement (ProZorro).

By explaining the grassroots emergence of these initiatives, I also seek to contribute to the field of Slavonic studies. Sensitive to the problem of presentism in the social sciences, this thesis explores currents in history and culture that have animated the development of Ukraine's informal civic culture through the centuries. I pay particular attention to a national mythology that, as we will see, has tended to promote suspicion of formal structures and to embrace informal ones. In my view, this mythology has brought about both negative (entrenched corruption and shadow economy) and positive (normalisation of mutual self-help and ability to cooperate on grassroots level) consequences. While corruption and tax evasion in the post-Soviet region were extensively studied in the 1990s–2000s (Ledeneva 1998; 2000; Trochev 2010; Polese 2014) and considered primary factors impeding the development of Ukraine's civil society, the horizontal self-organisation and mutual self-help culture in Ukraine have attracted less scholarly attention (Polese 2009; Reznik and Malchevska 2010; Reznik 2011; 2013; 2015).

In this thesis, I argue that a spurt in civic activism in post-Maidan Ukraine was a product of an evolution of what I call a social culture of grassroots 'self-help'. This culture was largely obscured from the international scholarly community until the moment of crisis during the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014 and the subsequent military conflict in Crimea and Donbas. I posit that Ukraine's 'informality culture' can explain why, in the face of inadequate public service provision, citizens abandoned protest politics and self-organised to support the state by co-producing critical public services. My in-depth interviews with civil society leaders demonstrate that informal connections and an ideational motivation for pro bono work proved essential in overcoming a host of organisational and financial challenges. They also reveal varying degrees of success in collaboration with institutional donors. In the four case studies in Chapter 4, I will discuss how international collaboration can be beneficial, and how it can be detrimental to the ability of an organic civic initiative to serve its target populations in the long term.

Overall, I posit that the case of Ukraine can be informative for scholars and practitioners across disciplines as it invites us to rethink three major questions: (1) How can social scientists and international analysts define 'civil society' and conduct cross-country comparative analysis of the quality of civil societies? (2) How can social activists compensate for the lack of financial resources in developing countries? (3) What pitfalls should international donors avoid when interacting with informal networked citizen associations so as not to cause local civic groups to lose touch with their primary constituents?

Thesis structure

The foundational shift of focus from the form of civic behaviour to its function, or outcome, is the cornerstone of the originality of this research on civil society. Through the case of Ukraine, I demonstrate how overfocusing on studying civil society's structural forms and preconditions for its development in Western liberal democracies left Ukraine's informal civic activism understudied, and the quality of Ukrainian civil society misinterpreted.

To problematise this misinterpretation, I pose the following research questions: (1) was the upsurge in informal civic activism in post-Maidan Ukraine a 'revolutionary' or 'evolutionary' process in the development of Ukraine's civil society? (2) why did informal public service institutions emerge in post-Maidan Ukraine *from the grassroots*¹¹ rather than from existing NGO networks, and whence the roots of such potent 'informal' social capital in Ukraine? (3) what has empowered a new generation of civic entrepreneurs in Ukraine to set up grassroots public service institutions, and why has digital media become 'the vehicle of choice' for public service delivery? Finally, (4) how can the case of Ukraine inform the burgeoning theoretical discussion on the scope and remit of the civil society in the digital age, particularly in post-colonial/post-communist societies?

Confronting these research questions requires methodological pluralism, leading me to rely on a range of approaches, including an assessment of academic literature, an analysis of historical, statistical and comparative factors, and in-depth interviews and case studies. The selection of case studies was based on three criteria: (1) grassroots emergence in post-2013 Ukraine; (2) function of public service provision; and (3) sustainability. Interestingly, all cases that matched the criteria appeared to be digitally enabled.

Digital media is an unconventional resource from the perspective of the 'resource mobilisation' social movement theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977) because it is theoretically available to every society and can be utilised to solve a wide array of grievances. As the case studies in Chapter 4 will demonstrate, Ukraine's civic activists used digital media as means to different ends: to coordinate the protest against the unaccountable government; to establish

¹¹ By 'grassroots emergence' I understand the gradual development of collective action starting from a person, who have an idea for collective action for public good, and who subsequently brings together people through mix of offline and online social networks to work towards creating a non-excludable public good with no commercial purpose in mind. This is in contrast to the collective action, which is started by the members of existing formal civic organisation, utilising resources of such organisation, to achieve public impact in line with pre-defined organisational scope of activities, targets and goals.

a BBC-like public service media outlet; to provide crowdsourced and crowdfunded fact-checking service to counteract the fake news; to provide mass online courses; and to build the World Procurement Award-winning digital public procurement system (Open Procurement n.d.) and reform the Ukrainian procurement system from the bottom-up. Not every social movement around the globe uses digital media with the same goals and outcomes. Therefore, in this thesis, I consider the particularities of Ukraine's social context, its history and culture, and its peculiar social capital to explain the multiple occasions of digital collective action in post-2013 Ukraine.

Chapter 1 reviews scholarly debates on the nature of civil society and summarises existing knowledge about the development of Ukrainian civil society since 1991, seeking to understand why Ukraine's progression towards an impactful civil society remained under the radar of both Western and Ukrainian scholarship.

To fill the gap in knowledge of Ukraine's informal culture, **Chapter 2** traces the development of Ukraine's peculiar self-help culture from the Cossack myth of modern Ukraine through the Soviet period of 'organised shortages' and the post-Soviet transition towards the market economy and independent statehood. Relying on data from the European Social Survey (ESS) conducted in Ukraine between 2004 and 2012, I seek to measure, to the extent possible, informal social capital in pre-2013 Ukraine. I then deploy a comparative statistical analysis of social attitudes in Ukraine and the Russian Federation before 2013.¹² Through the statistical analysis of a dataset of 9986 observations from Ukraine, I explore the distinctiveness of Ukrainian informal social capital and conduct a contrasting analysis with the social capital in Russian Federation and Western Europe. I posit that highlighting the contrast between Ukrainian and Western European nations is essential to understand the limited usefulness of adopting civil society frameworks, which emerged in a peculiar social, cultural and political context of Western Europe, to Ukraine or any other non-Western societies. The counter positioning of social capital characteristic of a previously titular imperial nation (Russians in Ukraine's case) and a nation living on imperial borderlands (like Ukraine in the 17th–20th century) is critical to demonstrate why Ukrainian social capital bares similarities with other post-colonial nations. Unfortunately, the absence of a single social survey with unified questions and metrics deployed across post-colonial countries makes it

¹² This timeframe was purposefully selected to exclude the potential effect of the Russian–Ukrainian war in the Donbas in 2014 on the declared differences in social attitudes between these two nations.

impossible to conduct a cross-country comparison of Ukraine and post-colonial societies across the globe. I will provide, however, numerous examples from qualitative studies conducted in post-colonial countries to highlight similarities with Ukraine.

Having established the roots of Ukraine's informal social capital in Chapter 2, I move to the question of *why* digital media has become the crucial enabler of the informal self-organisation of citizens since the 2000s. In **Chapter 3**, I discuss the institutional build-up of the Ukrainian state in the 1990s–2010s and analyse the (un)availability of political opportunity structures for influencing the state in the pre-Maidan period. I argue that the perceived inaccessibility of institutional channels due to the consolidation of the semi-authoritarian regime in 2008–2013, coupled with the lack of a legislative framework regulating online activities, shaped digital civic activism in Ukraine in the 2000s–2010s. The internet facilitated the emergence of independent online media outlets performing public service functions and the growing importance of social media for the self-coordination of civic activities on both the local and national levels.

Chapter 4 comes to grips with what could have caused a change of public attitude towards 'civic duty' and the development of the perception of self-responsibility for the success of reforms in Ukraine. I offer case studies of the grassroots civic initiatives reforming various spheres of public life and providing public services when the state fails to do so. I also explore specific practices deployed by the selected grassroots public service organisations to sustain citizen engagement for years after the Maidan Revolution. Through in-depth interviews with the co-founders of these grassroots initiatives for the public good, I highlight the crucial role of civic leaders' subjective ideational motivations and access to professional social networks in driving the sustainability of these initiatives. Here I provide multiple comparisons of bottom-up initiatives and state enterprises providing public service and explore their rivalry and collaboration. Through in-depth interviews with public activists, I also explore how grassroots initiatives became the agenda-setters in various areas of public service and how affordances of digital media facilitated these processes.

The first grassroots initiative to undertake the public service function during the Maidan Revolution of 2013 was the online public service media outlet *Hromadske*, built on the principles of the BBC.¹³ The bottom-up development of the public service broadcasting

¹³ *Hromadske*, short for *Hromadske Telebachennia* ('public television'), positioned itself as an ideational successor of the Lviv-based independent radio *Hromadske Radio*, founded in 2002 by a journalist Oleksandr Kryvenko. *Hromadske Radio* was unable to receive a broadcasting license, leading to its closure in 2005. It was subsequently revived on a digital platform in 2013 and continues to operate.

organisation stands in sharp contrast to the established practice of setting up the public broadcasting organisation through state legislation from the top down. In the EU, the 1997 Amsterdam Protocol on the public broadcasting system reaffirmed that it is for the Member States to organise public service broadcasting, define its remit and provide for its funding (European Broadcasting Union 2000). The Preamble of the Protocol named the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and the need to preserve media pluralism as the central points of reference for establishing public service broadcasting. It established the responsibility of the Member States to define the peculiar communication and cultural needs of the society it represents (ibid).

Taking for granted that any state would seek to protect the cornerstone liberal value of the freedom of speech, the European approach left defenceless those societies in which the state assumed control over the media sphere. Even though the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the public has a right to receive information and ideas on political issues just as on those in other areas of public interest (ECHR 1986), there was no working institutional mechanism for the public to realise this right. In Ukraine, both state-owned and commercial television were subjected to media censorship. For instance, Human Rights Watch (2003) exposed informal state censorship in Ukraine through ‘temniki’ – instructions given to the top management of the television channels on how to report political events. By 2013 Ukraine was ranked 126 out of the 179 countries (in the bottom 30%) in the Worlds Freedom of Speech ranking (Reporters Without Borders... 2013).

The perceived consolidation of the semi-authoritarian regime, which tightened the grip on media outlets, pushed a group of young journalists to start a crowdfunding campaign to accumulate public funds on a grassroots level and establish a public service media outlet without any involvement of the state. This grassroots public service project – *Hromadske* (‘public’) – efficiently filled the gap between the state-owned and oligarch-controlled commercial media in Ukraine. In under a month, *Hromadske*’s YouTube channel gained 126 million views, becoming a leading news channel in Ukraine and establishing a world record for live streaming (Detektor Media 2015). By 2015 *Hromadske* started satellite broadcasting and consulted the state, undergoing the process of converting the state-owned TV channel into a public service broadcaster. In March 2020 *Hromadske* has been serving between 200,000 and 300,000 viewers daily as a television channel and reaching on average 10.5 million people through Facebook. All in all, the first case study in Chapter 4 will discuss how *Hromadske* overcame the limitations of the unfavourable political regime and a lack of

financial resources by ceasing the only available opportunity structure in 2013 – the internet – to set up the grassroots public service media.

The second case study is dedicated to a bottom-up fact-checking grassroots initiative called *StopFake*. Following in *Hromadke*'s footsteps in terms of deploying digital platform as a means to deliver free public services with all-national reach, a group of graduates of the Kyiv-Mohyla School of Journalism created a website to publish refutations of the false information seeded by Russia-controlled media and social media trolls to diminish the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state. The team conducted fact-checking themselves, shared the digital tools helpful in identifying photo and video fakes, and explained the principal ways of producing fake news. This civic initiative encouraged the public to do fact-checking themselves, conduct media monitoring, and share the results with the *StopFake* team. In other words, it effectively crowdsourced the fight against disinformation. As a result, *StopFake* contributed to promoting media literacy and became a predecessor of the institutional initiatives aimed at protecting national information security, such as the international broadcasting service *UA:TV* and a project of the European Union called *EU versus Disinfo*. In 2020 *StopFake* joined the International Fact-Checking Network and partnered with Facebook to help the world's most popular social media website¹⁴ to combat misinformation. It also managed to become fully independent from international donors and is currently fully funded through the research work, content production and training delivery, performed by *StopFake*'s team (Fedchenko 2021).

In the case of Ukraine, grassroots civic forces proved more efficient than state institutions in reacting to the dramatic social changes brought about by the military conflict in 2014. The Ukrainian state was suddenly challenged on the 'hard power' front, leaving the 'soft power' front of media or education vulnerable. Ukraine's GDP shrank by 28.1% in 2014 (The World Bank n.d.c), bringing about a dramatic devaluation of Ukrainian currency by at least 97.3% – the highest national currency devaluation rate since the introduction of Ukraine's hryvnia in 1996 (Bereslavska 2015) – and a deep economic recession. While the state tried to stabilise the currency and reform the national banking system, simultaneously struggling to accumulate military might, the ordinary Ukrainian saw her savings plummet and competition on the job market skyrocket. The crisis made evident drawbacks of the state education system, which did not succeed in preparing students to meet the expectations of business employers. Corruption in universities also damaged the public perception of the

¹⁴ Facebook had 2.7 billion active users as of October 2020 (Clement 2020).

quality and utility of higher education, making employers reluctant to hire graduates. To support students, failed by the state education system, the grassroots digital educational initiative *Prometheus* emerged to provide free, high-quality online courses with a greater goal of revolutionising Ukraine's education sector. Thus, the third case study examines the impact of free massive open online courses in Ukraine. Far from being just a provider of online university courses, *Prometheus* has also taken upon itself a civic function. *Prometheus* developed courses promoting the employability of the people with disabilities; providing access to first-class knowledge to people left behind by the state education system in the occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea; supporting the state in providing professional improvement training for teachers and civil servants; and promoting civic education. By providing citizens and NGOs with the necessary toolset to work effectively with – or against – the state in its civic education strand, *Prometheus* demonstrates how one civic initiative can facilitate the appearance of the others and, by doing so, contribute to the long-term sustainability of civil society.

Finally, the fourth case study analyses a civic initiative purposefully created to strengthen the state's institutional capacity and enable immediate access to public information on state procurement auctions to increase transparency in the state sector for the benefit of the public. The grassroots digital public procurement system ProZorro subsequently named the world's best public procurement system according to the international Public Procurement Award (ProZorro n.d.), emerged from a pro bono collaboration of professionals from finance, business and IT-sectors. The project aims to combat corruption in the state public procurement system and provide access to the state procurement market equal to 15% of Ukraine's GDP to small and medium businesses, boosting competition and saving billions in public funds. In preparing the transfer of the digital system into the state ownership, the minds behind *ProZorro* developed sister-projects *DoZorro.org* and *Bi.Prozorro.org*, which provided analytical tools for civic activists to exercise public oversight over the state procurement auctions. *ProZorro* held 5.14 million tenders created by 41,670 state customers in which 301,100 businesses have participated. As a result, the total value of all the allocated procurement orders reached 106.2 billion GBP with estimated savings for the state budget up to 3.5 billion GBP¹⁵ (Bi.prozorro.org n.d.).

The common denominator for the four selected case studies is their bottom-up development. These four initiatives emerged from a grassroots collaboration of the civic

¹⁵ 123.2 billion UAH according to the exchange rate as of 16 July 2020.

activists and members of the public, who supported such initiatives by donations and pro bono work. The availability of the ‘digital media opportunity structure’ proved instrumental for the financial efficiency and nationwide scalability of these initiatives. Committed to enhancing public services in Ukraine, these civic initiatives provided a better alternative to state public services, improving the quality of life of fellow citizens whilst cautiously supporting the capacity-building of the state institutions to achieve long-term social change.

For performing service provision functions and becoming capacity builders and solution incubators for Ukrainian society, such grassroots civic initiatives are deemed ‘pseudo-plenipotentiaries’ by British scholar Laura Cleary (2016). For Cleary, Ukraine’s civil society qualifies as ‘hybrid’ as it replaces the weak state instead of challenging it. Yet, the civil society definition which I suggested at the beginning of this introduction recognises all performed functions as legitimate civil society functions, allowing me to argue against Cleary’s (2016) assessment of Ukrainian civil society as ‘hybrid’.

Drawing from the peculiarities of Ukraine’s case, the concluding chapter discusses the limitations of liberal civil society theories for understanding non-Western civil societies. I join the voices cautioning against developing a universal ‘global civil society’ theory without acknowledging the particularities of countries other than Western Europe and the United States (Burawoy 2015). Liberal civil society theory, with its inherent assumption of availability of the strong democratic political institutions, assumes that whilst the state can sometimes lack the political will to work in the public interest, it cannot, *a priori*, lack institutional capacity. However, it is indeed the case in many countries of the so-called ‘developing world’ where – challenged or not – state institutions lack funding, expertise and public trust to deliver public services. International policy has been set to address this issue through targeted aid to state institutions. Such policies are in line with the international institutionalism school of thought, which posits that the grievances of local populations can only be addressed from top-to-bottom. Working institutions are supposed to come before national solidarity and protected rights before anyone would wish to be a citizen (Mouritsen 2003, 658). One of the numerous adepts of such approach, Sheri Berman, argues that ‘local problems in complex societies are often linked to broader constraints which must be centrally addressed first, through political struggles that challenge established priorities, power bases and distributions’ (Berman 1997, 570–571).

Should the state fail to build democratic institutions or obtain international aid funding, liberal civil society theories do not foresee an efficient way for citizens to participate in the

institutional capacity-building from the bottom-up. Thus, in liberal civil society theories, ‘emerging democracies’ can get trapped in a vicious circle, where the democratic state is expected to be forged under civil society’s pressure, while the emergence of the civil society itself is preconditioned on the rule of law and functioning liberal-democratic state institutions. The case of Ukraine, by contrast, exemplifies a way to cut free from this vicious circle. When the dysfunctional state lacks the institutional capacity to deliver public services and is devoid of adequate funding and expertise to reform itself, the grassroots collaboration of experts and civic activists can result in the emergence of alternative public service organisations for the common good. The latter, remaining independent from the state, can consult and support the state in reforming its institutions from the bottom-up.

More generally, the case of Ukraine invites scholars to be cautious of Western cultural biases when assessing non-Western civil societies, where robust networks of self-help compensate for the inefficiencies of political institutions. Such a state of affairs allowed many developing countries, including Ukraine, to harness peculiar social capital increasingly visible on the global arena with the rise of digitally-mediated protests. Can new media become a productive public space for renegotiating social contracts and achieving social change? The following chapters demonstrate how Ukraine can be seen as a trailblazer in this respect.

I. The ‘Hegemony’ of Liberal Conceptions of Civil Society in Ukrainian Civil Society Research in the 1990s–2010s

Having proclaimed independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine had set out to redefine the state-society relations at the junction of communist and liberal socio-political ideals. What would fill the lacuna left by the disappearance of the totalitarian state, and how would Ukraine’s ‘unexpected nation’ (Wilson 2000) formulate its ideal of ‘fair society’? Western societies had their socio-political ideal to rely upon – a concept of civil society as a foundation for liberal democracy. But could this concept be extended eastwards?

The concept of civil society originated from the seminal works of Western European political philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment, such as *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbs (1651), *Two Treatises of Government* by John Locke (1689) and *The Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762). Civil society as the socio-political ideal of a commercial society governed by the rule of law was seen as an antidote to a particular state of the market sphere, redefining the estates’ system of feudal society in seventeenth-century Western Europe. At the time, the increasing thirst for private wealth diminished community life, causing citizens to retract from the political arena. Such conditions allowed for the strengthening of the state under the premise of upholding security, Scottish political philosopher Adam Ferguson observed in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* written in 1767 (Ferguson 1996, 261).

This idea of civil society keeping in check the state's power had paved the way for the liberal revolutions of 17th–18th century Europe. It was therefore hypothesised to similarly light the way for the liberalisation of Eastern European states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Civil society became a buzzword of transitology – a field of study on the transition between political regimes. Throughout the 1990s, transitology increasingly guided policy recommendations on bringing democratisation and market liberalisation to post-socialist societies. The wide-held hope amongst transitologists was that civil society would help post-socialist states out of their ‘political predicament’ (Kumar 1993, 375).

Yet, as Chapter 1 will demonstrate, applying the liberal civil society theory to a Ukrainian context has proved problematic. By tracing the development of the civil society concept in Western and Ukrainian social sciences, Chapter 1 will discuss how the knowledge of Ukrainian civil society had been constructed throughout the 1990s–2010s. This theoretical analysis will be further complemented with the empirical statistical and anthropological data,

demonstrating the numerous instances of divergence by the actual civic practices of Ukrainians from the expectations of the predominant civil society theories at the time. Such discrepancies had been fueling speculations of the weakness of Ukrainian civil society (Gatskova and Gatskov 2012) until the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014 revealed Ukraine’s potent civic forces. By bringing to the puzzle the informal civic practices – the Black Swan of Ukrainian civil society studies – Chapter 1 will caution against the uncritical transplantation of the liberal civil society conceptualisations to the post-Soviet societies, which has historically prevented academics from predicting impactful and sustainable collective action in Ukraine.

Civil society in transitology

‘The notion of civil society had become the central idea guiding the democratic transformation of Eastern Europe,’ wrote Ernest Gellner in his review of the volume *The Transition from Socialism: State and Civil Society in the USSR*, edited by Chandran Kukathas, William Moley, and David Lovell in 1992. At the time, sociological evidence for the importance of civil society to liberal democracy was mounting, culminating in seminal work in civil society studies by American political scientist Robert Putnam (1993). Putnam showed how civil society – with a combination of culture, structure and historical tradition of civic orientations and behaviours – played a decisive role in the success of Italian democracy (Putnam 1993). Putnam supported Machiavelli’s thought that the character of citizenry depends on its ‘civic virtue’ and argued that this ‘republican school’ provides the most reasonable explanation for well-functioning civil societies and democracies. From the republican position, democracy and civil society are built upon political equality, civic engagement, individual striving in the community’s common interests, and civic virtues of solidarity, tolerance and trust, developed through participation in a network of civic associations (Cumings 1999, 96). As the concepts of civil society and democracy became increasingly intertwined in social and political sciences in the 1990s, Ernest Gellner observed that the concept of ‘civil society’ had replaced ‘democracy’ as ‘much more sociologically concrete’ and a much better fit to explain anticipated political transformations in post-Soviet countries (Gellner 1992, 353).

The goal of explaining political transformations leading to the establishment of liberal democracy had been occupying scholars’ minds since the Carnation Revolution in Portugal and the Spanish transition to democracy in the 1970s, which marked the beginning of the

process which would become known as ‘the third wave’ of democratisation (Huntington 1991). In the aftermath, the neophytes of transitology (a newly emerged field of studies dedicated to transitions between political regimes) and consolidology (a study of conditions for regime stability) sought to ‘distil’ a universalistic set of principles that can guide the way from an autocratic to a democratic regime. Proponents of these two disciplines relied on assumptions and hypotheses drawn primarily from the Southern European and Latin American case studies (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the transitology literature mushroomed, incorporating the case studies of post-totalitarian societies into the expanded corpus of case studies on democratic transition. ‘For the first time, [transitologists] could manipulate equations where the variables did not outnumber the cases, and they could test their tentative conclusions in cultural and historical contexts quite different from those which generated them in the first place,’ Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl observed (1994, 177). A small number of case studies from relatively homogenous cultural areas of southern Europe and Latin America, which laid the foundations of transitology, faced a challenge of ‘conceptual stretching’ (Sartori 1970, 1034), or applicability of transitology’s concepts to the societies and countries not imagined initially (Schmitter and Karl 1994).

On this front, the area studies scholars challenged the transitologists undertaking the quantitative-based comparative analysis across the ‘third wave’ democracies and post-Soviet states. The former argued that transitologists failed to come to grips with the historical, cultural and ideological particularities of the post-Soviet societies, permeating the normative and prescriptive ideas of linear progression towards democracy, which shadowed almost all discussions of states and economic transition in political sciences in the 1990s (Tilly 2001, 403). After exploring the effects of universalistic logic of transitology on civil society studies in Ukraine in Chapter 1, I will demonstrate, in Chapter 2, specific historical and cultural particularities of Ukrainian society, explaining why universalistic liberal theories should not be uncritically applied to the case of Ukraine.

The logic of transitology implies that the best way to understand how stable, well-functioning democracies develop is to analyse the political trajectories that such countries have already followed, focusing on the states in Western Europe and North America. Amongst them, England is mainly regarded as an exemplar of a type of political development the most likely to lead to a stable democratic outcome because it features gradual change, with liberalism and a well-functioning state emerging before the transition to democracy

(Berman 2007, 31).¹⁶ The classical paradigm of transitology has four main traits: (1) an aim to create a single universal theory of democratization, which explains processes of democratization in different social contexts; (2) an assumption that democratization is a gradual one-way process with several phases; (3) an emphasis on a decision by the political elite as the single crucial factor for democratic; and (4) the normative belief of neoliberal nature, that the consolidation of the institute of democratic elections and other reforms of its own accord establish effectively functioning states power (Jankauskas and Gudžinskas 2008, 181).

In this vein, German-British sociologist, political scientist and liberal politician Ralf Dahrendorf (1990, 71–108) hypothesised that ‘the road to freedom’ for post-Soviet societies would consist of three processes: firstly, political power must be demonopolised through constitutional changes; secondly, a regulatory market economy must bring about free markets; thirdly, and most importantly, the civil society must accumulate substantial variety and power outside of the state, bringing ‘the hour of the citizen’. These three aspects, Dahrendorf argues, would enable a free society to emerge in Eastern Europe (ibid). Dahrendorf argued that constitutional changes could be made in 6 months, economic reforms could take up to 6 years, but an active civil society would take 60 years to develop (Dahrendorf 1990b). The prospects for Eastern Europe appeared gloomy.

The fundamental problem with such an understanding of the political predicament of Eastern Europe is that it lacked nuance. The societies within Eastern Europe are culturally diverse, economically unequal and subjected to different external political and cultural influences. And yet, their transition was overwhelmingly imagined by transitologists as a shift from one system to another with no connections or realities but an empty chasm in between (Sachs 1991). This attitude has persisted even with the emergence of the new critical theories of transition, such as regulatory, evolutionary, governance and Keynesian (Korhonen 2012).

Normative ideas about the preconditions for democratic transition and consolidation were subsequently ‘transplanted’ into eastern Europe with an extraordinary variety of western advisors and international actors, who came to fill the vacuum left by the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and collapse in international trade in the 1990s. ‘To a far greater extent than

¹⁶ Two good examples of literature questioning the ‘idolisation’ of English political development are Blackbourn, David and Geoff Eley. 1984. *Peculiarities of German History*, New York: Oxford University Press; and Dangerfield, George. 1997. *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

elsewhere, these external actors have imposed political ‘conditionality’ upon the process of consolidation, linking specific rewards explicitly to the meeting of specific norms or even to the selection of specific institutions,’ Schmitter and Karl argued (1994, 178).

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Freedom House have set the quantitative standards for liberalisation, privatisation, and democracy in ‘transitioning’ countries in EBRD’s annual ‘Transition Report’ (since 1994) and Freedom House’s ‘Nations in Transit’ (since 1995). In the latter, Freedom House provides numerical ratings in seven categories, representing ‘the institutional underpinnings of liberal democracy’ (Freedom House n.d., para 2). These include elected state institutions (local and national governments), unelected state institutions (the judiciary and anti-corruption authorities), and unelected non-state institutions (the media and civil society) (ibid). The resulting Democracy Score is a straight average of the analysed indicators (Freedom House n.d., para 2).

What appears problematic is that this methodology is unmistakably skewed towards state institutional performance, with five out of seven indicators relating to the quality of state governance and only one assessing the quality of civic life. Such overemphasis on an institutional arrangement can be explained by the author’s reliance on liberal theories of civil society. The latter posit that a robust civil society is preconditioned on the existence of well-functioning liberal institutions, and therefore cannot be strong where the institutions are weak. In liberal theory, institutional health comes first, so it has more weight in the resulting Democracy Score, underpinning the society’s movement from the ‘consolidated authoritarian regime’ through the ‘transitional regime’ to ‘consolidated democracy’ (Freedom House n.d.).

Since the quality of the civil society defines only one-seventh of the democracy score, the nations with dysfunctional state institutions but vibrant civic lives remain obscured within the ‘transitional/hybrid regime’ category. This methodological approach made Ukraine appear ‘stuck in transition’. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development report (EBRD 2013) used this language to characterise Ukraine in the year, which was yet to be marked by the Maidan Revolution and the subsequent civic movement to facilitate state capacity-building from the bottom-up as analysed in Chapter 4.

The Freedom House’s Democracy Score arguably illustrates how the methodology developed in line with the logic of transitology and liberal theories of civil society permeates a bias towards normative liberal-democratic concepts, which affect how knowledge about Ukrainian democracy and civil society is constructed in the West. Therefore, my next step is

to explore the development of the concept of civil society at the heart of Western political theory to demonstrate how its transplantation to different cultural contexts has limited scholars' ability to predict potent collective action in Ukraine.

Exploring liberal theories of civil society

Within liberal paradigm, the definitions of civil society belong to one of the three conceptualisations, dubbed by civil society theorist Mark Jensen (2006) the 'Lockean concept', the 'Scottish concept' and the 'sphere concept'. Jensen's (2006) analysis posits that none of the three could be reconciled under the fourth hypothetical 'umbrella concept' due to the principally different functions they envisioned for civil society, nor could any of them be put forward as superior. Let us consider them in turns and then discuss why they have only limited utility in the Ukrainian context.

The 'Lockean concept' took its roots from *Second Treatise on Government*, the fundamental work of XVII century English philosopher John Locke. The philosopher argued that civil society represented a people's departure from a 'state of nature'¹⁷ to the establishment of the legitimate coercive power through the social contract. 'Whenever, therefore, any number of men are so united into one society as to quit every one his executive power of the law of nature and to resign it to the public, there and there only is a political or civil society,' John Locke argued (Locke in Jensen 2006, 44).

As Jensen makes clear, the 'Lockean concept' was prominently advocated by British political theorist John Dunn (1996), for whom civil society represented a particular political order, an instrument of effecting the partial escape from a state of nature (1996, 122). For Dunn, the Lockean account was the most useful analytical framework because it did not call for separating the realm of civil society from the domain of governmental power, which had been the task occupying the majority of civil society theorists in the 1990s. By contrast, Dunn argued that the boundaries between state and civil society were inherently blurred, and that causal independence of the civil society from the state was 'an absurd assumption, which has probably never been actualised anywhere the category of the state has been actualised' (Dunn in Jensen 2006, 44).

In the case of Ukraine, however, the history of Ukraine's subjugation to foreign powers prompted most Ukrainian scholars to treat the idea of including the state into the boundaries of civil society cautiously. For example, historian and political scientist Antonina Kolodii

¹⁷ The state of nature is a hypothetical condition of human living before or without political association.

(2000) emphasises the importance of distinguishing between civil society and the state since the former is supposed to be *autonomous* and *counterbalance* the latter. In a similar vein, Mariia Patei-Bratasiuk and Tetiana Dovhun, authors of *Civil Society: Essence, Genesis of Idea, Particularities of Emergence in Contemporary Ukraine* (1999), rely on the definition of contemporary French philosopher Jean-François Revel, who defines civil society as citizens acting by their initiative *independently* from the state (Revel in Patei-Bratasiuk and Dovhun 1999, 3).

As a result, Patei-Bratasiuk and Dovhun focused their scholarly optics on the entirety of formal non-state actors. ‘A civil society is...formed outside political structures but also comprises them,’ Patei-Bratasiuk and Dovhun argue (1999, 16). This definition enabled them to study political parties as a representation of civil society, which was also the predominant approach in western Ukrainian Studies at the time. Similarly, British political expert Taras Kuzio and American area studies scholars Paul D’Anieri and Robert Kravchuk (1999) limited their research on civil society in Ukraine to a detailed overview of Ukrainian political parties, election results and electoral data by regions. Yet weaving political parties into the canvas of civil society is a problematic move, given a perceived divide in Ukraine between political elites and ordinary citizens: only 3 to 4% of Ukrainians trusted political parties in 2001, for example (Yakymenko n.d., 3).

An alternative concept of civil society was forged during the Scottish Enlightenment to describe a space wherein private and individual interests reconcile with public and social goods (Jensen 2006, 42). This argument was coined by Adam Seligman, who relied on the works of Adam Smith and David Hume to characterise civil society as a public ethical space of human solidarity, in which every citizen pursues private interests in harmony with the common good (Jensen 2006, 43). In such a socio-political ideal, the space of civil society is regulated both by laws and moral sentiments, praise and reprobation (Jensen 2006, 44). Notably, in the absence of a sovereign Scottish state since 1707, Scottish thinkers enriched the state-centred Lockean civil society concept with an ‘under-layer’ of sentiments and cultural norms, expanding the civil society template to make room for Scottish distinct national history and identity.

In a similar vein, Ukrainian political scientists Vasyl Kremen and Vasyl Tkachenko (1998) coined their definition with a focus on solidarity and harmonisation of private interests with the common good. ‘Civil society is a mechanism of social partnership which enables the balance of interests in society as well as the actualisation of these interests’ (Kremen and

Tkachenko 1998, 318). In Kremen and Tkachenko's view, civil society is a space for public deliberation, where organisations of citizens, political parties and state institutions negotiate social contracts. 'The market economy, a plurality of groups in the social structure, a variety of independent political forces, independently formed public opinion and, above all, a free individual with a developed sense of civil and individual dignity, represent the foundations and features of civil society,' Kremen and Tkachenko conclude (1998, 318–319).

This concept's strength arguably lies in recognising the crucial role of values such as human solidarity, civil and individual dignity for functioning civil society alongside the institutional prerequisites for civil society's development (market economy, political pluralism, etc). Its principal drawback lies in its limited applicability to societies outside consolidated liberal democracies. This concept's foundational assumption is that citizens require functioning state institutions, with which social contracts can be formed, to actualise their interests; otherwise, the overall balance of interests in a society would be disrupted. If this assumption is true, then civil society is preconditioned on the existence of efficient legal mechanisms and strong legal awareness amongst citizens to enforce and uphold social contracts.

Following this logic, Ukrainian legal scholar Skrypniuk (2006, 279) concluded that 'it is the high mission of the court that provides the foundation for the development of the civil society – the society, in which the members and their associations enjoy a wide range of rights and freedoms, and where all their relations are based on the law.' Another Ukrainian legal scholar Kravchenko argues that 'the legal consciousness is the pivotal feature of citizens' activity in a civil – based on the principles of law – society' (2008, 16). In the case of Ukraine, such conceptualisation proved problematic: it caused the abundance of research on institutional deficiencies of the Ukrainian state and the predominance of everyday corruption as a means to explain the putative 'incivility' of Ukrainian civil society. At the same time, legal scholarship dismissed everyday civic activities in pursuit of collective good as irrelevant to civil society development.

The most recent theoretical approach to defining civic society is represented by studies by Nancy Rosenblum, Robert Post (2002) and Robert Putnam (1993; 1995; 2000). For these scholars, civil society represents an inherently diverse sphere of social life, where individuals come together to pursue their private interests in the public realm (Jensen 2006). It was therefore dubbed a 'sphere concept' by civil society theorist Mark Jensen (2006). Building on the shared consensus of what civil society is *not* – the sphere of the government – the 'sphere

concept' is the most permissive from the practical perspective. Putnam (1993), for instance, fitted the voluntary self-organisation of citizens, such as amateur choirs, into the concept of civil society. Such an approach enabled American political theorist Nancy Rosenblum and legal scholar Robert Post (2002, 3), the editors of the volume *Civil Society and Government*, to formulate an 'umbrella' definition for civil society, bridging the various approaches taken by their volume's contributors:

Civil society is the realm of social life which, when viewed from the perspective of government, is characterised by plural and particularist identities. Government, by contrast, is an inclusive sphere, which, when viewed from the perspective of civil society, is characterised by overarching public norms made and enforced by official institutions. Civil society is a zone of freedom for individuals to associate with others and for groups to shape their norms, articulate their purposes, and determine for themselves the internal structure of group authority and identity.

Prima facie, Rosenblum and Post's concept seems 'unusually inclusive' (2002, 1), to use their term. Their concept encompasses political advocacy groups, religious groups, distinct religious communities and settlements, fluid voluntary associations organised around ideology, professionalism or pursuit of power or money, groups of friends, and even family as a primary mediating and socialising institution (ibid). 'Civil society harbours cultural institutions of all kinds, from the deep, constitutive practices of a cultural group with a common language and history, to the wildly eclectic popular culture of self-help groups in the United States,' Rosenblum and Post argue (ibid, 3).

With such an all-encompassing term came benefits and challenges. Crucially, Rosenblum and Post recognised that the use of the term 'civil society' is inherently theory-bound. Thus, as the editors of the volume on civil society (2002), Rosenblum and Post encouraged their contributors to individually define which groups are singled out as shaping the nature of the civil society in question. Acknowledging the perpetual debate on the boundaries between the state and civil society, they also suggested that the location of such boundary moves with contingencies of history.

Such fluidity of civil society structures arguably represents the principal strength of this theory. It leaves room for cultural particularities, making it relevant for area studies scholarship. Acknowledging that 'the concept of civil society is historically bounded, and it is not an organising concept in every tradition,' Rosenblum and Post encouraged to delve into the 'functional equivalents, if any, to opposition between state and society' wherever the concept of civil society is foreign (2002, 1). Hence, the volume Rosenblum and Post edited included a case study from Israel, where ultra-religious groups participated in the modern

state-building by deploying the conceptual framework based on the biblical and medieval past (ibid, 22). This conceptualisation inspired my function-based definition of civil society, guiding the logic of this study.

At the same time, this recognition of the fluidity of forms in which civil society can manifest itself constitutes a challenge for comparative analysis in political sciences. But how can families, as the primary socialising institution promoting civic values in some cultures, be compared to political associations as the principal driving force of civil society's development in another country? As Jensen observed:

To describe civil society as "associational life between state and market, including unions, churches, PETA, and the Boy Scouts" is inadequate. ...A local Boy Scout troop and a local chapter of PETA are likely to have very different relations with the local government, for example. In the end, because every account of civil society presupposes a complex conceptual framework, theorists who fail to construct such a framework for their account fail to present conceptions that can be of critical value in contemporary political theory' (Jensen 2006, 54).

To provide the common denominator for comparative politics, Rosenblum and Post's (2002) appear to imply that any of civil society's structured or fluid forms should be analysed through its opposing and yet mutually dependent relations with the liberal-democratic government. 'The very origin of civil society is inseparable from the theory and practice of limited government,' Rosenblum and Post posit, 'totalitarianism is its antithesis; so is authoritarian repression of self-organised groups' (2002, 12). For Rosenblum and Post (2002, 8), the government's role was not limited to non-intrusion into the matters of citizens' private interests. The state was seen as the primary enabler and the principal driving force behind civil society's development because of its unique ability to impose and enforce legal structures through which individual citizens form their ideas of personal rights – and universal Right – and can pursue them through free association:

The legal framework is the means by which government performs its civilising role of transforming arrant pluralism into civil society. ...Neither individual rights nor the rights of the collectives are meaningful without the enforcement of law. This implies that limited government must be distinguished from a weak government. ...It is the responsibility of government to provide groups and associations with efficient public good and entitlements to commit them to publicly imposed order and cooperation. At a minimum, these benefits must include civil peace and the distribution of certain rights. At a maximum, they might include public funding for parochial education and cultural reproduction, support for services to group members, and public recognition of group identity. ...Civil society is inconceivable absent a reasonably stable structure of civil law, which is a vehicle for particularism (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 8).

From this perspective, civil society can take any form as long as permissive liberal-democratic legal and political regimes are in place. The logic of this argument implies that, first, the liberal-democratic government creates a space for citizens to internalise political values necessary for democratic self-government, and then citizens form associations to pursue their group interests in a civil manner – hence, the ‘civility’ in the ‘civil society’. Assuming that democratic values are inherently external to an individual, civil society theorists coming from institutionalist school of thought agree that internal lives of citizen groups must be subjected to close regulation to make them conform to universal public values and common principles of justice, established and promoted by the government (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 12). Thus, analysing the civil society ideal of the ‘sphere concept’ to which Rosenblum and Post’s framework was ascribed, Jensen (2006, 47) succinctly summarises: ‘In the sphere concept, civil society plays two roles: it provides a context in which citizens can cooperatively pursue their comprehensive vision of the good life and it teaches citizens how to be good liberal democrats.’

The principal limitation of the ‘sphere concept’ lies precisely in the rejection of the possibility of civil society in an ‘abnormal state’ – the state which either cannot develop and/or enforce law protecting individual and group rights or cannot deliver basic public goods such as civil peace. Hence, the applicability of the ‘unusually inclusive’ and ‘not exhaustive’ concept of civil society (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 1) is narrowed to democratic political regimes. Such benchmarking leaves behind 48.7% of the world’s population, living under hybrid and authoritarian regimes in 2006 (Kekic 2007), around the time Rosenblum and Post’s argument was developed. As the proportion of people living in non-democratic regimes has increased to 51.6% by 2019 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2020, 3), liberal-democratic states ceased to represent the majority on the global scale, curbing the applicability of liberal civil society framework even further.

As Joel Migdal (2009) argues, the Weberian ‘gold standard’ of the state with the notion of state’s dominance and monopoly on power was hardly ‘standard enough’ for the variety of new states created in the wake of collapsing empires. ‘State leaders, in cases such as Lebanon or Sudan, have made little pretence that their states exercise authority from border to border or that they speak for all the people – minimal criteria for “stateness” in the standard template,’ observed Joel Migdal (2009). Yet, all the schools of thought represented in Rosenblum and Post’s volume on civil society (2002) – from classical liberalism, liberal egalitarianism and critical theory to feminism – relied precisely on the ‘golden standard’ rejected by Joel

Migdal's reasoning, building upon the basic notion that the state speaks for the common good, while participants in civil society engage in various particular enterprises (2002, 20). 'In the flush of...utopianism', Rosenblum and Post argue, 'it is sometimes assumed that civil society can substitute the government. But, as we have tried to make clear, civil society and government are complementary constructions. Civil society cannot exist without government, and the democratic governments cannot exist without civil society' (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 23). The case studies from Ukraine presented in Chapter 4, however, will illustrate how robust civil society can flourish and substitute the government in the hybrid political regime.

Rosenblum and Post underline that the suggested framework of civil society is of limited value outside the liberal democracies. 'The conception of civil society that we have ought to develop...is unmistakably a product of Western culture and institutions,' Rosenblum and Post admit, 'it not only presupposes characteristically occidental social and governmental structures but it draws upon a long intellectual history of attempting to comprehend the normative implications of these structures' (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 19). The concept, however, was anticipated to subsequently grow in value with globalisation spreading Western institutions throughout the world. Rosenblum and Post's idea was that in the process of 'democratisation' of non-Western countries, global civil society scholarship would be already well equipped to study how Western institutions would be received locally (2002, 22). For instance, John Kelsay, one of the contributors of Rosenblum and Post's volume, observed how Muslim communities opposed governmental attempts to impose gender equality from above. From the perspective of these communities, such policy was anti-Islam, intervening in the citizens' private affairs and threatening the traditional role of religious leaders in communities. The scholar had therefore predicted that if gender equality were to be achieved, it would come mainly from within religious communities in a bottom-up manner (Rosenblum and Post 2002). 'Globalisation can only magnify the extent and reach of such abnormalities,' reads the editors' comment to John Kelsay's study (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 22).

But given the majority of non-democratic regimes on the global arena, the 'abnormalities' invite a reassessment of the rule. Thirty years into the post-communist democratisation project, the uniformity of Western-type political institutions did not bring about the uniformity of the way in which non-Western societies adopt and adapt to such institutions. The actual practices of the political institutions, modelled on the liberal-democratic regimes, appear marked by a variety of local socio-political, economic and cultural particularities. The same can be expected of the adoption of the liberal concept of

civil society, which needs to undergo the process of ‘localisation’ to account for national particularities.

I argue that societies that have failed to establish liberal-democratic political regimes and the rule of law are likely to have harboured a peculiar functional substitute for the ‘gold standard’ of liberal-democratic civil society and that such functional substitutes should become the focus of national civil society studies. More specifically, civil society’s principal function envisioned by liberal scholarship concerns socialisation into the political values necessary for self-government (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 18).

Let us consider Rosenblum and Post’s argument again:

The governing assumption is that associations inculcate civic virtue and constructive dispositions like sociability and trust. They understand this socialisation to spill over into public life. The phrase “mediating institutions” is meant to capture this idea. The thought is that the sense of cooperation and shared responsibility generated by association produce “social networks” and “virtuous cycles” of trust on an ever-expanding scale. Civil society is said to provide participatory, egalitarian experiences that foster the disposition to care for others. The moral disposition and “social capital” generated within groups are deemed invaluable for the conduct of democracy (2002, 18).

The argument implies that civil society is the first step toward the development of a sense of cooperation, shared responsibility and the disposition to care for others, which indeed had been the case for the Western nation-states of the Age of Enlightenment. Does this necessarily mean, however, that the societies deprived of liberal-democratic state at this crucial historical juncture had never developed these civic virtues? The growing number of grassroots social movements in post-communist countries, from Ukraine’s Maidan Revolution to protests in Belarus since August 2020, demonstrate the ability of people in hybrid regimes (in Freedom House’s conceptualisation) to self-organise *despite* the unfavourable political circumstances and to deploy personal support networks to sustain collective action. Wherever the presence of civic virtues becomes evident, the question should be posed: what were the ‘mediating institutions’ for civic values in society in the absence of liberal-democratic political and legal structures? Can local self-help groups, religious communities and families – which, for Rosenblum and Post, are acceptable forms of civil society in countries governed by a limited democratic government – prove to be such mediating institutions in non-democratic regimes? Which particular social structures are used in the place of democratic institutions to pursue private and public goods in various national contexts? None of the civil society concepts discussed above offers a theoretical framework to address these questions. Their inherent

dependency on the liberal-democratic ideal of the state as a prerequisite for civil society is a persistent flaw.

Seeking the Root-Cause for Putative ‘Incivility’

The previous section has discussed how the concept of civil society was constructed in the West as a product of Western culture and institutions. The following section will demonstrate how the hegemony of Western political sciences in Ukraine fueled arguments about ‘incivility’ of Ukraine’s society and left Ukrainian scholars without the theoretical framework to explain the particularity of Ukraine’s ‘informal’ civil society. The deficiency of such a theoretical framework limited scholars’ ability to assess the quality of Ukrainian civil society and predict civic mobilisation in Ukraine before the onset of the Orange Revolution of 2004–2005 and the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014. The observation that scholarship consistently fails to predict the developments of Ukraine’s ‘unexpected’ (Wilson 2010) nation arguably can be explained by structural flaws in the process of knowledge production itself.

How has a theory of civil society developed in Ukraine? As departments of political science replaced ‘departments of Marxism-Leninism’ in Ukrainian universities, liberal conceptual frameworks of democracy and civil society filled the respective lacuna in Ukrainian social science research. A similar trend persisted across the post-Soviet region, where in the 1990s the proportion of references to European and Northern American scholarship soared. By 2003–2005, European and Northern American scholarship already represented 83.4% of the reference lists in the top-200 most-cited social sciences journals in post-Soviet countries, up from 61.7% in 1993–1995 (Gingras and Mosbah-Nathanson 2010). Such state of regional social sciences partially explains why despite the drastic differences in the lived experiences between liberal-democratic and post-communist societies, the civil society debate in Ukraine in 1991–2014 largely mirrored the one in the western academic literature.

Acknowledging the decisive role of civil society in democratic transformations in post-communist countries, Gellner asked: will civil society emerge on such historically barren ground (1992, 355)? In the early 1990s the prospects of Ukrainian civil society looked promising: the number of registered non-governmental organisations increased over sevenfold from 4,000 in 1995 to 30,000 by 1999. According to the Centre for Innovation and

Development, charitable organisations constituted the largest proportion of the NGO sector. Strikingly, even though the state policy and legislation did not promote charitable expenditures in any way, 72.8%¹⁸ of enterprises donated money to various causes (Kolodii 2000).

Yet, despite the expansion of the NGO network, their membership declined rapidly: only 9% of Ukrainians were members of NGOs in 1999, compared to 12% in 1997 and 17.8% in 1994 (Kolodii 2000).¹⁹ The interest in participation in NGOs plummeted: whilst in 1996, 75% of Ukrainians were proactively willing to join NGOs, 55% of respondents claimed they would refuse to join an NGO three years later (ibid). By 1997, the most popular types of civic organisations were interest-based associations of citizens, relatively distanced from political affairs: sports clubs (3.3% of respondents were their members), trade unions (2.9%), and religious organisations (2.5 %) (D'Anieri, Kravchuk and Kuzio 1999, 147). Kolodii (2000) argued that this non-involvement in politics was a result of a lack of trust in state institutions, courts, and elections, coupled with a perception among citizens of their powerlessness to influence state policies.

The sense of personal disempowerment accorded with an intensifying expectation that the state would take care of political and economic matters on the highest level: 76% of respondents said that Ukraine's development primarily depended on political authorities, their competence, fairness, responsibility and dedication to public interests (Kolodii 2000). At the same time, however, 56% of respondents²⁰ believed that Ukraine's future would depend on the nation's culture and ability to influence the actions of the state.

Such inconclusive sociological data were utilised to illustrate Ukraine's societal infantilism. Kremen and Tkachenko (1998, 324) cited the polling results from 1996, when 48% of Ukrainians wanted the state to define the development of economy, prices and salaries versus 28% who wanted the free market to be the defining force. Relying on this data, they concluded that Ukrainian society had fallen victim to 'consumeristic paternalism', as citizens expected the state to be in charge of the economy and public service provision (Kremen and Tkachenko 1998, 344). Similarly, by the end of the 1990s, there appeared a consensus that this putative passivity impeded the development of a strong civil society (D'Anieri, Kravchuk

¹⁸ According to the 'Business and Charity' section of the 1998 report by West Ukrainian Resource Centre Foundation (cited in Kolodii 2000).

¹⁹ Data from sociological studies 'Politychnyi portret Ukrainy. Ukrainske suspilstvo 1994–97' by Democratic Initiatives foundation and 'Nations in Transit. 1999–2000' by IFES (cited in Kolodii 2000).

²⁰ The respondents of the study could choose more than one answer resulting in the total exceeding 100%.

and Kuzio 1999, Kolodii 2000, Kremen and Tkachenko 1998, Patei-Bratasiuk and Dovhun 1999).

Yet when citizens were asked about informal civic practices in the public opinion-polling, a different picture appeared entirely. Eighty-five per cent of Ukrainians in 1996 said they discussed the future of Ukraine with their acquaintances and colleagues (36% always, 49% sometimes [Kremen and Tkachenko 1998, 324]). This high level of interest in public and state affairs appeared to go against the grain of Kremen and Tkachenko's claim (1998, 314–315) of predominant political apathy in Ukraine. Furthermore, the reluctance among Ukrainian citizens to participate in formal NGOs, seemingly illustrated in Antonina Kolodii's study (2000), did not necessarily imply a lack of associational life in Ukraine. In 2000 a SOCIS-Gallup opinion poll showed that 47% of Ukrainians confessed that they do 'nothing' when someone violates their rights, 17% utilised their 'personal connections' and 15% counted on courts for protection. Although Orysia Lytsevykh (2013, 8) argued that 'individual approaches to getting services from the state deprives these societies of the participatory spirit needed to propose systemic solutions to reform sectors such as healthcare, education and law enforcement,' I would suggest that triggering an 'I-owe-You-one' alliance requires a particular set of social skills necessary to form long-term trust-based reciprocal relationships. Such skills can engender productive horizontal civic participation on a local level, where citizens self-organise to solve the problems in their communities.

However, informal civic practices did not figure on the radar of researchers at the time and remained largely inconspicuous in Ukraine's civil society studies, enabling Ukrainian scholar Mykola Riabchuk to argue that the totalitarian legacy construed an "'uncivil" and easily manipulable society' (2002, para.19). Ukrainian sociologist Victor Stepanenko similarly criticised 'the substantially deformed (during the communist rule of the Soviet period) societal structures of [post-Soviet] societies, the main deficiency of which is weak development of the values and traditions of civiness' (2006, 577). Thus, the focus of Ukrainian civil society studies in the early 2000s moved towards the question of 'incivility'.

Transitology and cultural studies presented two candidates for the root-cause of 'incivility' of Ukraine's society: a lack of liberal-democratic institutions and legislation to perform the 'civilising' function (Gray 1991); and the absence of the overarching national identity gluing together the pluralism of individual interests (D'Anieri, Kravchuk and Kuzio 1999, 141; Riabchuk 1991). Let us consider each of these arguments in turn.

Within the field of transitology, the proponents of transitional constitutionalism argued

that the reemergence of civil society was preconditioned on the establishment of the rule of law.²¹ In Ukraine, the very term ‘civil society’ – ‘hromadianske suspilstvo’ or the ‘citizens’ society’ – seemed to embed concepts of statehood and citizenship within itself, enabling a multidisciplinary cohort of civil society scholars in Ukraine (e.g. Minchenko 2006, Derzhko 1999, Lytvyn 2008 etc) to conceptualise civil society as a society of free citizens in *Rechtsstaat*²² (‘the state of law’) and to focus on studying the prerequisites for the development of such a state. ‘A civil society emerges only when the state, as a form of its organisation, is democratically governed and able to ensure constitutional human rights, and...facilitate the functioning of civic and commercial organisations, acting in the public interest,’ legal scholar R M Minchenko argued (2006, 199). In assuming that the rule of law and democratic governance are the necessary and sufficient preconditions for the existence of civil society, this approach mirrored the transitology paradigm dominating the Western political sciences at the time. As a result, analyses of state institutions and legislation became the principal objects of this strand of civil society studies in Ukraine. But, as I argue above, this institutionalist framework vis-à-vis Ukraine is problematic because the state’s institutions did not emerge from a social contract between political elites and citizens. On the contrary, they were remnants of an authoritarian, and at times totalitarian, state. In Ukraine, political institutions were neither particularly representative of the culture of its society nor did they play an essential socialising function.

Building on transitologists’ thinking, area studies scholar Taras Kuzio (2002) sought to advance transitology by adding a national identity component to its discussion on democratic transition. ‘The unwillingness of transitology to discuss stateness and nationality was – and remains – a fundamental error,’ Kuzio argued (2002, 1). Post-authoritarian transition in Latin America and Southern Europe (the cases which have initially informed the assumptions of transitology) was largely focused only on democratisation and marketisation, Kuzio (2002, 1) noted, while most of the post-Soviet states faced additional challenges of rebuilding state institutions and restoring their purposefully ‘erased’ sense of national identity within the

²¹ For detailed account of the transitional constitutionalism and the rule of law, see Czarnota, A., Krygier, M., and Sadurski, W. 2005. *Rethinking the rule of law after communism*. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press.

²² A *Rechtsstaat* is a constitutional state bound by the rule of law. The concept of a *Rechtsstaat* emerged in Germany based on the philosophy works by Kant, Hegel, Treitschke and Humboldt. A *Rechtsstaat* represents a neo-liberal ideal of the state, which is limited by laws and by fundamental principles of legality, rather than as being a purely political organisation that can dispense law in the interest of polity (Turner 2008). In other words, ‘the state of law’ allows for the full autonomy of individuals in exercising their rights and limits state activity to an absolutely necessity (maintaining mutual security and removing obstacles that may impede citizens in the free exercise of their rights).

Soviet Union (Kuzio 2002, 1–2). In Kuzio's (2002, 2) argument, the post-colonial transition best fits the quadruple nature of transition in the former USSR. This quadruple transition includes democratisation, marketisation, and state institution and civic nation-building (ibid). The latter was popularly deemed particularly troublesome in the case of Ukraine (D'Anieri, Kravchuk and Kuzio 1999, Riabchuk 1991; 2001; 2002).

'Most fundamentally, the absence of a coherent national identity undermines efforts to build a civil society in Ukraine,' claimed D'Anieri, Kravchuk and Kuzio (1999, 264). The authors stressed that Ukraine was not geographically united within one state until World War II,²³ with its diverse historical and political experience producing distinct and hardly reconcilable local identities. According to this logic, these different identities were reflective of social fragmentation, which hobbled the capacity of Ukrainians to produce nationwide public support for any social cause, be that a much-needed social policy, a reformist political party, or an impactful NGO (D'Anieri, Kravchuk and Kuzio 1999). In a similar vein, Ukrainian identity studies scholar Mykola Riabchuk (1991) argued that 'the fundamental precondition of the reemergence of [civil] society was a high level of national consciousness', which was less a superstructure over local identities than a force extent more in the west of the country than in the east or south (1991, 103). Riabchuk had been enthusiastic about the revival of civic life in western Ukraine in the 1980s and acknowledged a proliferation of both official and underground civic associations at the time. He attributed this proliferation to the democratic legacy of the European states that had shaped the civic culture of western Ukrainians through the institutions of medieval European law²⁴ in Lithuanian state, participation in Parliament in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, followed by a year-long period of independence as the Western Ukrainian National Republic. This development continued under the rule of Poland and Czechoslovakia up till 1939, when western Ukraine became a part of the Soviet Union. Defining civil society through the opposition to *étatisme*, characteristic of the Soviet State, Riabchuk (1991) omitted the Soviet period in his analysis of the precursors of the civil society in Ukraine.²⁵ Instead, he turned his attention to the civil

²³ The authors say Ukraine was united in 1939, but actually Zakarpattia was not united with Ukraine until 1945, and Crimea joined in 1954.

²⁴ Yet, a prominent Ukrainian 19th century historian and ethnographer Volodymyr Antonovych disputed the utility of European law on Ukrainian lands: since the European Magdeburg rights law was 'transplanted' to Ukraine by the authorities without involvement of Ukrainian citizenry, Ukrainian townspeople couldn't fully adopt it or benefit from it, leading to the slow degradation of Ukrainian towns (Honiukova et al. 2018, 19–20).

²⁵ Mykola Riabchuk (1991, 97) argued that the Soviet Marxism-Leninism has distorted the Hegelian notion of civil society – *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* – by translating it into Russian as the 'bourgeois society' and tainting it with the popular negative connotation of the word 'bourgeois'. Such linguistic nuance has

society institutions of the pre-Soviet times. Riabchuk noticed that the majority of the newly formed associations, which emerged in the 1980s in then-Soviet western Ukraine, re-created their historical (or at times mythical) predecessors in pre-Soviet Galicia and even used the same names (Riabchuk 1991). ‘Unfortunately, western Ukraine makes up less than one-quarter of the Ukrainian Republic and therefore cannot by itself serve as an indicator of social processes for the entire republic,’ Riabchuk remarked. ‘The level of national consciousness in eastern Ukraine does not compare to that of the western part of the country’ (1991, 104). For eastern Ukrainians, Riabchuk envisioned a path to the reemergence of civil society through reclamation of Ukrainian history and reawakening of national consciousness across all regions of the country (1991, 106–107). This line of reasoning has later given rise to Riabchuk’s controversial ‘two Ukraine’s’ thesis (2001; 2002). Riabchuk portrayed Ukraine as ‘one state – two countries’ (Riabchuk 2002) with two conflicting identities riven between east and the west, unable to develop a uniform national consciousness – and therefore, a robust civil society.

The problem with Riabchuk’s reasoning lies in the assumed normativity of national identity. This logic implies that there could be only one type of ‘good’ identity conducive for the development of civic virtues and that it could only emerge from the historical experience of parliamentarism in Austro-Hungarian monarchy. If these premises were true, eastern Ukrainians would demonstrate substantial differences in civic engagement. However, statistical evidence from the Monitoring Survey conducted by the National Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2003 and 2015 defies the ‘two Ukraines’ argument. Victor Stepanenko’s analysis of the statistical data from the 2003 Monitoring Survey revealed no considerable regional differences in civic participation in Ukraine (Stepanenko 2006, 587). The survey data from 2015 provided further evidence that ethnocultural affiliation (identifying as Ukrainian or a representative of a national minority) was not a significant predictor of a person’s participation in a voluntary association of citizens, challenging the preconception of the importance of the overarching national identity (Reznik 2015, 179).

effectively destroyed the Hegelian ideal of an equilibrium between the state, the social and the personal, paving away for ‘open étatism’ in the communist societies (Riabchuk 1991, 97). Thus, Riabchuk utilises the concept of civil society defined as an ‘antipode to étatism’. Riabchuk (1991, 99–100) cautions, however, that defining civil society as ‘everything that is not étatic society’ is an unavoidable and allowable simplification at the beginning of the path towards democracy, but will likely prove insufficient in the future (Riabchuk 1991, 100). After all, the rejection of étatism does not automatically lead to the emergence of civil society (ibid).

Liberal perspectives on the history of civil society in Ukraine

The previous sections demonstrated how transitological thought influenced civil society research in Ukraine. Legal studies and identity studies in the 1990s–early 2000s were primarily occupied with explaining the causes for the alleged weakness of the newly ‘emerging’ civil society in ‘transitioning’ Ukraine. The qualitative assessment of the state of Ukrainian civil society, defined by normative concepts and metrics developed in the West, stayed unchallenged in the 1990s–early 2000s. Although area studies scholars (Kuzio 2002; Riabchuk 1991, 2002) argued for the importance of understanding particularities of national history and identity to explain the present state of civil society in Ukraine, they seemed to fit selected Ukrainian historical experiences into the narrow conceptual framework of civil society, which was itself a product of Western history and institutions. As a result, Ukraine lacked an indigenous concept of civil society, which would reflect Ukraine’s unique history and culture.

With the dominance of liberal paradigms in post-Soviet social and political sciences, the attempts at rediscovering the history of Ukrainian civil society faced a teleological challenge: the past experiences tended to be explained from the present context of liberal conceptions of civil society (see, for example, Derzhko 1999; Lytvyn 2008). In such fashion, Ukrainian historian Ihor Derzhko equated the ‘indigenous’ Ukrainian concept of civil society with Athenian democracy, where all free citizens enjoyed a right to vote and were equal before the law (1999, 3). Derzhko traced the beginnings of Ukraine’s civil society ideal back to the first state formation on the territory of modern Ukraine – Kyivan Rus. He emphasised the importance of citizens’ gatherings – called *viche*²⁶ – in limiting the power of local princes and creating the foundations of the democratic culture. Derzhko’s investigation of the ‘formation of the idea of civil society in Ukraine’ (1999) concluded with a concept advocated by eighteenth-century thinker Manuïl Kozachynskyi, who considered civil society’s defining trait as the recognition of an individual’s right to life and satisfaction of natural needs.²⁷ Derzhko (1999) argued that Kozachynskyi’s ideal could only be achievable through the establishment of the rule of law, hence tying the idea of civil society to the democratic state.

²⁶ Known as *veche* in Russian-language sources.

²⁷ The societal ideal, built upon the notion of satisfaction of human needs in a society bound by mutually-beneficial social contract, was a prevalent topic in English and continental political philosophy in the eighteenth century. See, for example, *A Vindication of Natural Society* by Edmund Burke (1756), *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* by Jeremy Bentham (1789) and *The Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762).

In a similar vein, historian of ideas Olena Lytvyn (2008) looked for the roots of Ukrainian concept of civil society in the nineteenth-century politico-philosophical tractates of Mykhailo Drahomanov. In Lytvyn's account, Drahomanov envisioned civil society as an ideal society based on the political freedom of all taxpayers to elect representatives of executive and legislative power and have access to justice. Lytvyn underlines that Drahomanov advocated for developing a system of regional and local governments, which would create opportunities for the emergence of public organisations and their participation in political life (Lytvyn 2008, 38).

Lytvyn's framing of Drahomanov's works mirrors the liberal doctrine of civil society. It construes civil society as a society with developed state structures, political institutions and the rule of law – the three key enablers of civil society. The description of such enabling political structures indeed features in Drahomanov's work 'Free Union – An Experience of Ukrainian Political and Social Programme' ['Вольный Союзъ – Вільна Спілка. Опыт української політико-соціальної програми'] (1884).²⁸ 'On the lands inhabited by Ukrainian tribes, a union named *Vilna Spilka – Volnyi Soyuz* should be established to work on political, economic and cultural emancipation and development of the Ukrainian people and those colonies of foreigners living amongst them,' Drahomanov posits (1884, 7). Drahomanov classifies *Vilna Spilka* as a political union (1884, 32) and assigns it a threefold task: the struggle for 'personal and a citizen rights as a necessary precondition of the personal dignity and development; a system of self-governance as a foundation for the movement towards social justice; political freedoms as a means for returning the Ukrainian nation into the family of cultured nations' (Drahomanov 1884, 19). The self-government bodies will emerge in the cities and in villages, named *dumy* (from 'dumaty' – to think) and *skhody* (literally, meetings) respectively. The *skhody* will be led by *starshyna* (the elders) – the term, which Drahomanov borrows from the Cossack self-governance. To reform the political system of the Russian Empire in this fashion, local branches of *Vilna Spilka* must emerge throughout the Ukrainian lands, gathering educated people from all social classes. 'An exclusive involvement of educated people who live in Ukraine into activities for the benefit of [Ukrainian] people would not pass without consequences for the whole Russia, since the character, abilities and traditions of the Ukrainian people allow to hope that emancipatory ideas will get hold among them quickly,' Drahomanov underlines (ibid, 31).

²⁸ All Ukrainian and Russian language sources in this thesis were translated by the author unless stated otherwise.

Drahomanov's prediction that the struggle for the transformation of political institutions in the Russian Empire will draw its vitality from the ideals inherent in Ukrainian character and values is a crucial detail omitted in the analysis of Drahomanov's works by Lytvyn. The framing, which Lytvyn applies to Drahomanov's scholarship, unjustly overemphasises Drahomanov's focus on the institutional build-up and belies Drahomanov's notion of a national character and traditions driving local communities.²⁹

The fundamental problem with a retrospective analysis of political texts suggested by Derzhko and Lytvyn is that these contemporary scholars approached historical sources from a theoretical perspective that arose after the Kozachynskyi or Drahomanov's writings, none of which contained the term 'civil society'. As we will see in Chapter 2, when the concept of civil society emerged in western Europe on the coattails of growing gentrification of the cities and increasing political power of the middle class, the lives of those on the territory of today's Ukraine were markedly different. In 1801 the level of urbanisation of Ukrainian provinces in the Russian Empire, home to thinkers and activists like Kozachynskyi and Drahomanov, stood at 9.8% (Hladun, Kulyk and Rudnytskyi 2018, para. 141), whilst the majority of the population remained illiterate peasants. Thus, the national myths and the way they mark, preserve and reinforce social norms of dealing with ingroups and outgroups can provide nuanced insight into the local civic culture. My second chapter will discuss one such critical myth – the Cossack myth – in more detail.

In fact, the Cossack myth plays a central role in a fundamental work by Drahomanov omitted in Lytvyn's account, 'A Foreword to the Community' [*Perednie slovo do hromady*] of 1878. Here Drahomanov draws from the Cossack legacy to argue that a free Ukraine should be a 'union of communities'. Just as every Cossack voluntarily decided to join a certain community or *kurin* and could leave it at any time, so too could the people of Ukraine achieve true freedom, that is, by self-organising freely into various communities to collaborate with other people, pursuing similar goals, and providing them 'help for help' ['pomich za pomich'] (Drahomanov 1878, para. 54). Drahomanov treated states and notions of hierarchy and power

²⁹ Mykhailo Drahomanov is Ukrainian historian, ethnographer, political philosopher and one of the founding fathers of Ukrainian socialism. Drahomanov's political writings reveal influences of the French School, in particular, Jean-Jacque Rousseau. Rousseau argued in his *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (1755) that civil society corrupts an inherently good 'natural man' (*un homme sauvage*), binding him through the laws, adopted by the elites to protect the property of the rich. In the light of the intellectual influence of the French School, Drahomanov's guiding concept of *hromada* – community – gains critical significance for the history of Ukrainian civil society ideal as I will discuss. For a more detailed account of Mykhailo Drahomanov's political writing, see Ivan Lysiak Rudnytsky (1952) 'Drahomanov as a Political Theorist.'

cautiously, claiming that even in the free European states such as England, France or the United States many people are unfree (ibid, para. 49). Drahomanov framed his goal in this way:

Getting to the point where people's unions, large and small, would consist of free people who get together at will for communal work and help – this is the goal to which people aspire and which is in no way similar to present states, ours or foreign, elected or unelected. This goal is called *commandlessness* [*beznachalstvo*]: free will for all, free association, and free society of people and associations (Drahomanov 1878, para. 57).

Thus, one of the founding fathers of Ukrainian democratic liberalism and socialism, Drahomanov, did not merely 'subscribe' to the English or continental liberal thought but 'localised' it to incorporate a distinctive national component with suspicion of the vertical power structures. His writings provide a glimpse into Ukraine's peculiar civic culture, which bears a dual legacy of undemocratic state control and statelessness and therefore formulates its societal ideal through a negation of oppression and hierarchy, on the one hand, and the pursuit of a society of free individuals and communities based on mutual help, on the other.

This nuance allowed a possibility for Ukrainians to cut through the Gordian knot created by the classic top-down approach to the development of civil society. As Alexander Motyl (1998, 11) argued: 'Unfortunately, if civil society is... premised on the rule of law, then civil society must also be premised on the state, which is a logical precondition of the rule of law. If so, then championing civil society, though intrinsically useful and normatively good, leads to a vicious circle as far the parasitic state is concerned'.

In this respect, the Ukrainian case presents a fruitful testing ground for the liberal civil society theories, precisely because Ukraine's civil society has demonstrated its potency in spite of the deficiency of a consolidated liberal-democratic regime. In 2002, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2002, 52) acknowledged that the Ukrainian political regime under Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma in 1991–2004 was characterised by the abusive use of formal democratic institutions as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. If civil society vitally depended on the democratic state, then Ukrainian civil society should have been non-existent. Yet in 2004, it revealed a hidden potency with successful protests that forced Ukraine's Supreme Court to annul the result of the presidential elections due to electoral fraud. So how was this strong manifestation of civil society reconciled in civil society scholarship at the time? The short answer: it was not.

The U-Turn at Orange Light

The Orange Revolution represents a tipping point for civil society studies in Ukraine. The protest started on Kyiv's Independence Square, Maidan Nezalezhnosti, in November 2004, after revelations of massive criminal voter fraud, which led to the declaration of Viktor Yanukovych – Leonid Kuchma's political 'progeny' – as the third president of Ukraine (Karatnycky 2005). 'The 2004 Orange Revolution overturned not only the established political regime in Kyiv but also the study of post-Soviet politics... The sight of hundreds of thousands of protesters [...] instantly demolished the notion that Ukraine had a weak civil society,' Paul D'Anieri argued (2010, 1). The Orange Revolution raised the profile of Ukrainian civil society noticeable to new heights – and presented something of a riddle for liberal theories of civil society along the way.

Indeed, before the Orange Revolution, the conventional wisdom was that Ukrainians would remain powerless to solve their grievances if the state did not create a fruitful soil for the emergence of civil society. Moreover, it was thought that state authorities, as rational actors, would not be interested in strengthening civil society, which demand their accountability and endanger them with potential exposure and prosecution for corruption (D'Anieri, Kravchuk, Kuzio 1999, 146). Samuel Huntington had long warned (1963) that the development of robust civil society in a new and a weak state would not necessarily be beneficial for citizens. He cautioned that state institutions might fail to satisfy the demands of civil society effectively, causing the state to collapse under the weight of social pressure. Yet the Ukrainian state in the early 2000s was not inclined to citizen empowerment, and citizens in turn seemed reluctant to engage with national authorities and institutions. According to a survey by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences, public trust in Ukraine's state institutions before the Orange Revolution was lower than trust in astrologers (Kuzio 2006, 55). Before 2004 'both within and outside Ukraine, a generally uncontested conclusion was that the Ukrainian nation had a weak civil society, which was unable and perhaps unwilling to exert control over the government,' Paul D'Anieri observed (2010, 1).

When the Orange Revolution revealed that Ukraine's civil society had indeed emerged in spite of the semi-authoritarian political regime, it appeared that civil society and liberal democracy need not – and often do not – go together after all, as John Gray argued (1991, 146). After 2004, a new trend among political and Ukrainian studies scholars was to seek an explanation as to why and how Ukrainians mobilised when national opinion polling

systematically showed a low level of civic engagement and little public readiness for protests. Only five years before, in 1999, Paul D'Anieri, Robert Kravchuk, and Taras Kuzio claimed that a striking 50% of Ukrainians did not care about politics at all, with political apathy prevailing among young people (D'Anieri, Kravchuk, Kuzio 1999, 151). Two years before the Orange Revolution, public-opinion polling revealed very similar attitudes among youth in Ukraine and Russia, with little indication that young Ukrainians would soon become an avant-garde of the Orange Revolution (Diuk 2006, 67). Whence the roots of this robust civic activity?

Political Actors under the Guise of Civil Society

With an unanticipated potent civic movement to reclaim citizens' right to free elections in Ukraine in 2004, Ukraine appeared to enter the hypothesised second stage of democratic transition as per the classic transitology theory: a breakthrough – the most crucial stage when founding elections are held, and new democratic government comes to power (Jankauskas and Gudžinskas 2008, 185). Since the previous research did not demonstrate a presence of a robust civil society to achieve this breakthrough, the preconditions which enabled the Orange Revolutions required explanations.

Methodologically, transitology was well-equipped to explain this phenomenon: ever since publication of Dunkwart Rustow's (1970) article 'Transitions to democracy: toward a dynamic model', the key feature of classical transitology was an emphasis on the decisions by the political elite as the single crucial factor for democratic transition. This actor-oriented approach became dominant in mid-1980's with the seminal work by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986); it stressed that the collective choices of elites, if taken under the right circumstances, can cancel out the negative effects of structural deficiencies such as a low level of development and education, unfavourable colonial legacies or ethnolinguistic fractionalisation (Jankauskas and Gudžinskas 2008, 185). This assumption of classic transitology made a democratic transition hypothetically possible anywhere, provided the correct decisions are made at the critical moment by relevant actors (ibid).

In line with this thinking, between 2004–2013 scholars tended to portray political parties and political elites as the principal decision-makers that 'orchestrated' the Orange Revolution. Anders Aslund (2006), Adrian Karatnycky (2006), Tammy Lynch (2010), Ioulia Shukan (2010) and Serhiy Kudelia (2010) focused their research on the political strategies of the 'pro-Orange' opposition, which set the stage for a future mass protest by developing

repertoires of collective action; organising the election campaign and political rallies; and achieving a pact with their political rivals. Karatnycky (2006) argued that the three-months-long street protests under the slogan 'Ukraine without Kuchma' in 2000, which were sparked by allegations of President Kuchma's involvement in the murder of Ukrainian journalist Heorhii Gongadze, did not lead to a change of regime because the only viable oppositional reform leader (and then Prime Minister) Viktor Yushchenko did not join the protests. According to Karatnycky (2006), the situation in 2004 was dramatically different because Yushchenko's party had already won the parliamentary elections of 2002 and formed an effective democratic political opposition to the Kuchma regime. This development set the stage for Yushchenko's success in the presidential elections of 2004 (Karatnycky 2006). For Karatnycky, it was the ability of a particular political party to mobilise citizens for a protest against a semi-democratic regime which was indicative of the high capacity of Ukraine's civil society.

Karatnycky's view is not without problems. In rational choice political theory, political parties are supposed to represent certain social groups, so the more political parties get elected to the parliament, the more social groups get their interests represented on the national level. Accordingly, social groups are supposed to take an interest in political parties, actively agitate for them during elections, aspire to become their members and support them financially. By learning to self-identify with a particular political force, a citizen is expected to undergo the process of 'political socialisation' (Vorona 2008, 53). This is why, from the perspective of classic Northern American republican school of thought, political parties are supposed to be not only the principal enablers of formation and an expression of a political will of the citizens, but also instrumental in spreading a general habit and taste for association, as Alexis de Tocqueville argued in his classic *Democracy in America* (1840).

According to this republican school of thought, political parties represent the interests of particular social groups and provide an ideological framework by couching these interests in the party's political programme. Yet the analysis of political programmes of the parties elected to the Ukrainian Parliament in 2006 by Petro Vorona (2008) concluded that 75% of the key messages across the party programmes could be supported by *every* party. In the public consciousness, political parties in Ukraine were distinguished not by political programmes but by the personalities of their leaders (Vorona 2008, 55). Vorona observed how parties used polls to learn about citizens' expectations before the elections, formulated political programmes accordingly, got elected to the parliament, and then lost any interest in

implementing the party's programme (Vorona 2008, 56). In the case of Ukraine, the number of votes political parties receive is therefore not necessarily indicative of the public support for specific political and social values that such parties claim to represent. Instead, political parties in Ukraine have often represented the interests of economic and political elites known as 'oligarchs'. As Paul D'Anieri argued in 1999, Ukrainian citizens did not feel that they could pursue their grievances effectively through the political system. If getting results through the political system is one of the hallmarks of civil society, he quipped, then civil society is largely absent in Ukraine (D'Anieri, Kravchuk, Kuzio 1999, 146). Parties largely failed to establish themselves in rural areas or small towns, D'Anieri explained; they were relatively weak and had limited appeal to the public (D'Anieri, Kravchuk, Kuzio 1999, 150).

The overwhelming emphasis on political structures in scholarship on Ukraine's civil society has been obfuscatory. Up until 2014 Ukrainian political parties had a weak symbiotic relationship with the electorate and used to depend on the state to secure electoral success. Since a principal autonomy from the state is the most decisive characteristic of civil society, North American republican theories privileging political parties as a precursor of a 'proper' civic culture should be applied to the Ukrainian case with caution. Indeed, as John Gray argued in 1991, 'in most of the emerging post-communist countries, it is inherently unlikely that the reconstruction of civil society can be conducted under the auspices of a democratic regime on the Western model' (1991, 149).

From 2008 until 2013, after Viktor Yushchenko failed to deliver reforms during his tenure as president, scholarship returned once again to the 'weak civil society' narrative. 'By 2010, the gains of 2004–2005 seemed illusory,' Paul D'Anieri argued, claiming that 'citizen mobilisation became something of a mockery' (2010, 1–2). The success of the Orange Revolution looked like an anomalous outlier in the otherwise complete picture of 'social apathy', lack of 'legal and political consciousness' and large-scale perception of powerlessness among the population. As a way of cutting this Gordian Knot, Jessica Allina-Pisano argued that 'the Orange demonstrations' should not have been taken as an indication of a hidden robust civil society in Ukraine in the first place. 'State actors played a leading role in determining the content and form of civic participation,' Allina-Pisano (2010) concluded.

Opponents of the actor-centred approach disagreed, mirroring the 'structure and actor' debate in transitology literature. In the alternative line of explanation, the critical precondition for the success of the Orange Revolution lied in a particular structural relationship between the state and civil society, represented in an extensive network of NGOs (Diuk 2006).

NGO networks behind the Orange Revolution

A number of scholars turned to focus their attention on the role of NGOs in enabling and facilitating the Orange Revolution. Most notably, Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbig (2006), Olena Prytula (2006) and Nadia Diuk (2006) sought the roots for the Orange protest movement in the practices of Ukrainian non-governmental organisations, citizen associations, youth groups, think-tanks and media. Demes and Forbig (2006) analysed the activities of the youth organisation *Pora*, which formulated a successful campaign strategy and mobilised and trained thousands of activists. The role of then-emerging new media for public mobilisation during the Orange Revolution was acknowledged by Prytula (2006), the editor of Ukraine's first independent online media outlet *Ukraiinska Pravda*.

The most detailed account of Ukrainian civic groups, whose activities provided fruitful soil for the Orange Revolution, was given by Diuk (2006) in a study enthusiastically titled 'The Triumph of Civil Society.' In line with structuralism theory³⁰, which opposes an actor-centred approach discussed in the previous section, Diuk started by stating that the term civil society should not be used reductively to describe various types of non-governmental groups but to describe the mechanism comprising civic groups, non-governmental organisations, associations, trade unions, political parties, movements, and other freely associating collectives of citizens, a mechanism that allows for an interaction between the citizen and the state (Diuk 2006, 70). She held that the Orange Revolution in Ukraine erupted when various types of non-governmental groups could no longer contain and express the aspirations of the citizens, requiring a civil society in a much broader understanding to step in. Her analysis was, however, focused precisely on the activities of various civic groups and their relations with political opposition – but not on the citizens themselves. Diuk argued that in Ukraine, 'civil society organisations and well-informed coalitions and activist networks had been working for years towards the democratisation of society' (2006, 70) and that, as a result, 'of all the post-Soviet states Ukraine's emerging civil society was the most developed and sophisticated' (2006, 75). Thus, in Diuk's reasoning, by the time of the Orange Revolution, networks of NGOs had created a vital precondition for the democratization of Ukrainian society. The large-scale participation of citizens, who were not affiliated with the NGOs, was seen as a natural response to the calls to action disseminated by civic networks, independent

³⁰ Structuralism is political theory that posits that underlying societal structures affect developmental politics. In structuralist thought, the institutions are the cause behind political decisions.

media and think tanks. As long as enabling social structures were in place, the action was thought to follow automatically. Ideational motivations of citizens and the mechanisms of their grassroots self-organisation were not given sufficient consideration.

To trace the enablers of the Orange Revolution, Diuk suggested focusing on think-tanks (or analytical centres), monitoring groups, and youth groups (such as *Ukrainian National Assembly*, *Young Communists*, *Young Rukh*, *Pora*, *Chysta Ukrainina*, *Znayu* etc). Before 2004 such think-tanks regularly provided analytical data critical of the government. Media monitoring groups analysed how pro-government forces dominated the media and manipulated audiences. Election monitoring groups, like the *Democratic Initiatives Foundation*, conducted exit polls about how people voted and announced results immediately at the close of the polls, creating an obstacle for authorities attempting to falsify results. Before the parliamentary elections of 2002, these civic groups started to form coalitions such as the *Freedom of Choice* coalition. Coincidentally or not, the elections of 2002 became the first in the history of independent Ukraine to see the Communist Party lose its dominance in the parliament, allowing for an oppositional coalition to start to form (Kuzio 2006, 45).

Continuing her line of thought within the structuralist framework, Diuk (2006) argued that by 2004 a relationship between the state and a sophisticated network of civic groups in Ukraine became increasingly strained. The government exercised pressure through the frequent deployment of the tax police, leading to radicalisation of some civic groups and motivating them to develop relationships with the political opposition (ibid). This collaboration between civic groups and political opposition was argued to have caused the Orange Revolution. The youth organisation *Pora*, which trained thousands of volunteers for Viktor Yushchenko's election campaigns rallies, is one prominent example, discussed by Diuk (2006). As soon as the fraudulent election results were announced, *Pora* set up 25 tents symbolising the 25 regions of Ukraine on Maidan Nezalezhnosti in the centre of Kyiv. By doing so, *Pora* started a protest that would be joined by hundreds of thousands of people (Diuk 2006, 80). 'This type of protest created a qualitatively new kind of civil society, one that transcends the need for a connection with the state or government because it has its own form of self-organisation,' Diuk concluded (2006, 80). Such self-organisation appeared largely reliant on the energy of the young activists from this NGO network, deploying crowdsourcing and crowdfunding techniques offline and online. In particular, youth civic groups trained and coordinated activists who went door to door asking Ukrainians for food and accommodation for the revolution's participants from regions outside of Kyiv. Using

mobile phones and computers, young activists created a database of available housing and helped the Orange Revolution participants to find free shelter and food (Diuk 2006, 81). In this example, the ability to use new technologies effectively gained critical significance for the youth groups on Maidan.

All things considered, the Orange Revolution shattered the established opinion about the decisive role of the state in promoting civil society. In the scholarship of 2004–2010, this role was instead entrusted to political elites (in classic transitology) or to the collaboration between the political elites and NGOs (in structuralism theory), who mobilised the larger public. So, with its free democratic election, political pluralism and sophisticated network of NGOs, have Ukraine managed to fulfil the necessary prerequisites for a strong civil society and democracy? Half a decade later, the optimism seemed to fade away.

Potemkin Villages of NGOs: Promoting Civic (Dis-)Engagement

From 2010 a growing body of empirical case studies from Ukraine has consistently pointed out that Ukrainian NGOs often represented ‘fake’ civil society institutions. When 19,174 registered NGOs (a third of the total number of registered NGOs in Ukraine) sent reports about the numbers of their members to the State Statistic Service in 2009, the total number of members came at 20,106,000 or 53% of Ukraine’s population over 18 years old at the time (Ukrstat n.d.).³¹ At the same time, data from opinion-polling conducted by Gallup research centre showed that only 3% of respondents said they belonged to an NGO (Shaihorodskiy 2014, 25). Such a low self-reported level of public participation did not surprise Ukrainian scholar Yuriy Shaihorodskiy (2014). He argued that Ukrainian society did not require civil society institutions as an aim in itself if those institutions were useless for fulfilling public needs. According to Shaihorodskiy, political elites were interested in limiting the concept of civil society to formal institutions in order to manage them more easily or at least force them to adopt the rules of the game of the political regime. He argued that the most important trend of Ukraine’s formal civic sector development in 2010–2014 was the growing ‘subdual’ of NGOs before the state (Shaihorodskiy 2014, 26). Shaihorodskiy also noticed that many political movements and parties established NGOs or funded already working NGOs

³¹ Calculated as a proportion of 37,777,082 Ukraine’s resident over 18 years old in 2009 according to the data of Ukraine’s national census.

in order to drive their political agenda through the means of the allegedly ‘independent’ civic sector (ibid).

Lutsevych similarly acknowledged this trend, arguing that many regional party leaders used to ‘own’ sports associations, which allowed both clients and patrons to gain an advantage from each other. The state used taxpayer money to finance specific sports federations in exchange for loyalty to the ruling Party of Regions (Lutsevych 2013, 12). At the time, the government provided substantial financing to civil society organisations: in 2011, the national budget allocated 31 million USD for various associations – four times more than the Soros Foundation’s budget for Ukraine. The availability of a rather substantial state funding of 0.5%–1% of the total yearly state budget, however, became a way for the state to ‘co-opt’ civic groups. Notably, no state funding was available for human rights, environmental or advocacy NGOs (Lutsevych 2013, 12). The procedures for funding allocation lacked transparency; furthermore, in 2013 only two out of 78 central executive agencies had a competitive procedure for the allocation of funding (Lutsevych 2013, 12). In the best-case scenario, the funding was granted based on the decision of the ‘contest committee’, which was appointed by state authorities (Shaihorodskyi 2014, 26). For instance, on April 25, 2013, the Ministry of Youth and Sports allocated 5,480,000 UAH to 70 various NGOs, with over half of the funding allocated to the ‘youth’ branches of the political parties supporting the political regime at the time. ‘Young Regions’ – a branch of Yanukovich’s ‘Party of Regions’ – got 10% of all available funding. The other particularly successful applicants included Lenin’s Communist Youth Union of Ukraine, the Socialist Congress of Youth, Lenin’s Ukrainian Pioneer’s Organisation, the Ukrainian People’s Youth, and the Union of Pioneer Organisations of Kyiv (Shaihorodskyi 2014, 26).

As a result, in 2008–2013, an average of 48.6% of Ukrainians had little or no trust in non-governmental organisations (Shaihorodskyi 2014, 25). The situation deteriorated because of unfavourable political circumstances, which did not allow NGOs to solve citizens’ problems or protect them from an abusive state. According to Lutsevych (2013), both large private foundations and local businesses were reluctant to expose themselves as supporters of civic initiatives that may alienate the state. They steered clear of fighting such issues as corruption, human rights violations or media censorship. Two of the largest private foundations in Ukraine, the Development of Ukraine and the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, focused on ‘softer issues’ such as healthcare, education and culture (Lutsevych 2013, 12). Jessica Allina-Pisano (2010) attributes the tendency of NGOs to focus on the politically safe

issues to the fact that, in political circumstances where the state allocates funding in return for loyalty, NGOs were aware that they might require state funding in the future. Therefore, NGOs were motivated to provisionally shape their work so as not to challenge the state. ‘Thus, even organisations that rely primarily on private or foreign support must make their choices, keeping in mind a possible future relationship with the state,’ Allina-Pisano concluded (2010, 243).

Substantial funding, which had been poured into Ukraine’s NGO network relying on assumptions of liberal institutionalism³², seemed to bring about unfortunate unintended consequences in Ukraine’s case. For years, foreign donors spent millions of dollars, hoping to strengthen the capacity of Ukraine’s civil society: in 2010 alone, USAID spent 31 million USD in Ukraine; the European Union allocated approximately 3 million EUR; and the Open Society Foundation (OSF), funded by George Soros, spent 7.5 million USD for the development of Ukraine’s civil society (Lutsevych 2013, 15–16). Yet these substantial investments arguably contributed to a distortion of civil society (Lutsevych 2013, 16) and a flourishing of a so-called ‘NGO-crazy’, in which professional leaders use the access to domestic policy-makers and western donors to influence public policies, all the while remaining disconnected from the public (Lutsevych 2013, 1). In pre-2013 Ukraine, Western-funded NGOs preferred to develop recommendations and guidelines and discuss them during the roundtables with political elites instead of engaging with citizens (Lutsevych 2013, 16). Donors avoided working with newly emerging informal civic groups; instead, they tended to allocate funding to the NGOs with which they already worked. In 2010 the OSF-Ukraine awarded 35% of its civil society funding to 22 Ukrainian NGOs, which received grants two or three times during that financial year (Lutsevych 2013, 16). Thus, Lutsevych concluded that major western donors treated Ukrainian citizens as mere recipients of aid and NGO expertise, while their participation in policy-making and NGO development was seen as a separate issue (Lutsevych 2013, 16).

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, scholars who sustained interest in activities of Ukrainian non-governmental organisations – such as Jessica Allina-Pisano (2010), Adriana Helbig (2010) and Orysia Lutsevych (2013) – all acknowledged that

³² Liberal institutionalism is a cluster of theories derived from the belief that international relations should be moving towards harmonious cooperation between political communities around the globe. Liberal internationalists suggest a variety of agents of and strategies for reform: from the transformation of international morality to the construction of international institutions. Most current internationalists, however, tend to focus principally on the role of institutions and champion the supranational political structures (such as the EU). For the detailed account, see Bell, D. 2014. ‘What Is Liberalism?’ In *Political theory*, 42(6): 682–715.

Ukrainian NGOs did not enjoy trust and approval in wider society. More often than not, they were seen as mere ‘facades’ of civil society institutions, working towards their sponsors’ agenda rather than towards the interests of Ukrainian society. The aspiration of Western donors to bring the liberal-democratic ideal of civil society to Ukraine on the wings of international organisations has thus proven largely ineffective. Past legacies and a semi-democratic political regime have led to a situation in which citizens tended to engage in grassroots civic practices rather than in the activities of formal NGOs. Yet, scholarship has not given a detailed account of informal local civic practices. After all, as Orysia Lutsevych said, ‘active and empowered citizens, not the expertise and capacity of a few NGOs, are the indicator of civil society’s strength’ (Lutsevych 2013, 17).

The ‘Unknowns’ of Ukraine’s Civil Society Studies

Throughout this chapter, I demonstrated how normative universalistic assumptions of transitology and liberal theories of civil society shaped the research on Ukrainian civil society until 2013. The assumed universality of the path to democracy with an overemphasis on the role of political actors and state institutions was reflected in the choice of research subjects. The process of knowledge production itself arguably explains the lack of data on informal civic practices on the grassroots level until 2013. The studies, which focused on the quality of state institutions, strategies deployed by political elites and national history of formal institutions of civil society (political parties, formal religious and cultural organisations etc.) and their impact on the formation of national identity greatly outnumbered the fieldwork-based studies of actual civic practices of Ukrainian people in local communities. The cases of informal self-organisation were recorded during the Orange Revolution but were explained through actor-centred or structuralist theories without advancing the knowledge about Ukraine’s particular informal social capital, enabling collective self-organisation for the public good. The roots of this informal social capital arguably constitute ‘a known unknown’ of Ukrainian civil society research – the gap this thesis seeks to fill.

A review of the literature published in 1991–2014 on the phenomenon of Ukraine’s civil society reveals three principal lacunae. The first is the lack of research on *non-formalised forms of civic activism*; the second is a shortage of studies on *local activism*; the third is a deficiency of studies on how *digital media* is used for grassroots activism in Ukraine. A lack of knowledge in these areas has arguably led to unsubstantiated over-generalisations by which

particular civil society manifestations, which were *not observed*, were said to be *non-existent*. Focus on formal involvement in civil society organisations (NGOs) and participation in political decision-making led some researchers (Howard 2003; Wallace, Pichler and Haerpfer 2012; Way 2014) to characterise Ukraine's civil society as 'weak'. Marc Howard (2003) was one of the first theorists to draw the causal link between the Soviet legacy of mistrust in communist state-controlled organisations and what was seen as the 'weakness' of post-communist civil societies. By contrast, I posit that Ukrainian civil society has been robust for years, but that it largely kept clear from the institutional domain. Ukrainian civic forces did not manifest themselves in the forms privileged by liberal-democratic, republican or liberal institutionalist theories, often eluding western scholars and their Ukrainian counterparts who relied on these theories.

Only since 2017 have scholars begun to include voluntary groups in the notion of civil society. In the Chatham House report from December 2017, Orysia Lutsevych (2017, 61) acknowledged that Ukrainian civil society largely consists of two groups: voluntary self-organised groups and well-established, professional, non-profit NGOs. Yet before 2013, the sociologist Reznik and his co-author K Malchevska (Reznik 2011; 2013; Reznik and Malchevska 2010) of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine were the only Ukrainian scholars to publish research on the informal civic practices of Ukrainians. Reznik argued that such civic practices emerged to substitute traditional paternalistic strategies when the latter proved ineffective (Reznik 2013, 135–136). Persuading friends, relatives and acquaintances in the rightness of one's political preferences and attitudes was the most commonly cited informal civic practice (Reznik 2013, 142). Those who adopt rational choice theory would argue that it is natural given the low risks and stakes involved in such 'domestic' type of activism. Yet persuading others can be also seen as a proof of a person's genuine interest and basic competence in politics and as an important practice for the future formation of a civic activist. In 2013 Reznik acknowledged that according to his data, only 20% of respondents engaged in any kind of civic practices. Yet Reznik's list of informal practices neither included 'volunteering', nor accounted for the use of social media. When asked about sharing political information, citizens had to answer about the use of mobile phone and email *only*, even though by 2012, social networking activity had already overtaken the use of email as the major form of internet activity in Ukraine (Yarovaia 2012). By 2013, 50% of Ukrainians over 16 years of age used the internet regularly, identifying social network websites as the primary reason to use the internet (GfK 2013). Nevertheless,

the informal civic practices on the internet remained out of the scope of sociological research until 2013, likely contributing to the underestimation of the potency of Ukraine's civic culture.

At the time, Reznik (2013) explained the total figure of 20% of people engaging in civic activities by a deterioration of the financial situation in Ukraine, which made people focus on securing financial resources to survive and left little time for civic practices. He supported the assumptions of Olson's collective action theory (1965), which argued that it is the lack of socio-economic resources among the population that constitutes a principal barrier for the development of civic practices in countries like Ukraine (Reznik 2013, 144). Yet as the years of 2013–2020 will show, Ukrainians consistently donated money and devoted their free time to support social causes *despite* a deteriorating financial situation. In fact, as I argue, the case of Ukraine can inform resource mobilisation scholarship by showcasing the way digital resources and pro bono work, fuelled by the growing public perception of the critical importance of the individual action for the public good, can overcome a lack of financial resources.

In other words, prior to 2014, Ukrainian civil society had not been 'weak'; it had been misunderstood, subject to a case of mistaken identity. For over twenty years, our scholarly energies had not addressed the phenomenon of *non-formalised* civic activism in Ukraine. Between 1991 and 2014, for instance, research in Ukrainian academic journals failed to conceptualise volunteering as a type of civic activity. One reason for this lacuna can be attributed to a lack of sociological data on volunteering to this point. Past surveys conducted by independent think-tanks³³ like the Razumkov Centre or by the state institutions like the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Science did not ask participants whether they volunteer, leading to an assumption that Ukrainians, traumatised by totalitarian rule, were not able to re-establish interpersonal trust.

Only since the grassroots Maidan Revolution, launched and sustained by volunteers, have scholars and analysts directed necessary attention to the phenomenon of a voluntary sector in Ukraine. The results are illustrative. Research conducted by GfK Ukraine (2014) revealed that 23% of Ukrainians engage in volunteering and that 14% of Ukrainians volunteered before December 2013. If this data is accurate, the crisis of 2013–2014 increased

³³ Vera Axyonova and Fabian Schöppner (2018) argue that reliance on international funding and willingness to secure influence at European arena has resulted in a pro-European bias in data and analysis provided by Ukrainian think-tanks. Omitting some questions in favour of others considered more conventional in the West and confirming Western understandings of civil society can inhibit an understanding of local specificity.

the number of volunteers by 60%. This is far from a ‘revolutionary’ 360%-leap from 5% (i.e. the percentage of Ukrainians donating money and volunteering for NGOs in 2011 [Lutsevych 2013, 4]) to 23% (GfK 2014) – a perception one would get from uncritical comparison of sociological data, relying on diverging conceptualisations of volunteering.

The problem of fluid operationalisation of volunteering, however, persisted into the post-2013 period. The questionnaire of the sociological study led by Viktoriia Sereda (2014, 64) distinguished between (a) volunteering (the option chosen by 5.4% of respondents); (b) providing help to refugees from Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (12.4% of respondents); (c) helping soldiers in Eastern Ukraine (31.4%); and (d) donating resources (money, time and professional consultations) – the activity to which 18.4% of Ukrainians ascribed. Yet *all* of these activities would qualify as volunteering under the definition suggested by the UK-based National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), which includes both the ‘formal volunteering’ for a civic group and ‘informal volunteering’. For NCVO (2020, para.8), ‘informal volunteering includes activities like giving advice, providing transport, doing the shopping or providing childcare for someone for free who is not their relative or friend.’ The lack of academic consensus on the range of volunteer activities in Ukraine therefore hinders measuring the true extent of volunteer practices.

However, the overwhelming support for mutual help, expressed by the respondents in Sereda’s study (2014), is emblematic of the fruitful soil for volunteering in Ukraine: 94.2% of Ukrainians claimed that they placed great importance on supporting other people on a voluntary basis. Volunteering was much higher on the list of priorities for people all over Ukraine than taking part in political decision-making processes (important for 69.5%) or joining civil society organisations (58.8%). Volunteer and non-state initiatives surged in east-southern Ukraine, mostly due to the new challenge of accommodating the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) moving to these regions from the occupied Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Since the state welfare system could not effectively provide help to all IDPs in need, active citizens joined their forces with local authorities to reorganise community life in the region. IDPs self-organised into support groups as well (Lutsevych 2017, 61), challenging the narrative of the ‘paternalistic’ attitudes of Ukrainians towards the state and civil society organisations. In a society where each fifth person volunteers, voluntary groups understandably enjoy the highest level of public trust among all civil society institutions – 53% of Ukrainians in 2017 declared their trust in volunteers (Lutsevych 2017). At the same time, despite the growing number of registered NGOs, the level of engagement of Ukrainians

in the formal civil society organisations has not changed significantly since 2008 (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2018). So, the question stands: given the dramatic shift in available data on civic activism, was there a dramatic change in civic consciousness or rather in the scientific approach to studying and evaluating Ukraine's civil society?

'The Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine in the winter *revolutionised* Ukraine's civil society' (emphasis mine), claim Natalia Shapovalova and Olga Burlyuk in the first line of their compelling volume of research on civil society in post-Euromaidan Ukraine (2018, 11). 'The protests created a new civic ethos of activism and participation based on the values of individual freedom, responsibility and dignity ... they all led to the civic awakening and national revival,' Shapovalova and Burlyuk argued, adding that 'each and every contribution in [the] book confirms that, as can be expected, the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine is an important marker alongside the Euromaidan, exercising a significant impact on civil society's mobilisation, organisational forms, discursive practices and interaction with the state' (2018, 11–12). My research adds nuance to this view. While my in-depth interviews with civic activists (see Chapter 4) support the overarching argument of the significance of the Maidan Revolution and the national struggle for the territorial integrity from 2014, I show that Ukraine's informal civic culture has been subject more to *evolution* than revolution. The national crisis since 2013–2014 proved a catalyst but not the source.

Determining what constitutes evolution vs revolution in this contest is not straightforward, especially given the absence of sociological data on Ukraine's volunteering practices from early 2000–2010. But as I point out in the introduction, the small-sample (n=400) fieldwork study conducted by Ukrainian researchers in 2006 indicates that a volunteer ethos permeated Ukraine's society for years before the Maidan Revolution brought such practices to the forefront of public attention, giving them ideational valuation and promoting them as a new social norm. Back in the times of a putatively 'passive citizenry' in 2006, the Community Surveys conducted for the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for Ukraine (n=400) showed that 61% of the study's respondents regularly donated to charities, 49.25% actively provided support to other people informally and 43% of respondents devoted on average 16 hours per month to volunteer work, with 57% of respondents acknowledging that voluntary organisations provided better services than formal NGOs (Kuts and Palyvoda 2006). As only 8.25% respondents volunteered for NGOs, the difference in the survey question formulation ('Do you volunteer for an NGO?' or 'Do you provide unpaid services in your community?') would have resulted in the drastically different data on the level of

citizens' engagement in volunteering at the time. The proportion of volunteers in 2006 could have been understood as either 57.5% (formal and informal volunteer work) or 8.25% (NGO volunteers). Unfortunately, the lack of consistently gathered data does not allow us to establish when and how such a strong preference for volunteering developed. In the next chapter, I therefore explore the dynamics of what I call the informal civic practices of 'self-help' in Ukraine, deploying statistical analysis of the corpus of data gathered for the European Social Survey between 2002 and 2012. On a theoretical level, I consider how a suspicion of the state – a common denominator for both Ukraine's national discourse and the Soviet legacy of 'informality culture' – has influenced the inclinations of Ukrainians to rely on each other instead of the civil society actors emphasised in prevailing liberal-democratic conceptualisations of civil society.

Furthermore, by focusing on nationwide forms of activism, scholarship on Ukrainian civil society has tended to miss local horizontal forms of activism. In fact, Shapovalova and Burlyuk (2018) acknowledge that none of the twelve chapters of their volume focus on local forms of activism, which they identify as a promising avenue for further research. Indeed, studies on local civic activities remain rare. Lutsevych (2013; 2017) briefly mentions in her work local forms of citizens self-organisation such as neighbourhood associations, which have been developing in Ukraine with an aim to improve the management of apartment blocks. In 2013, there were around 14,000 registered associations, which covered about 10% of all apartment blocks (Lutsevych 2013, 8). Since 2015, when the new law on housing associations was adopted, the number of such association has increased dramatically: in under a year, the number of household associations almost quadrupled in a city of Mariupol, which due to being located in south-east Ukraine had had a reputation for citizen apathy and 'a culture of submission' (Lutsevych 2017, 61–62). Examining the quantity of the registered neighbourhood associations does not let us see the whole picture. The sociological research of Sereda (n=6000) in 2014 provides more nuanced insights about informal civic practices in local communities, demonstrating that on the level of each Ukrainian city, civic participation was significantly higher than on the national level. While the scope of my own research here does not allow me to delve deeply into the local level, Chapter 2 touches upon the role of local communities as traditional place-of-arms of Ukraine's civic forces from a theoretical perspective.

The indispensable facilitator of civic participation in Ukraine since the early 2000s has been the internet. The fact that it is often unpoliced, affordable, and (increasingly) widely

available has made it a particularly convenient tool for coordination of the protests all around the globe. Ukraine is no exception. Olena Prytula argued that the Orange Revolution was the first revolution to be sparked by globalisation and new media technologies (Prytula 2006, 122). Before the Orange Revolution, online media outlets, weblogs, forums and email communication had facilitated Viktor Yushchenko's political campaigning, informing people about time and locations of the oppositional political rallies and circumventing the state-imposed media censorship. During the Orange revolution, the internet was important for 'framing' the revolution for its participants. The online news outlet *Ukrainska Pravda* extensively covered developments of the revolution, while the world wide web became a space where people could exchange the symbols of the revolution through emails, blogs and message services with their friends. Likewise, the even greater importance of the internet in facilitating the Maidan Revolution has been studied in detail by western and Ukrainian scholars in the recent years (Tytysh 2014; Onuch and Sasse 2016; Piechota and Rajczyk 2015). Yet for all this attention, there has been a relative lack of scholarly focus on the role of digital media in *sustaining* the Maidan pro-reform social movement after the revolution itself. This story of digitally-powered sustenance is a lesson for the globe.

In 2018 Tetyana Bohdanova and Vitaliy Moroz examined the sustainability of the grassroots civic initiatives formed with the help of the social media during the Euromaidan. They looked at three citizen journalists' initiatives set up in 2014, offering us a valuable contribution to the growing body of research on the impact of ICTs on activism and professionalisation of volunteer movement. Their concentration on journalists, however, blurred the line between the internet as an information and communication technology for disseminating the information on the grassroots activism and the internet as a new *medium* for activism itself. My first case study in Chapter 4 similarly focuses on the public service media initiatives, especially given the role of journalists in embracing the internet as a medium for delivering pro bono professional services for the public good. But here I stress that the role of the internet in Ukraine's case exceeds its original function of the information and communication technology and lies in the creation of an *infrastructure* for the operational activities of civil society organisations enabling particular *horizontal relationship* with Ukraine's citizenry (see Chapter 3 and 4).

What Ukraine's 'Digital Civil Society' Can Teach Us

The case of Ukraine can teach the global community of scholars in political science and civil society studies two important lessons. First of all, Ukraine challenges preconceptions of Olson's resource mobilisation school of thought about the critical role of financial resources. The evidence from the three case studies I discuss in Chapter 4 demonstrates that a lack of financial resources can be overcome with the help of the digital media and volunteer work, provided that people have a strong ideational motivation for volunteering.

Secondly, the case study of Ukraine's 'digital civil society' – a society which relies on digital media as its primary resource – can complement Bennett and Segerberg's 'connective action' theory by extending its focus from the organisational capacities of the new media for protest actions to *non-contentious civic actions after the protest ends*. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) explore how the digitally networked action through the examples of digitally-organised protests like Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring. They investigate how such action is structured and what political power it can wield, analysing the organisational properties of digital media and arguing that they cause increasingly personalised shared political action. In 'connective action' – as opposed to 'collective action', which also can use digital media as means for citizen mobilisation – digital media are used not as another top-down channel of the information dissemination, merely used for 'framing' of the collective action and formation of a unified identity. Instead, technologies become *agents* in connective actions, automating and organising the flow of information and providing a platform for peer-defined relationships. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) acknowledge two equally important types of 'connective action' networks: crowd-enabled (e.g. Facebook group *Euromaidan SOS*, discussed in detail in Chapter 3), which enable people to establish relations, transmit information and coordinate activities 'horizontally'; and organisationally enabled (e.g. *ProZorro* web platform, explored in Chapter 4), where the connectivity is more technologically sophisticated, purposefully built and powered by some recognised organisation at the head of the power signature (2012, 198). This theoretical differentiation is helpful for a more sophisticated analysis of Ukrainian digital civil society initiatives.

I suggest that Bennett and Segerberg's 'connective action' theory can be applied to what I term the Ukrainian 'self-service' movement after the Maidan Revolution of 2014. In fact, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) envisioned that connective action should not necessarily disperse in the end, even though it was the case for all their examples. The case of Ukraine,

where such ‘digital organisations’ proved to be sustainable for at least six years and with no sign of decline, can further scholarly understanding of the ‘connective action’ in non-contentious politics as ‘public self-service media’.

II. ‘Expect-the-Unexpected-Nation’: Investigating Ukraine’s Informal Social Capital

In 2013 Ukrainianist Rory Finnin called Ukraine the ‘expect-the-unexpected nation’.³⁴ Since then it has lived up to the moniker, surprising scholars and analysts inclined to see Ukraine as another country ‘in transition’ from the Soviet totalitarianism to the liberal democracy. Yet philosopher Charles Taylor had long doubted the applicability of pan-Western ‘procedural’³⁵ liberal theories in societies other than the United States and Great Britain without a consideration of the ontological issues of identity and community (Taylor 2003, 197–198). Nevertheless, fieldwork-based studies of Ukrainian communities remained rare in comparison to the wealth of literature focused on the transformation of the formal political institutions and the ‘Europeanisation’ of the policymaking (Deacon 1993; 2000; Deacon, Lendvai and Stubbs 2007). As discussed previously, these liberal theories asserted the necessity of establishing the rule of law and strong democratic institutions, determining the prerequisites (i.e. liberal legal framework, civil order and sufficient institutional and financial resources) for a robust civil society – the very prerequisites Ukraine seemed to lack. Yet the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014 and the subsequent rise of civic activism challenged opinions about the weakness of Ukrainian civil society. The voices of conspiracy theorists, seeing foreign funding and organisational forces in both the 2004 and 2013 Ukrainian uprisings (Traynor 2004; Milne 2014; Zuesse 2018) were challenged by the abundance of scholarly data pointing to the grassroots essence of the Maidan Revolution (Chebotarivova 2015; Otrishchenko 2015; Emeran 2017; Onuch 2015). Thus, the question of how Ukraine’s formidable civic forces remained in the dark sparked a vivid academic discussion. Chapter 2 will join this debate, discussing the prevalence of peculiar civic traits conducive to ‘self-help’ civic activism in Ukraine in national mythology and informal civic practices of the Soviet and post-Soviet era.

Although some scholars have observed that post-socialist societies developed the socio-economic culture of self-provision of services (Fajth 1999; Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009; Draxler and Van Vliet 2010), their argument centred mostly on

³⁴ An allusion to Andrew Wilson’s book *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (2000).

³⁵ By ‘procedural’, Taylor had in mind procedures of decision-making to determine what social goods will be advanced in society rather than discussing what goods the society will further according to its concept of ‘good’ (Taylor 2003, 197).

the economic sphere. My aperture is wider. I posit that an informal culture of self-provision of services extends well beyond economic practice. It is at the heart of Ukraine's civil society.

Informality has not only inflected cultural and political practices in Ukraine; it has been a mirror of a specifically Ukrainian notion of identity and community. As we shall see, the Ukrainian identity, that has emerged from various colonial historical experiences, bears a suspicion of official institutions of the state and emphasises instead reliance on the members of their communities for social welfare provision. The first section of this chapter will therefore discuss the political and social conditions of Ukrainian modernity, characterised by mutual help within local communities as an antidote to social oppression permeated by imperial rule. The second section will demonstrate how the pervasiveness of informal practices not only became an indispensable means for the survival of a Soviet individual but, counter-intuitively, for the survival of the Soviet state economy itself. I will proceed to analyse how informality shaped Ukraine's post-Soviet economic transition and laid the foundations for the success of the Maidan Revolution and digitally-mediated welfare provision in post-revolutionary Ukraine.

It is therefore fruitful to commence the exploration of Ukraine's civil society by tracing Ukrainian 'networking culture' to the centuries before digital media would bring it to the forefront of public and scholarly attention.

The Brothers of Cossack Descent

In December 2013, in the wake of the Maidan Revolution in Kyiv, one of the protesters' tents featured a masterful poster urging viewers to choose their political destiny. The poster featured two paintings by the Russian artist Illya Repin. On the left-hand side of the poster, the 'Barge Haulers on the Volga' depicts the horridly exploited powerless Russian workers. On the right-hand side, 'The Reply of Zaporozhian Cossacks' features an equal community of Ukrainian Cossacks, laughing at the Turkish sultan's offer to surrender to his rule voluntarily as they write a bold letter in response. The only word on the poster urges: choose (see Appendix A for a photo of the tent taken by Rory Finnin in Kyiv in December 2013).

The appearance of this artistic reference to the perceived differences between Russian and Ukrainian relationship with vertical power on the streets engrossed in the Revolution against pro-Russian then-president Viktor Yanukovych is worthy of examination. The Cossack mythology was extensively used during the revolutions on the Maidan in both 2004–2005 (the Orange Revolution) and 2013–2014 (the Maidan Revolution). During the Orange

Revolution of 2004, the Cossack legacy sprang out on the streets organically. Protesters divided themselves into *sotni* (a traditional Cossack administrative unit) with a *sotnyk* as a leader. Along with Cossack tradition, those *sonti* usually represented various cities or oblasts, reinforcing the importance of local identities. In 2013 the Maidan Revolution reused this proven repertoire of Cossack-inspired organisational patterns. Participants were actively drawing from the Cossack mythology with which the arguably most important Ukrainian national poet and mythmaker Taras Shevchenko is strongly associated. And so, Taras Shevchenko suddenly became an active participant in the Maidan Revolution, his portraits flashing here in there on the streets, but not in their traditional form. Shevchenko emerged as a superman, or in Warhol's pop art style, or even as Frida Kahlo. He was re-appropriated by a popular movement, dismantled as a granite monument and infused with grassroots energy and a seminal national figure celebrating *communitas* in a fight against structure – against a corrupt state that had lost sight of the rule of law.

The Ukrainian anthem – ‘Shche Ne Vmerla Ukrainina’ – became a leitmotif of the Maidan Revolution of 2013–2014. ‘Our enemies will perish as dew in the sun, we are yet to rule in our land ... we will lie our bodies and soul for our freedom and will show that we are the brothers of Cossack descent,’ thousands of Ukrainians sang in unison, freezing at the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti*, or Independence Square. Whereas these lyrics raised questions in 1991 – what does it mean that ‘we are yet to rule in our lands’ if ‘we’ have already established an independent state? – they set the record straight in the winter of 2013–2014. The image of Maidan protestor Mykhailo Havryliuk, a self-described Ukrainian Cossack wearing the traditional forelock of hair or *oseledets*, captured, stripped of clothing, kicked by special forces, and filmed naked and bare-footed in the snow became an emblem of the binary opposition between *communitas* (brothers-Cossack-protestors) and the state-*structure* (Yanukovich's special forces). Thus, the Maidan Revolution has not only *released* the forces of societal self-organisation (Gerasimov 2014, 29) long present in Ukrainian character, but also reinvigorated traditional images (e.g. Shevchenko), terms (e.g. *sotni*), and concepts (e.g. liberty) related to this self-organisation.

In this section, I suggest to explore the arguably quintessential myth at heart of Ukraine's national and civic identity – the Cossack myth.³⁶ The Cossack symbols have been persistently utilised in Ukraine in the instances of the national struggle of the 'people' against internal and external oppression. Therefore, it is essential to explore the values associated with Cossack self-rule in Ukraine to understand why the Cossack myth became a means of self-identification for protesters during the Maidan Revolution.

In his book *The Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires*, historian Serhii Plokhy follows the definition of myth provided by George Schöpfung: 'Myth is one of the ways in which collectives – in this context, more especially nations – establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own system of morality and values. In this sense, therefore, myth is a set of beliefs, usually put forth as a narrative, held by a community about itself' (Schöpfung in Plokhy 2012, 7). Echoing numerous scholars sharing an anthropological approach to the study of myth, Schöpfung emphasises that '[i]t is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account' (Schöpfung in Plokhy 2012, 7). Anthony D. Smith's observation that myths, memories, symbols and values are often being accorded new meanings and new functions to adapt to new circumstances is also central to my interpretation of the role of the Cossack myth in the formation of Ukraine's informal social capital (Smith in Plokhy 2012, 8). This section traces how the Cossack myth was narrated in the 18th century; it argues that in Ukraine, national mythology played a role of a critical socialising institution, promoting values associated with Cossack self-rule and normalising horizontal self-help.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the concept of the state as the civilising force formulating and spreading the civic values among the citizens, turning 'arrant pluralism' into the civil society (Rosenblum and Post 2002, 8), is problematic in the case of Ukraine. Whilst in the West, the evolution of the state has defined the development of civil society, in Ukraine, the history of stateness proved formative.

³⁶ In his book *The Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires*, historian Serhii Plokhy follows the definition provided by George Schöpfung: 'Myth is one of the ways in which collectives – in this context, more especially nations – establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own system of morality and values. In this sense, therefore, myth is a set of beliefs, usually put forth as a narrative, held by a community about itself' (Schöpfung in Plokhy 2012, 7). Echoing numerous scholars sharing an anthropological approach to the study of myth, Schöpfung emphasises that '[i]t is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account' (Schöpfung in Plokhy 2012, 7). Cautious not to make essentialist claims about Ukrainian national identity, this section traces how the Cossack myth was narrated in the 18th century and how the perceived values associated with Cossack self-rule played a role of socialising institution, normalizing self-help within local communities in Ukraine.

Whilst militant nationalism, unleashed by the wave of European revolutions of 1848, aided the unification of Germany and Italy, the Ukrainian nation-building project largely remained a pursuit in the domain of literature and art, informed by historical and ethnological research. The ideas of French Romanticism, brought to the Russian and Austrian Empires on the auspices of Napoleonic wars, fortuitously surrounded a relentlessly oppressed Ukrainian peasant with an exotic and fashionable aura. Indeed, whilst the seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbs portrayed a man of nature as ‘brutish’, the eighteenth-century French harbinger of Romanticism Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder asserted the innate virtues and inherent goodness of a man, unspoiled by civilisation. Thus, Russian and Polish-speaking nobility of Cossack descent turned its attention to its own *Sauvage Noble* – the Ukrainian-speaking peasant. The descendants of the Cossack elites scrupulously searched for the proofs of their ancestry to assert their noble status in the Russian Empire, giving a further boost to the historiography of the Ukrainian people.³⁷ From the playful travesties of Ivan Kotliarevsky to the historical fiction of Panteleimon Kulish; from *Kobzar* by Taras Shevchenko to the foundational historiography of Mykhailo Hrushevskyy, who would become the first leader of an independent Ukrainian state, the Cossack myth with its ideals of brotherhood and self-governance emerged as the spinal column of the Ukrainian national narrative.

In the years following the Napoleonic Wars, a manuscript called ‘The History of the Rus’ and describing the heroic struggles of the Ukrainian Cossacks circulated among the artistic circles of the Russian Empire. Perceived as a testament to the national character, the Cossack myth became reflected in Russian and Ukrainian historical and literary imagination.³⁸ Above all, Ukraine’s ‘national mythmaker’ Taras Shevchenko (Grabowicz 1982) interpreted it as a quest for Ukrainian national liberation. In the years (and centuries to come), the Cossack myth would inspire thousands of Ukrainians to fight for the freedom of their homeland.

Taras Shevchenko is one of the most influential narrators of the Cossack myth. Literary scholar George Grabowicz (1982) argues that the binary opposition between *structure* and *communitas* (borrowing terms from sociologist Victor Turner) is a structural key to Taras

³⁷ Russian Empress Catherine II liquidated the autonomous Cossack Hetmanate in 1764 and subsequently ordered Russian troops to destroy Zaporozhka Sich as a symbol of the annihilation of Cossack autonomy in 1775.

³⁸ For a detailed account of the preserved memory of the Cossack past in Ukrainian architecture, see Pevny, Olenka. 2012. ‘The Encrypted Narrative of Reconstructed Cossack Baroque Forms.’ *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1–4 (2009–2010), p. 471–520.

Shevchenko's discourse. For Turner, social structure is represented by statuses and social roles the individual plays in the society; by contrast, *communitas* represents such a modality of social relationship where society is not differentiated according to structural positions (Turner in Grabovych 1982, 77). Grabowicz argues that Taras Shevchenko privileges *communitas* (organic forms of human organisation built on solidarity and fellowship) but condemns *structure* – hierarchical systems of power characterising the nineteenth-century empires. *Communitas* emerges in Shevchenko's poetry as the radical rejection of status, property, wealth, rank, privilege for the sake of egalitarian emotional bond between people in society (Grabowicz 1982, 79). Taras Shevchenko's poetry (i.e. 'Chernets,' 'Haidamaky,' 'Kholodnyi Yar,' 'Jeretyk') romanticises the notion of brotherhood and equality amongst the Cossacks and dreams of a return to the Cossack social and political order.

Cossacks emerged in the sixteenth century as a military group of 'steppe cowboys' in the south-east territory of the Ukrainian lands often called the 'Wild Field'.³⁹ By the seventeenth century, Cossack settlements had evolved into a proto-state with direct democracy. In 1654, their autonomous polity aligned with the Tsardom of Muscovy in return for promises of protection from Moscow against future conflicts with Poland-Lithuania and the Crimean Tatar khanate. Over a century later, as the Crimean Tatar threat subsided, Catherine II eliminated Cossack self-rule, dismantling the Hetmanate, razing the Zaporozhian Sich, and bringing the institution of serfdom to Cossack lands.

An orphaned serf himself, Taras Shevchenko was preoccupied with the subjugation of the peasantry that culminated in this loss of Cossack autonomy.⁴⁰ In his poetry 'I mertvym i zhyvym i nenarodzhenym...' ('To My Compatriots, Dead, Living and Unborn, in Ukraine and Outside Ukraine – My friendly Epistle'), Shevchenko criticises Ukrainians for reliance on external concepts of their national history and identity. 'You are seeking good goodness, holy goodness. Freedom! Freedom! And brotherly brotherhood! You had found it and carried it from a foreign field to Ukraine,' his lyrical persona mourns (Shevchenko 1845, lines 37–42).⁴¹ 'Who are you, brother?' he asks his compatriot, anticipating the response, 'Let us hear a German⁴² tell us that. We do not know' (ibid, lines 101–104).⁴³ Shevchenko shows little

³⁹ Known as *slobody* (from 'svoboda' – freedom), settlements of the free men.

⁴⁰ Shevchenko was educated at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg and accepted in the beau monde of the Russian Empire. Born a serf, he was bought out from servitude by a group of artists.

⁴¹ 'Шукати доброго добра, добра святого. Волі! Волі! Братерства братнього! Найшли, несли, несли з чужого поля і в Україну принесли.'

⁴² Taras Shevchenko alludes to the German ancestry of Catherine the Great and hence the Romanov dynasty.

⁴³ In original, 'Добре, брате, що ж ти таке?' 'Нехай скаже Німець. Ми не знаєм.'

sympathy to the great men of history, who bring Turner's structure at the expense of *communitas*: 'Slaves, footrests, Moscow dirt, Warsaw garbage – these are your lords, your reverent Hetmans!' (ibid, lines 163–165).⁴⁴

Like Shevchenko, artist Illya Repin portrayed Cossacks in his 1891 painting 'Zaporozhians Writing a Letter to the Ottoman Sultan' as irreverent opponents of status and authority. The authenticity of this letter is disputable, as several versions are preserved in the oral tradition, each one more daring than another. The text of one version published by historian Mykola Kostomarov in the journal *Russkaia Starina* in 1872 illustrates how the indigenous political culture in Ukraine was narrated by the nineteenth-century intelligentsia. Full of obscene vocabulary, the mythical letter to sultan Mehmed IV elucidates two important features of the Cossack proto-state: the radical notion of equality shying away from social hierarchies and artistic references to the ideal state of nature as advocated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In the version published by Kostomarov (1872, 450–451), Sultan Mehmed IV starts his letter with 'I, the Sultan...' whilst the Cossacks use the collective signature: 'Kish Otaman Zakharchenko with all the Kish Zaporizhzhian'.⁴⁵ The nineteenth-century historian of Zaporizhian Cossacks Dmytro Yavornytskyi posits that all the letters and orders, sent from the Cossack stronghold *Zaporizka Sich*, were signed with the name of the Cossack leader (*otaman*) alongside the Cossack *starshyna* (high military rank, literally 'elders') and *menshyna* (the lowest military rank) (1990, 175). The communication between the *koshovyi otaman* and the Cossacks lacked the traditional subordination of the military groups: Yavornytskyi (1990, 175) notes that *otaman* addressed the Cossacks as 'children', 'brothers', 'fine fellows' and 'comrades'.⁴⁶ When the decision had to be made, *otaman* gathered the entire kish, the young and the old, and asked 'What shall we do, fine fellows?' (ibid). Thus, the political order of the Cossack proto-state, as narrated by Dmytro Yavornytskyi, reveals a tradition of collective governance based on equality. Its unconventional dating does the same, posing the natural community-based political order of Ukrainian Cossacks against the rigid hierarchical structure of imperial states. 'We do not know the date because we do not have a calendar; the moon is in the sky, the date is in a book, and the day is the same for us as it is for you,' the Cossacks write (Kostomarov 1872, 451) (see Appendix B for a scan copy of the cited article by Kostomarov from the digital archive of *Russkaia Starina*).

⁴⁴ 'Раби, подножки, грязь Москви, варшавське сміття – ваші пани ясновельможні гетьмани.'

⁴⁵ 'Кошовий отаманъ Захарченко со всімъ кошомъ запорозькимъ.'

⁴⁶ "дітками", "братчиками", "панами-молодцями", "товаришами".

By the end of the nineteenth century, ethnographers, artists and writers had weaved the Romantic ideals of freedom, equality and horizontal self-organisation into the fabric of the Ukrainian national narrative. The problem remained that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian speakers remained illiterate, which prompted the emergence of the precursors of civil society organisations in Ukraine – *hromady* ('communities'). The first *hromada* emerged in Saint Petersburg; the *hromady* movement spread to Ukraine. Far from demanding political liberties, *hromady* focused on educating peasants through Sunday Schools and publishing ethnographic and historical research. The intelligentsia in Right-Bank Ukraine similarly sought to educate the peasantry (the so-called *khlopomanstvo* movement, from *khlopy* – servants). At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, schools in Poltava, Chernihiv, and Kharkiv had already produced at least 2 million literate Ukrainian speakers between the ages of 9 and 60 (Velychenko 2017, 53). The rapid growth of the cities in the late nineteenth century led to 11.7% of Ukrainian population living in the towns by 1897 with access to print matter. Ukrainian speakers, however, represented just a third of the urban population (Velychenko 2017, 61), whilst the growing demand for industrial labourers drew workers from Russian gubernias, Poles and Jews.⁴⁷ Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Ukrainian speaking urban dwellers represented only about 4% of the total population of Ukrainian gubernias.⁴⁸

At the same time in Europe, the second half of the eighteenth century was marked by the industrial, agricultural and financial revolutions resulting in the growing political significance of an increasingly wealthy middle class. Readily available bank credit funded technological development and brought about the ubiquity of steam-powered machinery and transport, facilitating both global trade and the military conquests of the burgeoning European colonial empires. An abundance of cheap raw materials from colonies fed factory-based mass production, drawing increasing number of workers to the cities and giving rise to an urban underclass. Worker revolts and the emergence of socialism as a political creed brought about the emergence of trade unions as essential building blocks of civil society in liberal theories.

In Ukraine, by contrast, this 'institutional' channel, which was instrumental for ameliorating the lives of the poor in the West, remained inaccessible for the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians, most of whom were subjects of the autocratic Russian empire, which

⁴⁷ 11.7% was calculated by the author as a proportion of urban population to the total population of Ukrainian gubernias according to the census of 1897 (source of data: Velychenko 2017, 61).

⁴⁸ Calculated as a third (Velychenko 2017, 53) out of 11.7% of urban population in Ukrainian gubernias of the Russian Empire according to the census of 1897 (Velychenko 2017, 61).

restricted their cultural expression as well as their political mobilization. When the Ukrainian intelligentsia started to vocalise demands for Ukrainian autonomy and to form political parties, a cleavage between the intelligentsia and wider Ukrainian society remained an obstacle. The overwhelming majority of Ukrainian speaking peasantry remained illiterate and continued working manually on the land⁴⁹ with little communication with people from outside their local communities. Peasant communities were self-sustained thanks to a culture of mutual help – the principal coping mechanism against the unpredictability of the forces of nature (or the state), which could cause famine at any point. Thus, the political parties and civic movements of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century became the ‘schools of democracy’ (borrowing Tocqueville’s concept) for the emerging political elites, but not for the wider Ukrainian society. To the Ukrainian peasantry, the national mythology and local culture permeated in the oral tradition played the central socialising role.

The fall of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1818 gave rise to two independent Ukrainian states: the Ukrainian People’s Republic [Ukrainska Narodna Respublika, UNR] and the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic [Zakhidnoukrainska Narodna Respublika, ZUNR] accordingly. The act of union (Akt Zluky) between UNR and ZUNR took effect on 22 January 1919 and hereby formed the unified Ukrainian state. The nineteenth-century song ‘Ukraine Has Not Yet Perished’ (‘Shche Ne Vmerla Ukraina’) resounded throughout Ukrainian lands as a national anthem. The song frames Ukraine as a project that has survived despite imperial assaults on freedom and liberty. What lyrics are chosen for the national anthem is a highly political question about the characteristics and contours of any ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006). ‘We will lay our souls and bodies for our freedom, and will show that we are the brothers of Cossack descent,’ the anthem proclaims.

In the Soviet period, the Cossack myth was sustained in political and cultural discourse, perpetuating the tropes of self-sustainability and the deep-rooted culture of mutual help within local communities. The Cossack myth gained new legitimacy under the premise of the Soviet ‘friendship of Russian and Ukrainian people’ paradigm⁵⁰, which celebrated the decision of

⁴⁹ Only 30% of the urban population in the cities in Ukraine in early 20th century were speaking Ukrainian with an overwhelming majority of Ukrainian-speaking population represented by peasantry (Polishchuk 2016, 396; Szporluk 1997, 98).

⁵⁰ The Soviet authorities reevaluated the Cossack myth’s significance only in the early 1970s because of its hypothesised potential to provide the historically-grounded foundation for Ukrainian nationalism (Plokhyy 2012, 4–5). Indeed, when Ukraine reappeared on the map of Europe as an independent state in 1991, the Cossack myth regained its vitality, promoted by the political activists deeply inspired by the Cossack history described in the History of Rus. Notably, Ivan Drach, the leader of the Rukh, the largest Ukrainian pro-independence

the Cossack hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi to accept the Moscow tsar's suzerainty over Ukraine in the mid-seventeenth century (Plokhy 2012, 4). Within this paradigm, Shevchenko was deemed a proper national idol from the point of view of Soviet ideology. Literary critics portrayed his epics of Cossack-led wars against Polish pans as class struggle. Monuments to Shevchenko were erected on the central squares of most Ukrainian cities, and the leading national university in Kyiv now bears Shevchenko's name. Across the centuries, the Cossack myth, with its promotion of *communitas* over *structure*, advanced by Shevchenko alongside countless other Ukrainian writers and scholars, came to Ukrainians from the east to the west.

A Parallel Polis

The Cossack proto-state provided an organisational pattern and a national myth for protesters' self-organisation during the Orange Revolution and the Maidan Revolution. On a practical level, however, many Ukrainians had a more recent historical experience conducive to grassroots self-organisation: combatting the deficits of goods and services in the Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine. Whilst the Soviet state took total control over formal associational life, the social norms of behaviour, which facilitated voluntary cooperation for mutual benefit, manifested themselves in the informal sphere. Yet for decades, the concept of informality appeared in scholarly literature first and foremost as a synonym to 'informal economy', with the majority of studies centering around informal employment, manufacturing and black markets (Loayza 1997; Schneider Buehn and Montenegro 2010). Yet the *social* consequences of the economic deficiencies of the Soviet 'command' economies are not less important, as informal trust networks became indispensable not only for the provision of households but also for the functioning of the state itself (Neef 2002, 299).

Indeed, although the planned economy theoretically allows for efficient prearrangement of shipments of the raw materials, the poor organisation of public procurement in Soviet Ukraine often left state-run factories short of the vital supplies. The lack of materials coupled with strict punishment for failing to achieve the plan confronted managers of the Soviet enterprises with a difficult choice. One option would be to violate the technical specification – for instance, to replace the undersupplied materials with other compatible substances – risking eight years in prison for such a minor change as substituting the red paint for the green

movement of the late 1980s–early 1990s, translated the History of Rus into modern Ukrainian in the months leading up to the proclamation of Ukraine's independence in August 1991 (Plokhy 2012, 5).

one with the same properties (Berliner 1957, 155). Another possibility would be to go through the over-bureaucratized state⁵¹ system with its centre in distant Moscow to get the necessary materials (Berliner 1957, 185). Yet even in the case of success, the factory manager who opted for such a route would lose valuable time and risk not fulfilling the plan. Hence, a much more viable alternative would be deploying informal networks to either receive the formal allocation order or to exchange materials with another trusted factory manager. The notion of trust was of colossal importance in this process, because, if discovered, the machination was strictly punishable no matter the greater good in mind. If a factory producing machinery for the mining industry lacked paint to finish the machines, the mines would not get the machines, and the economy would experience a shortage of coal. The electric stations would not have enough fuel to supply hot water, depriving households, schools and hospitals of central heating, which would have grave consequences for public health. If it is in the public interest that the enterprise gets the proper paint, but the state has failed to fulfil the official allocation order, what should the factory manager do?

In his study 'Factory and Manager in the USSR', Joseph Berliner (1957) brought up the example of Iakov Karnakov, the Chief of Fuels in the Rural Wood and Industrial Fuel office of the Komisariat of Agriculture in Soviet Ukraine, who failed to obtain the necessary 150 tons of coke through the official allocation order. Karnakov decided to deploy his informal network to buy coal elsewhere, so he wrote a letter to his former colleague and 'a good friend' Konstantin Zolotarevskii, the deputy commercial director of the Nikotovsk Dolomite Kombinat. Karnakov suggested that Zolotarevskii could call the price for 150 tons of coal, inviting him not to miss a chance to 'earn a little milk for the kiddies' (Berliner 1957, 186–187) while helping out an old ally. Unfortunately for Karnakov, Zolotarevskii was away when the letter arrived, so an individual outside the 'trust network' read the letter and then disclosed it to the newspaper *Chernaia Metallurgii* (Black Metallurgy). It would be safer for Karnakov

⁵¹ In a study of Soviet managerial practices, Joseph Berliner gives an example of the highly inefficient logistics of the supply materials in the centralised Soviet economy: 'The process of supplying sulphuric acid to enterprises of the commissariat [of General Machinery] located in Kiev and Odessa is carried out in the following fashion: the consuming enterprise sends its statement of requirements to its chief administration, in Moscow; the chief administration sends a statement of requirements for its enterprises to the commissariat; the commissariat presents its summary statement of requirements to the marketing department of the Commissariat of Local Industry in Kiev; this marketing department sends an allocation ... to the commissariat in Moscow; the commissariat distributes the allocated amount among its chief administrations and sends the distribution plan to the marketing department of the Commissariat of Local Industry of the Ukrainian SSR; the chief administrations distribute their allocations among their enterprises and send the distribution order to the marketing department of the Commissariat of Local Industry; the latter, finally, sends out allocation orders to the producing enterprises authorising them to sell' (Berliner 1957, 185).

to have ‘good friends’ in public office instead: this would allow him to obtain an allocation order for his enterprise legally. One of Berliner’s interviewees said that for the supply of cement, oil and so forth, the supply chief of the enterprise would usually have to develop a robust interpersonal trust network. Such a person would personally go to the Chief procurement officer of the relevant ministry and ask for an allocation order should the need arise. The success of such a deal would depend on the personality of the supply manager and their ability to drink socially (Berliner 1957, 187).⁵²

The unnecessarily strict punishment for both violating technical specifications and not fulfilling the plan fostered a social culture promoting a set of soft skills, enabling people to build self-aid social networks to protect an individual (and a larger public) from dysfunctional state institutions. Informal networks of trust progressively became the critical means for ensuring that enterprise could meet the requirements of the plan. With more people deploying personal connections to circumvent the inefficient logistics of the centralised economy, formal institutions became increasingly dependent on the extensiveness of informal practices. Thus, ministers were developing yet more unrealistic plans, which could only be achieved by falsification of reporting, manipulations with wages or deteriorating the quality of production (Berliner 1957). While the shortage of money was not an issue in the Soviet Union with its obligatory employment, high-quality consumer goods became the unceasing deficit. The ability to secure high-quality product once again depended on personal connections. The word ‘to buy’ in common Soviet lexicon was therefore replaced by ‘to fish out, to obtain’ (*distavaty*) (Wanner 1998, 57) and informal social networks became the principal resource.

Breaking Through the Post-Soviet Transformation

Already valuable for navigating the Soviet ‘system of organised shortages’ (Verdery 1996, 85–88), ‘networking’ skills were repurposed to survive the collapse of the Soviet Union with its hyperinflation, erratic salary payments and poorly controlled privatisation (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2013). In place of the shortage of goods came a dramatic lack of financial resources with currency devaluating by hours in Ukraine and consumer goods becoming only available to a fraction of population, who managed to secure a job and had access to hard currencies. The black market trade prevailed, and trust became the key factor in deciding with

⁵² For a detailed discussion of the importance of drinking culture – and, more generally, hospitality – in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet societies for securing networks of kin, see Polese 2013.

whom one would trade to secure access to necessary goods and services (Wanner 1998, 51). Ukrainians could not rely on state institutions to ensure that the goods they bought were of adequate quality, as most trading in the 1990s was unsanctioned. As a consequence, Ukrainians came to rely on *svoi cheloviek*⁵³ ('one's own' – trusted person).

In the post-Soviet period, social networks became vital not only for earning for living and securing meaningful employment and a living wage, but also for breaking through overcomplicated bureaucratic state regulations. The latter, as anthropologist Catherine Wanner noted, often seemed to have been purposefully designed to prevent citizens from receiving public services (1998, 51). In her ethnographic study of Ukraine in the 1990s, Wanner described the experience of thirty-three-year-old Nina, who needed to obtain the state registration – *propyska* – in the apartment for which she had recently exchanged her grandmother's room in the communal flat in central Kyiv. Flats in the Soviet Union were predominantly state-owned, but following the adoption of the law on property privatisation in independent Ukraine, a person could privatise a studio apartment for free if she was registered there – that is, if she had the *propyska*. Even though *propyska* was mandatory and no citizen could access public services without it, the process of obtaining it was so complex that people were often induced to paying bribes to get the necessary stamps on all the required paperwork. At some point, Nina was told that she would only get the final stamp on her application if she helped the person in charge to obtain an international passport for travelling abroad. Thus, Nina needed to 'pull the strings' to find connections in the state institution issuing travel documents. She eventually found an acquaintance who could push the application for a foreign passport through, but only if she managed to help him exchange the coupons – *kuponokarbovantsi*, the Ukrainian currency at the time – for hard currency. The currency exchange was illegal in Ukraine up till 1996, and only those who had authorised travel arrangements were allowed to buy hard currencies. The state employee was not going to travel anywhere and wanted to hold hard currency to protect himself from currency devaluation. So Nina had to find someone who had dollars and needed the coupons. Finally, she reached another person, who planned to purchase a refrigerator from the state factory for coupons, so Nina arranged for currency to be exchanged, foreign passport issued, the papers

⁵³ Catherine Wanner (1998) noted that her Ukrainian-speaking respondents still used the Russian-language colloquial phrase *svoi cheloviek* instead of Ukrainian *svoia liudyna*.

for *propyska* stamped and her ‘guaranteed free privatisation of dwelling’, as the law put it, finalised.⁵⁴

Another example Wanner provided referred to the case of Maria from Kyiv, who was astonished by a suggestion to leave her cheating husband, the former head of ideology at the Higher Party School: ‘but who will get me train tickets?’ Maria asked (Wanner 1998).⁵⁵ Indeed, even though the transport system was state-owned and operated, ordinary citizens could not easily get access to train tickets. If a person needed to travel, she needed to either have some connections at state institutions, which held pre-booked tickets for business travel purposes or buy from *spekulianty*, people who *did* have those connections and who resold tickets for a fee. Alternatively, a person could reach some informal agreement with a *providnyk*, the train manager who also oversaw ticketing control and had the power to allow a person onto the train without a valid ticket. *Providnyky* with their access to yet another deficit good – the public transportation system – found themselves in positions of power, becoming a key cultural reference in Ukrainian pop-culture of the 1990s–2000s.⁵⁶

In order to respond to such social conditions, Ukrainian citizens shaped their everyday cultural, political and economic practices in a way that ensured their independence from dysfunctional state institutions, with which one only chose to deal in extreme cases. Where an ordinary citizen could not buy tickets for the state-run trains, privately owned minibuses called *marshrutky* satisfied public need.⁵⁷ In a *marshrutka*, a driver traditionally relies on the self-organisation of passengers to collect money for the ride. While it is far from unusual to leave *marshrutka* without a purse because of thieves, one can always rely on the other passengers to pass across, for instance, a 100 UAH⁵⁸ note for 8 UAH ride to the driver from the back of *marshrutka* and receive the change in full after it passes through the hands of scores of passengers back to the original payer. These privately operated *marshrutky* used to take people to the city – or abroad – where they could buy goods unavailable in Ukraine and bring them home for themselves or for others in their social network or for business.

⁵⁴ The Law of Ukraine on Privatisation of the State Housing (Verkhovna Rada 1992).

⁵⁵ The Higher Party School was the Communist Party elite training school.

⁵⁶ For instance, Ukrainian comedian Andrii Danylko – who became known internationally after he came second at Eurovision song contest in 2007 as Verka Serdiuchka – started his comedian career impersonating Ukrainian ‘*providnytsia*’ Verka Serdiuchka.

⁵⁷ Those minibuses – the primary means of public transport in Ukraine still – were often transformed from the freight mini trucks lacking the necessary safety measures to carry passengers. Marshrutka driver would avoid taking on board pensioners or children – ‘*pilhovyky*’ – who are entitled to a free ride in public transport; their drivers would also willingly stop at virtually any place (including at the red light of the traffic light) to pick and the passenger or let one alight.

⁵⁸ UAH stands for Ukrainian hryvnia, Ukraine’s national currency since 1996.

Ukrainians packed such goods in *kravchuchky* – trolley-bags named after Ukraine’s first post-Soviet president of 1991–1994, Leonid Kravchuk – because of the scale this practice during his presidency. In order to pay for things, Ukrainians used money, the origin of which was usually unknown to the state, and hard currencies, which one could not legally exchange in the bank but could get hold of through personal networks. These emblematic examples illustrate how welfare was diffused through informal channels when the state did not function effectively. Post-Soviet Ukrainian society compensated for deficiencies of the state by creating alternative structures and institutions of welfare, taking upon itself the socio-economic functions that are underperformed or not-provided. As Predrag Bejakovich argued, ‘in post-socialist societies, unofficial production, non-registration of economic activities and corruption may be deemed the solution rather than the problem because such practices might be seen as the only way in which the state can be made to work. In a situation when public finance policy ignores the needs of the public, such behaviour has enabled these societies to survive’ (2016, 464).

As in Soviet times, this culture of informality allowed Ukrainian state-society relations to achieve an equilibrium, whereby the Ukrainian state was distrusted but not challenged for the sake of sustaining *status quo*. A Communist legacy of deploying informal networks to overrun the shortages of goods, services and resources was interwoven into the structure of Ukrainian post-Soviet state institutions to allow ‘short-cuts’ through the bureaucratic procedures. In the early 2010s, Ukrainians still tended to rely on social networks instead of institutional means to solve everyday problems, and to a significantly higher extent than other post-socialist nations. The ‘Life in Transition’ survey (EBRD 2011), for instance, concluded that over 60% of post-Soviet households relied on informal private safety nets, in contrast to 30% in Central European post-socialist countries and around 35% in Balkans. The importance of the safety nets in post-socialist societies indicate a common failure to renegotiate the public mandate of state institutions. As a profound consequence, citizens in former communist societies developed ‘scepticism toward anything formal ... and considerable disregard for the rule of law’ (Grødeland 2007, 220).

The arrival of the market economy did not diminish but rather transformed the role and place of social networks in the public economy. If one analyses data from a recent sociological study that targeted specifically Ukrainians aged 14–29, one sees that 79% of young Ukrainians still believed that having connections is necessary to get a decent job, a view consistent with the ideas prevalent in the 1990s. At the same time, 83% of young respondents

said that skills and experience were necessary for successful employment (New Europe Centre 2017). In other words, a combination of individual skills and social networks was perceived as necessary to succeed in the job market. While this is not an uncommon view in many countries, this nuance conveys a sense that contemporary Ukrainian youth do not necessarily associate the word ‘connection’ (*zviazky*) with ‘corruption’, as it usually is interpreted in post-Soviet informality studies. In fact, the pervasiveness of corruption was named the biggest worry of the new generation of Ukrainians, closely followed by war (81% and 80% respectively) (New Europe Centre 2017, 90). Furthermore, 29% of respondents said they would not tolerate bribery in any form and *under any circumstance* (New Europe Centre 2017, 5, 7, 75); 26% of respondents would not justify tax avoidance; and 15% would never stomach the use of connections for employment or ‘solving a problem’ (*vyrishyty pytannia*) at state institutions. The level of tolerance to deploying personal connections to deal with the state institutions was still twice higher than illegal behaviours, such as offering a bribe or evading tax-payment, which is indicative of the social normalisation of mutual self-help when dealing with – or rather against – the state. This data shows the limitations of the classic post-Soviet informality framework with its focus on corruption, bribery and black markets. It calls for a new theory, one that encompasses the socio-cultural norms of community-based self-help and the ability to mobilise social networks to compensate for the failures of the state.

A Controversial Legacy

The Soviet legacy loomed large as a period in Ukrainian history that saw a ravaging of civil society. The consequences of this legacy have been a refrain in academic literature as well. ‘With regard to the post-communist countries, scholars and democratic activists alike have lamented the absence or obliteration of traditions of independent civic engagement and a widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state,’ observed Robert Putnam (1995, 65). British political philosopher John Gray also maintained that, although ‘flourishing, dynamic and progressive civil society existed in Russia in late tsarist period’ (1991, 147), it was ‘comprehensively desolated’ in the Soviet Union (1991, 146) as a consequence of the totalitarian regime. ‘The single most important feature of totalitarian orders is their suppression ... of the institutions of civil society – the autonomous institutions of private property and contractual freedom under the rule of law, which allow people of divergent values and world-views to live in peaceful coexistence,’ John Gray stressed (1991, 146). In a

similar vein, Rosenblum and Post asserted that totalitarianism is the ‘antithesis’ to civil society, and ‘so is authoritarian repression of self-organised groups and any form of paternalistic regime that does not provide space for autonomous associational life’ (2002, 12). Raising the example of Hanna Arendt’s work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Rosenblum and Post (2002) argued that the ‘defining characteristic of totalitarianism is the combination of “atomistic individualism” with techniques of terror. The absence of social buffers between individuals and the state makes persons vulnerable to ferocious mobilisation and extinction’ (15–16). As a result, the language most commonly used by scholars in the analysis of the post-communist societies referred to the ‘emergence’ or ‘reemergence’ of civil society in post-Soviet states (Gray 1991; Riabchuk 1991; Rau 1991), implicitly agreeing with the notion that the Soviet legacy was a arduous weight on civic life. Yet such arguments do not consider how an un-institutionalised associational life may have been deployed ‘social buffers’ to protect citizens from ‘extinction’ under the totalitarian state. In this section I consider the importance of informal networks in Soviet society as well as commonplace practices of the voluntary self-organisation of citizens in Soviet Ukraine to circumvent restrictive policies and overcome a lack of a market economy and the rule of law. By doing so, I seek to provide a glimpse into the formation of a peculiar social capital, which proved useful for mass mobilisation for collective action in independent Ukraine.

The concept of social capital was advocated by Robert Putnam (1995) in his discussion of what he saw as the decline of civic life in the United States. Drawing on the theoretical framework developed earlier by James S. Coleman (1988), Robert Putnam claimed that social capital referred to ‘features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (1995, 67). ‘For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital,’ Robert Putnam posits, explaining that engagement in social networks fosters sturdy norms of reciprocity and strengthened social trust, broadening participants’ sense of ‘I’ into ‘we’ (ibid, 67).

Social capital became one of the most divisive concepts in political science of the 1990s: its proponents (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1995) maintained that social capital is a necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the development of democracy. Its critics (Levi 1996; Tarrow 1996) claim that the concept had little conceptual validity on its own as social capital is the product of the institutional performance as opposed to its cause. ‘Governments [are] a source of social capital,’ Margaret Levi argued (1996, 50). Whilst Levi maintains that social capital

is formed in response to the civilising force of the democratic government (i.e. ‘establishing and enforcing the property rights which make trust possible’ and ‘establishing peaceful equilibria among otherwise combative groups’ [ibid, 50–51]), in Ukraine, as the previous sections demonstrated, the history of ‘uncivil’ governance shaped social capital.

The inherent problem with the concept of social capital is that it can be measured in different ways. The majority of studies conducted in Europe and North America assessed levels of social capital by comparing the percentage of people registered as members of at least one civic association. Thus, the greater the number of associations to which the person subscribes, the higher the social capital index. In this case, it might seem that countries like Ukraine, with its relatively low percentage of the population engaged in civil society organisations, are lacking in social capital. But as Anirudh Krishna (2005) rightfully points out, ‘what matters more for social capital are attitudes and behaviours of different kinds that might be exhibited even without the support of any formal organisation’ (Krishna 2005, 4). Krishna (2005) drew from the interviews of 1,898 people from 69 villages in India to demonstrate that over 80% of them participated in labour-sharing groups; 63% had self-organised in the past year to solve some community problem; 64% associated being a part of informal networks with feelings of trust for other villagers; and 92% felt sure that if someone’s house burned, the rest of the villagers would help the affected family. The level of participation in formal organisations was, by contrast, low. The attitudes demonstrated by the local population of rural India fit within Putnam’s definition of social capital as ‘networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (1995, 67), calling for a change in approach to measuring social capital.

Measuring Ukraine’s Social Capital

Looking through qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with Soviet Ukrainians (Berliner 1957, Wanner 1998), I have discussed several examples of informal voluntary self-organisation of citizens in Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine. But how can we measure the spread of such practices to illustrate its relevance for large-scale collective action in independent Ukraine? Here I rely on the statistical analysis of the dataset of the European Social Survey (ESS) to operationalise and measure, to an extent possible, Ukraine’s peculiar social capital and benchmark it against the social capital of another post-Soviet country (Russian Federation) and the weighted-average deduced from data on seventeen Western

European states: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The mean scores for Western Europe represent an aggregate mean score of the Western European countries calculated using the population weights.⁵⁹

The European Social Survey (ESS) is the cross-national survey based on biannual face-to-face interviews. The ESS contains standardised measures of people's attitudes and self-reported social actions in a broad range of social and political domains. I utilised the ESS Cumulative Data Wizzard software to create a cumulative dataset for 9986 observations from Ukraine and 10028 from Russian Federation, the only other post-Soviet country in the ESS database. The resulting dataset encompassed 1303 variables across the five survey rounds between 2004 and 2012, the year before the onset of the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine. Such a benchmark allows for a verification of whether the manifestation of the civil society in post-Maidan Ukraine is 'evolutionary' – rooted in preceding decades – or 'revolutionary' – sparked by an upsurge of civic activism during the protest itself.

I used StataMP statistical software to run a series of two-sample t-tests on mean scores for the selected survey questions, through which I operationalised a propensity to mutual help, a level of interpersonal trust and a trust in formal social and political institutions. The two-tailed t-test is a statistical process used to assess the probability that the particular characteristic of two independently drawn samples is significantly different (Kalpić Hlupić and Lovrić 2011). It also calculates the probability that the observed differences (if any) arose due to chance or sampling error. Although t-tests typically appear in biostatistics research (McDonald n.d.), I suggest that this method is useful for the cross-cultural analysis of the survey data as long as the samples satisfy the conditions of independence and normality.⁶⁰ Across the five ESS rounds conducted between 2002 and 2012, Ukrainian and Russian samples in the cumulative dataset were drawn independently in correspondence with the first principle, adding up to 20,015 respondents altogether. Such a reasonably large sample allows statisticians to draw inferences about the entire populations using statistical modelling.⁶¹

⁵⁹ The weights give the countries with larger population more impact on the cumulative mean score.

⁶⁰ On the use of t-tests for quantifying social capital in Europe see Meulemann and Heiner, 2008.

⁶¹ The Central Limit Theorem allows us to assume the normality of distribution of the sample means providing that the samples are large enough and independently drawn for several times from the same population. *Central Limit Theorem* says that: given random and independent samples of N observations each, the distribution of sample means approaches normality as the size of N increases, regardless of the shape of the population distribution. In other words, no matter what distribution you start with (ie no matter what the shape of the population), the distribution of sample means becomes normal as the size of the samples increases.

By deploying statistical analysis, I seek to identify whether the post-Soviet informality framework is sufficient to explain the specificity of Ukrainian social capital; in this case, we should not observe statistically significant differences between post-Soviet nations. I acknowledge an inherent problem with using survey data for cross-cultural analysis (Avvisati, Le Donné and Paccagnella 2019) as the subjective interpretations of questions can be influenced by respondents' culture. As I demonstrate, this is particularly the case for the questions relating to satisfaction with democracy and government, which diverge significantly in Ukraine and Russia. With a view to minimise the effect of interpretation error, I use clusters of multiple variables to operationalise each of the civic culture traits in question and place the responses into a cultural context during the discussion of findings.

I start by assessing the quantity and quality of social interaction on the informal level in Ukraine, Russia and Western Europe using the responses to the following set of questions in ESS dataset:

1. To what extent [do] you feel that people in your local area help one another?
2. To what extent do you agree with the statement: 'I feel close to the people in my local area'?
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: 'I can get support and help from my co-workers when needed.'

Both in Ukraine and Russia, citizens reported a high level of mutual help within local communities: on average 69.84% of Russians and 71.89% Ukrainians in 2006 and 2012 claimed that people in local communities helped each other a lot (operationalised as scores four, five and six on a scale from zero to six, where zero represents 'not at all,' three stands for 'neither little nor a lot' and six represents 'a great deal') (Figure 2). The respective percentage in Western European countries was significantly lower and stood at 44.55% (Figure 3). The scores assigned by Western European respondents to the extent of the helpfulness of the locals, illustrated in Figure 3, were rather normally distributed in comparison to the left-skewed distribution in the post-Soviet region, indicating the qualitative difference in the propensity to help people in local communities. Benchmarking the data on the extent of help in Ukrainian and Russian communities against Western European democracies supports the argument that the lack of a fully functional democratic regime did not impede the development of peculiar features of social organisation permissive of coordination and cooperation at the grassroots level.

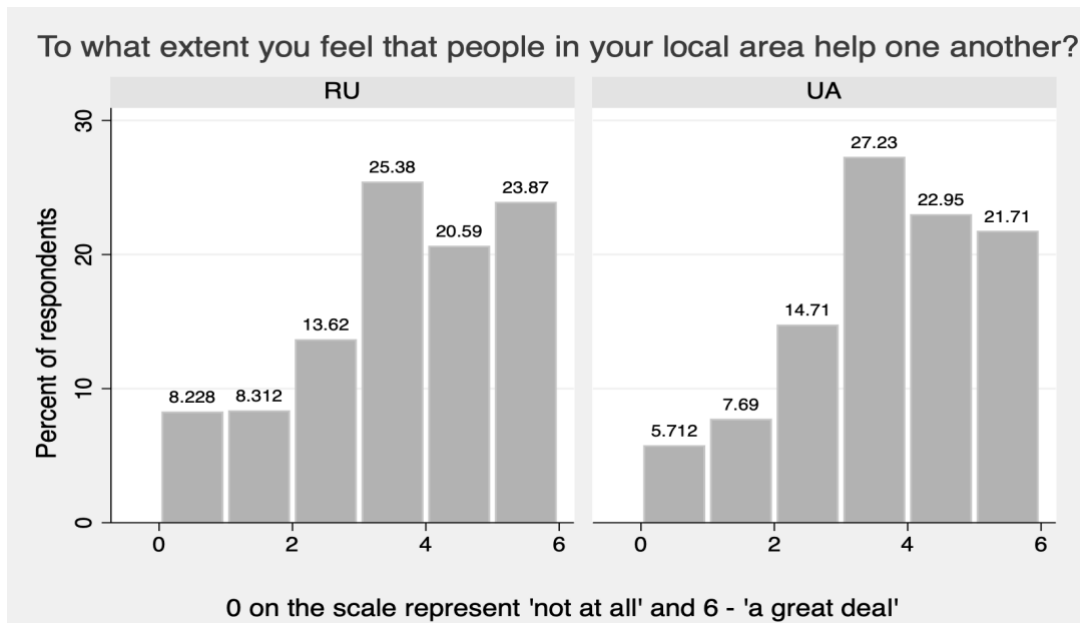


Figure 2. Aggregated ESS data from Russia (RU) and Ukraine (UA) in 2002–2012.

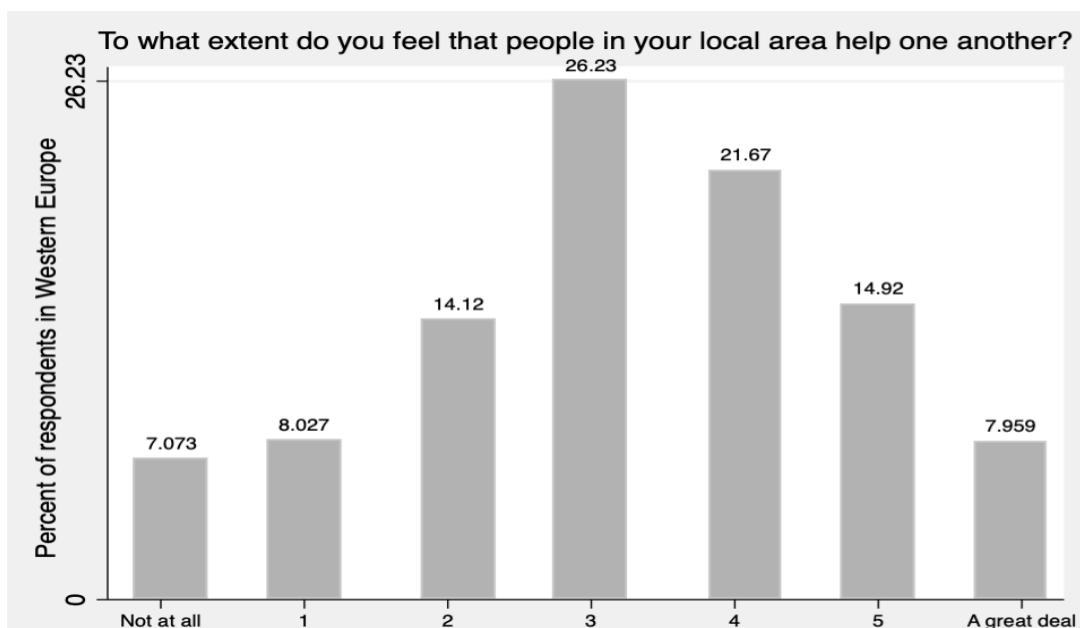


Figure 3. Aggregated ESS data from Western European countries in 2002–2012.

A statistically significant difference ($p=0.000$) between Ukraine and Russia arose once the respondents were tested for whether they feel close to people in local communities with Ukrainians feeling significantly closer (Appendix C, Figure 3). In the ESS survey methodology, numerical values were assigned to the answers in a range of ‘strongly agree’ (one) to ‘strongly disagree’ (five), enabling me to compute the mean score for Ukraine and Russia in 2006–2012. Ukrainians demonstrated a mean score of 2.36, leaning towards ‘agree’ based on 3,854 responses, in contrast to 2.65 in Russia, where respondents were leaning

towards ‘neither agree nor disagree’ based on 4,521 responses. When the data from 2006 and 2012 was tested separately, it emerged that both Ukrainians and Russians felt significantly closer to the people in their local communities in 2012 than in 2006, with Ukrainians having strengthened their local ties more quickly. Ukrainians demonstrated a steeper decrease in mean (the smaller the mean, the closer people on average felt to other people locally) of 0.14 points compared to 0.06 points in Russia (Appendix C, Figure 4).

This observation (as well as the greater extent of mutual help in a local area in the post-Soviet region compared to Western Europe) goes against the grain of the principal argument of the liberal civil society theory. The latter, as I argued in Chapter 1, assumes that non-democratic governance brings about the atomisation of individuals, whilst democratic regimes allows citizens to strengthen their ties with fellow citizens for the collective good. By contrast, from 2006 to 2012 Ukraine’s democracy index deteriorated from a ‘flawed democracy’ in 2006 (Kekic 2007) to a ‘hybrid regime’ in 2012 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012), whilst Russia moved down the respective Economist Intelligence Unit democracy indices from a ‘hybrid’ to an ‘authoritarian regime’ (Kekic 2007; Economist Intelligence Unit 2012). Yet the people in both countries grew to feel closer to the other people in their communities. This data additionally confirms the hypothesis that non-democratic regimes do not necessarily diminish society’s ability to build social networks and self-organise on a grassroots level. Moreover, with 59.86% of respondents reporting feeling close to people in local communities, Ukrainians outperformed not only the neighbouring post-Soviet Russia with the respective proportion of 45.74% of respondents but also the Western-European average⁶² of 58.46% (Appendix C, Figures 1, 2). This observation is consistent with data from the survey-based sociological study focusing on local civic activism, discussed in Chapter 1 (Sereda 2014). People in all Ukrainian cities declared a readiness to help those in need or to participate in improving the place where they live: 90% of Odesians and 83% respondents from Kharkiv (the least active citizenry on a national level) wanted to collaborate with the others to improve lives in their communities (ibid). Further statistical modelling demonstrated that both in Ukraine and Russia in 2004–2012, the perception of helpfulness and the feeling of closeness to one’s community were intrinsically interconnected. Pearson’s correlation

⁶² As a general point of reference in Western Europe, I created a cumulative dataset from seventeen Western European countries – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. I applied population weight so that the impact of each country on the mean value would be proportionate to the country’s population size.

coefficient revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between the two corresponding variables. Hence, the weaker a person's connection to a local community (the higher the score for flclpla variable), the less likely such person was to believe that people in a local area were helpful (the smaller the score for pplahlp variable) (Appendix C, Figure 5).

The higher propensity to help others in Ukraine is evidenced by the comparison of the mean scores given to the helpfulness of co-workers. When comparing scores given by people in Ukraine and Russia to the statement 'I can get support and help from my co-workers when needed,' the t-test concluded that Ukrainians were significantly ($p=0.000$) likelier to get help from the colleagues (Appendix C, Figure 6). This data is visually represented by the histograms below (Figures 5, 6). The right side of Figure 5, representing Ukraine, is skewed to the left, showing that the majority of respondents strongly agreed ('quite true' and 'very true' respectively) that they can get help from colleagues. The left side of this graph, representing Russia, is only slightly skewed to the left, indicating that Russians were more tentative when assessing their chances of getting such a help.

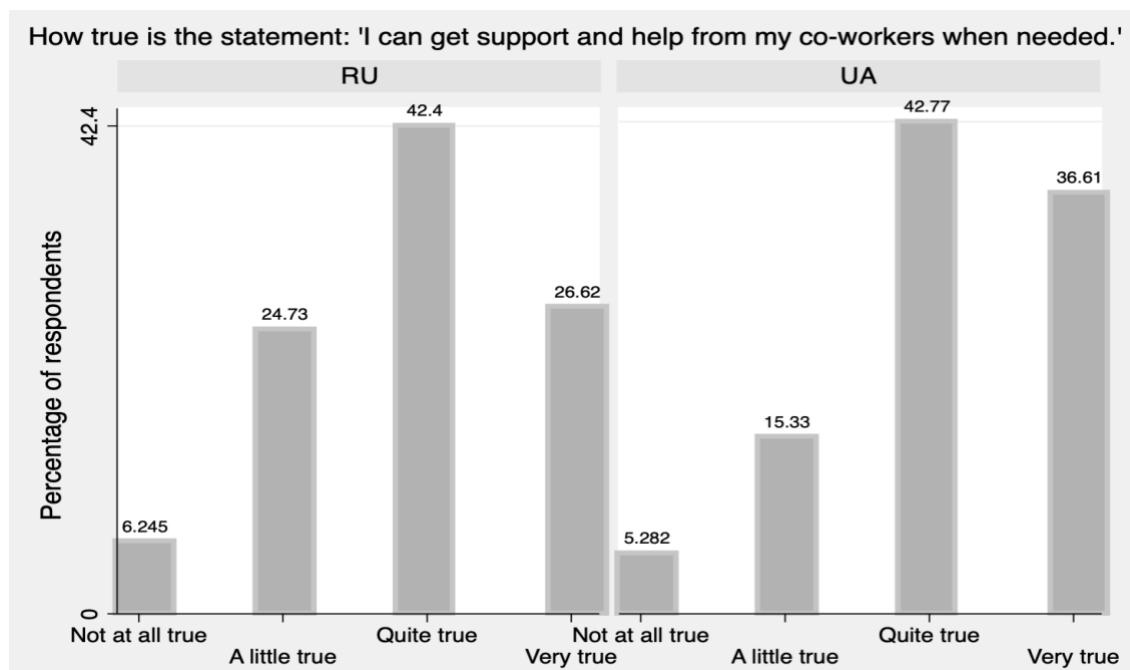


Figure 5. Aggregated ESS data from Russia (RU) and Ukraine (UA) in 2002–2012.

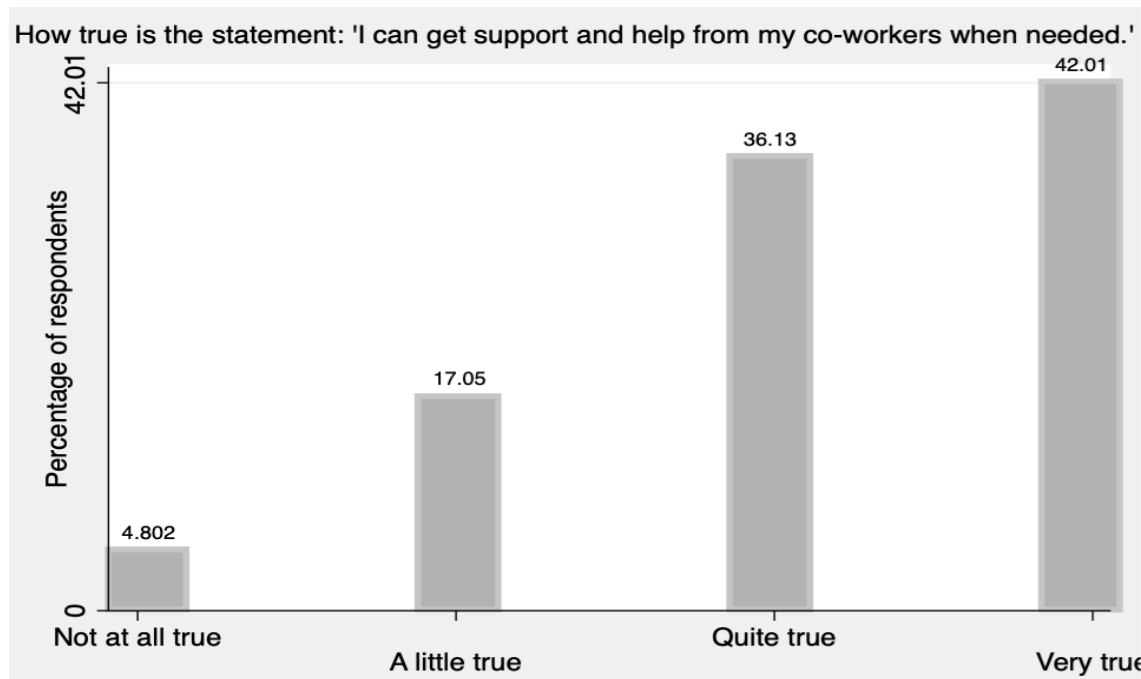


Figure 6. Weighted average for the seventeen Western European countries in 2002–2012.

Figure 6, which demonstrates the respective social perception of colleagues' helpfulness in Western Europe (although more radically left-skewed), bears similarity to the state of affairs in Ukraine.

In Ukraine, the high level of trust in colleagues was the only factor which correlated with the persons' propensity to participate in collective action to solve collective or personal problems in the linear regression run by Oleksandr Reznik (2015), who utilised an extensive body of sociological data from Ukraine's National Academy of Science. Neither ethnicity and first language, nor the level of trust in friends, family, neighbours and fellow citizens reached the threshold of statistical significance as a predictor of persons' ability to cooperate with others to solve personal and collective problems, Reznik's study concluded, but the amount of trust placed in colleagues did (ibid, 181–183). Hence, the ability to form networks of mutual help with colleagues represents the critical measurement of the quality of Ukraine's social capital given the statistically significant correlation between levels of trust in colleagues and the ability to solve grievances collectively. I have already discussed how professional networks helped people to solve problems via informal practices in Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine. Chapter 4 will later discuss how professional networks became instrumental in overcoming the dramatic lack of financial resources to sustain collective action in Ukraine.

All in all, the ESS survey data demonstrate that a lack of democratic governance in post-Soviet Ukraine did not prevent social cohesion in local and professional communities. Instead, it normalised mutual help as acceptable group behaviour. These characteristics suggest the presence of networks and norms facilitating ‘coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ as per Robert Putnam’s classic definition of social capital (1995, 67). Below I consider the third component of Putnam’s social capital – social trust.

In What We Trust

Contradicting the preconception of democratic governance as a *sine qua non* for the development of social capital, totalitarianism and a subsequent unruly democratic transformation of the 1990s did not ‘atomise’ Ukrainians. Instead, a culture of voluntary cooperation for mutual benefit – what I call ‘self-help’ – arguably became the principal means of survival in the absence of a fully-functioning welfare state (Aberg and Sandberg 2003). Both in the Soviet times and the early 1990s, a typical Ukrainian was a member of multiple social networks of support, which generally included extended and immediate family members, close friends, and colleagues (Wanner 1998, 51). ‘When you need something – you need it, and you’ll deal with anyone who can help you get it,’ quipped one of Catherine Wanner’s interviewees from L’viv (ibid, 51). Unlike other post-Soviet republics, Wanner concluded (ibid), instrumental bonds were impactful in Ukraine regardless of linguistic and cultural differences. Seventeen years later, Ukrainian sociologist Oleksandr Reznik found empirical evidence for Wanner’s observation after a linear regression failed to reveal a statistically significant correlation between person’s ethnic or linguistic background and his or her propensity to coordinate with others for mutual benefit (Reznik 2015, 181–183).

The ability to build efficient networks of self-help required high-level interpersonal trust, which is the critical component of social capital and a necessary precondition for the development of democracy in Robert Putnam’s argument (1993; 1995). Yet Ukrainians have been often perceived as lacking in social trust (Lutsevych 2013, Hlibovytskyi 2018, Koshman 2018), with such conclusions typically arising from sociological surveys measuring the level of trust in the *state and social institutions* (see, for example, an annual study by Razumkov Centre [2017a]). The European Social Survey also primarily gathered data on the level of trust in formal institutions, meticulously measuring the level of trust in the legal system, parliament, politicians, police, the European Union parliament and the United Nations as well

as people's satisfaction with the government, economy and democracy through variables derived from the answers to the following questions:

1. And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? (On a scale from zero to ten where zero represents 'extremely dissatisfied').
2. Please tell me how much you personally trust ...the legal system? (on a score from zero to ten, where ten represents 'complete trust').
3. how much you trust ... the [country]'s parliament? (from zero to ten, where ten represents 'complete trust').
4. ...the police? (from zero to ten, where ten represents 'complete trust').
5. ...the United Nations? (from zero to ten, where ten represents 'complete trust').

In all the questions above, Ukrainians consistently scored significantly lower than Russians, except for trusting the UN, which both nations assessed at about four out of ten. T-tests revealed that Ukrainians were the least satisfied with their democracy with the mean of 3.20 versus the Russian mean of 3.72 ($p=0.001$) and Western European mean of 5.24 (Appendix C, Figure 7). Ukrainians also demonstrated significantly lower trust in their police (mean=2.24 versus 3.43 for Russia [$p=0.000$] and 6.27 in Western Europe), legal system (mean=2.10 versus 3.65 for Russia [$p=0.000$] and 5.22 for Western Europe) and national parliament (mean=2.10 in Ukraine versus 3.35 in Russia [$p=0.000$] and 4.50 in Western Europe) (Appendix C, Figures 8–11).

The satisfaction with democracy is a particularly critical score because, as I discussed in Chapter 1, democracy is believed to be a principal enabler of the development of civil society (see, for example, Rosenblum and Post 2002). The dataset I used accumulated survey data gathered between 2002 and 2012 because the year 2012 marked the latest available data for Ukraine. Sociologists conducting longitudinal surveys after 2014 faced a challenge of representativeness of their samples after Ukraine lost control over the part of Donbas and Crimea. The Russian Federation is, however, represented in ESS round 8 from 2016. With the consolidation of the authoritarian regime of Vladimir Putin between 2012 and 2016, the level of satisfaction with democracy has risen dramatically in Russia from mean=3.89 to 4.33. The same applies to the level of trust in the legal system (from 3.78 to 4.34). This appears counter-intuitive, given the entrenchment of authoritarian rule under Putin's regime. This entrenchment was evident even in mundane displays of state power, with the ruble coin of 2016 adding the imperial crown over the head of the two-headed eagle, Russia's coat of arms (see Appendix D for a photo of the ruble coins from 2012 and 2016 taken by the author).

Since the early 2000s, Russians have tended to choose more covert types of dissent compared to Ukrainians and rely on vertical power structures to influence politics, which is

illustrated by the following data. Between 2004 and 2012 years, 11.63% Ukrainians said they had worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker in the previous 12 months, compared to only 3.13% Russians. Ukrainians also signed petitions slightly more often in the same period, 7.89% Ukrainians compared to 7.14% of Russians. Russians were slightly likelier to boycott certain things, with 3.73% taking part in boycotts versus 2.98% Ukrainians over the same period. They also chose to contact politicians or government officials at a slightly higher rate than Ukrainians (8.31% in Russia versus 8.29% in Ukraine) and more frequently worked in a political party or action group, 6.62% versus 4.18% in Ukraine. The survey data itself does not tell us whether contacting a politician or working in a political party served a means of demonstrating a critical or complimentary stance to the respective regime. Yet it does point to differences in approaches to political action, with Russians more disposed to vertical structures and Ukrainians more disposed to horizontal ones.

According to the logic of rational choice institutionalism, a distrust in social institutions and an avoidance of political parties and state representatives is likely to indicate a lack of interpersonal trust in society as a whole. Yet, as sociologists Natalia Letki and Geoffrey Evans (2005, 524) reasonably argued, ‘there appears to be no strong basis for assuming that trust was absent under the previous communist regime in the region: distrust of state should not be mistaken for distrust of fellow citizens.’ On the contrary, in the absence of a credible state and consistently enforceable legal system, trust formed the basis of contractual relationships between post-Soviet citizens (Bohnet, Frey and Huck 2001, 133).

A recent sociological study of the values of 14-29-year-old Ukrainians led by GfK for the New Europe Centre (2017) provides a piece of evidence in support of this hypothesis. Ukrainian aged between 14-29-years old rated, on a scale from one to five, how much they trusted each of the following groups of people (the responses appear in parentheses): immediate family (4.66), extended family (3.91), friends (3.88), classmates and colleagues (3.12), neighbours (2.95), people of different nationalities (2.69), people of other religions (2.44), people of conflicting political opinions (2.36), and political leaders (1.78) (New Europe Centre 2017). Nothing reduced the level of trust in a person as much as being a representative of the political establishment. This data aligned with Wanner’s (1998) observations that – should the need arise – Ukrainians will collaborate with people of any religion, nationality or ideological sympathies. Yet they are not likely to do so with elected professional political leaders, a point consistent with ESS sociological data. The New Europe Centre’s survey data (2017) also demonstrated the divide between the level of trust in the

people inside and outside one's immediate social network. Family, extended family, friends and colleagues surpassed the 'rather trust' threshold equivalent to the score of 'three', while neighbours, people of conflicting opinions and politicians were met with caution. Are these observations indicative of a peculiar notion of trust in Ukraine nation-wide?

In search of an answer to this question, I delved into data from the European Social Survey dataset, fishing out the variables indicative of the interpersonal trust. Unfortunately, the European Social Survey did not focus on measuring the level of trust in people inside one's social network and only included two questions which could be used to operationalise the interpersonal trust:

1. Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?
2. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?

Formulated in this way, the questions revealed that Ukrainians scored significantly lower on the 0–10 scale of trust in 'most people' than Russians or Western Europeans. Ukrainians were significantly likelier to expect people to try to take advantage of them (mean 4.64 on the scale from zero to ten, where zero represents 'most people would try to take advantage of me') compared to Russians (mean score 4.95) and Western Europeans (6.05) (Appendix C, Figure 12). Ukrainians also leaned towards claiming that people are more often than not looking out for themselves than trying to help others: with the mean score of 3.98 for Ukraine in comparison to Western Europe (mean 5.31) and neighbouring Russia (mean 4.24) (Appendix C, Figure 13). *Prima facie*, such data seems to confirm the hypothesis of the positive correlation between interpersonal and institutional trust.

At the same time, Ukrainians appeared to develop closer ties with people within their social circle, which remains an understudied phenomenon. It could be indicative of a high level of trust *inside* one's social circle, which, as qualitative data demonstrated earlier, can be quite vast in Ukraine, encompassing local and professional communities. For instance, when asked how often they meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues on a score from one to seven representing 'never' to 'every day', Ukrainians scored significantly ($p=0.04$) higher than Russians with a mean of 4.49 versus 4.41 respectively (Appendix C, Figure 14). This is not as often as in Western European society, where the mean is significantly higher at 5.09 (Appendix C, Figure 14), but we must take into account that Ukrainians are an extremely time-poor nation, with 45.88% of Ukrainians typically working over 40 hours a week compared to 37.64% of Russians and 38.34% of Western Europeans. Moreover, the ESS only

included questions on the total number of hours spent in the main job (formal employment) and did not ask people to specify the number of hours they devote to second jobs and unpaid care work, which is likely significantly higher in Ukraine than in Russia or the Western European countries, based on the data above revealing that Ukrainians were significantly likelier to help people in their local communities.

The higher frequency of social interactions despite a dramatic relative lack of free time is only one indicator of the strength of social ties in Ukraine. A discussion of the quality of social capital should also include the notion of inclusivity and fluidity of social networks. In other words, are people open to cooperation with the outsiders for the common good, as Wanner (1998, 51) claimed? As I stressed in introducing the sociological study of social attitudes of Ukrainian youth (New Europe Centre 2017), the notion of ‘otherness’, which would put the person outside one’s circle of trust and the network of self-help, is peculiar in Ukraine. It does map along the line of ethnical/racial/religious ‘other’, as data from the European Social Survey (ESS) make clear. Statistical testing revealed that in 2006–2012 Ukrainians were significantly more open to immigrants than people in Russia and Western Europe. Addressing questions about whether many or few immigrants of the same or another race or ethnic groups should be allowed into the country, Ukrainians were ready to embrace ‘many’ (mean score of 1.79) immigrants of the same ethnicity and race and ‘some’ (mean=2.40) immigrants of different race and ethnicity (Appendix C, Figures 15, 16). To put these scores in perspective, Russians and Western Europeans were ready to allow between ‘some’ and ‘few’ (the mean of 2.10 for the same race/ethnicity and 2.80 for another race/ethnicity in Russia, and 2.22 and 2.45 in Western Europe respectively) (Appendix C, Figures 15, 16). The comparative two-samples t-tests between Ukraine and Russia and Ukraine and Western Europe for both variables (immigrants of the same versus another racial/ethnic background) all came back showing the statistically significant difference with p-value 0.000.

Soon after the data for the ESS survey was gathered in 2012, Ukrainians showcased an openness to migration. Following the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in the Donbas in 2014, Ukraine became the world’s ninth largest country in terms of the number of Internally Displaced Persons, with at least 1.5 million of IDPs officially registered by the Government of Ukraine (UNHCR n.d.). Yet the Ukrainian state still lacks the comprehensive housing policy for such people. There is no official data on the matter, but a journalistic investigation by Radio Svoboda claimed that integration of IDPs into local communities was

conducted primarily by local communities and civic initiatives. Mariupol, for example, received an honourable mention from UNHCR as ‘a city of solidarity’ for single-handedly providing 600 sq. meters in a former dormitory and 30 additional flats to IDPs. At the same time, the Ukrainian state had only bought 131 flats in 2017–2018 (Bielokobylskyi 2019) and was expected to buy additional 36 flats for housing IDPs in 2019 (ibid). With approximately 600,000 internally displaced families requiring housing according to the Deputy Minister of the Temporary Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine Yusuf Kurkchi (Ukrinform 2018), the state has so far accommodated the housing needs of about 0.03% of internally displaced families. The duty of care for the remaining 99.97% was assigned to the local communities, friends and relatives. Thus, in Vinnytsia, IDPs self-organised into NGO ‘Spilna Sprava’ (‘Common Deed’) in order to build an apartment block on a co-operative basis (Radio Svoboda 2019). The very fact that Ukrainian society integrated and provided grassroots services to 1.4 million people (even if not all of them regularly live on Ukrainian territories but are merely registered at their relatives and friends) speaks to a propensity to accept immigrants and navigate through networks of self-help instead of dealing with the formal state and civil society structures.

Such lived experiences can provide a glimpse into the reasons for the dramatic deficit of trust along the state-society divide. Sociological data confirms that suspicion to the state and formal institutions in all spheres of public life is the common denominator for the younger and older generation of Ukrainians. When asked about the level of trust in various social institutions, Ukrainians expressed trust in volunteer organisations (66.7%), the church (64.4%), the army (57.3%), volunteer battalions (53.9%). A significantly lower proportion of Ukrainians, however, trusted government (19.8%), parliament (13.8%) and public servants (11.2%) (Razumkov Centre 2017a). In a different study the same year, the young people (aged 14-29) were asked to rate the level of trust in different social institutions on a scale from one to five, where one represents total distrust and five a complete trust respectively. Ukrainian youth similarly expressed more trust in the church (2.99), volunteer movement (2.98), army (2.86) and the least trust in courts (1.98), government (1.87), political parties (1.85) and parliament (1.81) (New Europe Centre 2017, 23). Thus, across all age groups of Ukrainians, the least formalised social structures associated with ‘the people’ enjoyed the highest level of trust with volunteer movement trusted to the same extent as the church.

Does the high level of trust in the army, the very quintessence of the state’s monopoly on violence in Weber’s terms, contradict this line of argument? At the beginning of the Donbas

war in 2014, the Ukrainian army was severely underfunded, prompting the Ministry of Defence to ask citizens and businesses to donate to the Ukrainian army by calling or sending an SMS worth 5UAH to the number '565'. As of August 2014, 134,8 billion UAH was crowdfunded (Ministerstvo Oborony Ukrainy n.d.). It soon became, from one perspective, a volunteer initiative. The examples of volunteer participation in the army are many: countless non-profits and many local communities gather money and crowdsource ammunition (including body armour and weapons) for the local men drafted into the army; the elderly women gather to knit warm socks for soldiers; and children in kindergartens draw pictures to send to the frontline. Thirty military volunteer battalions self-organised to help the official military forces withstand Russian-backed separatists in the Donbas. These volunteer battalions later joined the official military structures under either the command of the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Internal Affairs, recognising the sole mission the volunteers and the army share in defending Ukrainian lands.

Thus, in time of war, the Ukrainian army acquired the social perception of being more of 'the people' rather than of the state. This idea was embodied during the celebration of Ukraine's Independence Day on 24 August 2019, when President Volodymyr Zelenskyi decided not to hold a traditional military parade, sparking significant public discussion. Opponents argued that the president was depriving Ukrainians of a chance to thank the soldiers for protecting the sovereignty of Ukraine. Several veterans of the Donbas war and civic activists said they would organise their own 'people's parade', with social media voices⁶³ suggesting to bring self-armoured civilian vehicles that volunteers supplied to the front at the beginning of the Donbas war, when the state was struggling to supply the necessary amount of military vehicles. As a result, the president agreed to have a parade, but decided to replace the traditional slender ranks of perfectly synchronised soldiers with a 'procession of dignity' welcoming all Ukrainians into its rank, including soldiers, veterans, volunteers, doctors and teachers. In addition, the war veterans organised a 'procession of the defenders', in which 15,000 soldiers, veterans, volunteers and family members of the deceased walked shoulder to shoulder with one another. When on 24 August 2020, the military parade was similarly withheld due to Covid-19 pandemic, Ukrainians once again self-organised on a grassroots level to hold the 'people's parade' for a second time. These examples once again reveal the frequency of self-organisation when the state does not satisfy public demands.

⁶³ For example, see Guy Grubchak (2019).

The State versus Community

By enumerating self-help practices that Ukrainians deployed daily to circumvent inefficiencies in state policies, I argued that instead of turning citizens against each other, totalitarian regime had arguably fed a perceived divide between the state and the community. This dichotomy of the state and the community – structure and *communitas* – in Ukraine can be traced from the Soviet times through the two decades of Ukrainian independence. It is reflected in both sociological survey data and observations of predominant social practices, from preserving the central role of extended family and preferring horizontal self-organisation to hierarchical organisational structures. A lack of trust in the state institutions and formal organisations has been compensated by a high level of trust in the people in one's social circle, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality and religion, as both sociological studies by GfK and Razumkov Centre (New Europe Centre 2017; Razumkov 2017b) and my statistical analysis of ESS data have demonstrated. Reluctant to utilise formal structures to produce collective goods, Ukrainians consistently demonstrated an ability to spontaneously and voluntarily come together to solve their grievances on personal, communal and national levels, 'merging' their social networks if necessary.

To understand how Ukraine's peculiar social values translated into nation-wide impactful collective action, I suggest focusing on the social divide between 'structure' and 'community'. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Mykola Riabchuk's (2001) famous 'two Ukraine's' argument explained the particularity of Ukraine's civic life in the geopolitical divide between the East (embodied by Russia) and the West (represented by Western Europe). By contrast, Anastasiya Ryabchuk (2008), a representative of a new generation of Ukrainian studies scholars, argued that her father's 'two Ukraines' myth was artificially promoted by Ukrainian political elites to distract Ukrainians from demanding accountability from the state. The interests of western and eastern Ukraine are, in fact, common and include fair wages, a clean environment and high-quality social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and affordable housing, Ryabchuk posits (2008). Following the logic of Ryabchuk's argument, the 'two Ukraines' represent not conflicting identities; instead it speaks to a divide between the people and the politicians, a phenomenon observed in the youth survey by the New Europe Centre (2017).

I would also argue that the preference for 'community' over 'structure' is embedded in the renegotiated Ukrainian 'umbrella' identity shared across generations and localities. A

source of national pride for the younger generation and the relatively anti-communist Ukrainian north-west, it also does not contradict the Soviet high ideal of the communal efforts for the greater good, which is important for the older generations of dedicated communists and the Soviet-nostalgic south-east (Sociological Group Rating 2018). The survey by Ukrainian sociological group Rating (2018) revealed that, in 2017, 30% of Ukrainians regretted the fall of the Soviet Union, a decrease from 45% in 2010 respectively; moreover, 15% of young respondents (18-29 years old) felt nostalgic about the Soviet Union, despite the fact that it was never their lived experience (ibid). In Eastern and southern Ukraine, 33% of respondents were nostalgic about the Soviet Union – more so than in the other regions. Both regional peripheries had once been contested borderlands, albeit that of the different empires; as a result, they cultivated a peculiar borderland identity (Gerasimov 2015, Schlogel 2018): inclusive and self-reliant.

The concept of the frontier, advanced by Frederick Turner (1921) to explain the American spirit, is therefore no less relevant for Ukrainians. According to Turner, American settlers had to push a horizontal geographical border to survive. For Ukrainians this horizontal border was as important as the notion of the ‘vertical frontier,’ which represented the struggle with the hierarchy and the status boundaries. As much as the Wild West was instrumental for constructing American character, so too was the Ukrainian ‘Wild Field’ – *Dyke Pole* – and ‘Slobidska Ukraina’ (from sloboda – the free land) and the Cossack ideal associated by it. In Ukraine’s case, the Cossack myth bridges a peculiar notion of community, based on a suspicion of state power and the principles of mutual help and trust, with an overarching national identity. When state institutions are no longer seen to represent the society’s interests or culture (in contrast to the underlying assumption of the liberal theories), this national mythology becomes a source of motivation for collective action. The following chapter will demonstrate how a new frontier of technology, neglected by the political establishment, exploded in the 2000s–2010s to energize and repurpose the self-organisation of citizens for the common good.

III. A New ‘Wild Field’: the Internet as Political Opportunity Structure

In the previous chapter, I argued that a lack of institutional trust did not coincide with a lack of trust between members of local and professional communities in Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine. In a similar vein, this chapter posits that a low level of engagement with state institutions in the pre-Maidan period should not be read as an indication of social passivity because of an increasing inaccessibility of formal political opportunity structures (Tarrow 1996) such as political parties, an independent judiciary, free media and the third sector. Sidney Tarrow (1996, 54) notes that the concept of political opportunity refers to ‘consistent – but *not necessarily formal* [emphasis added], permanent, or national – signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements.’ As we will see, in the 2000s–2010s, Ukraine’s ‘informal’ social capital found a novel outlet for collective action in an inherently horizontal, accessible and under-regulated space: the internet.

I posit that the principal informality and horizontal essence of the internet are particularly impactful in Ukrainian society as a result of the historically-predetermined suspicion to the state and other formal structures that have been promoted in Ukrainian cultural discourse for centuries, as I discussed in Chapter 2. It is in part because of the public perception of online media outlets as free media, which allowed the internet as the *medium* to gradually accumulate public trust. The editor of *Ukrainska Pravda* Olena Prytula argued that, in 2004 the internet enabled the appearance of a ‘media underground’ resisting the regime. In the best traditions of the Soviet ‘samizdat’ (or, in Ukrainian, ‘samvydav’), online media outlets and blogging platforms provided journalists with an opportunity to publish articles that could not be published otherwise (Prytula 2006, 120, 108). The underground, non-professional, marginal position of the internet made it more appealing and trustworthy than official media outlets with an established top-down hierarchy. The public trust in the internet began to decrease after the beginning of cyber-warfare against Ukraine in 2014.

The accessibility of the internet and low costs involved in running websites provided an opportunity for grassroots civic initiatives to emerge. Prytula acknowledged that in 2006 the benefit of the internet for publishing was that it did not require large investments. This opportunity was instantly used by young civic groups: in 2004, the website *Maidan* was established, which Nadiia Diuk (2006) characterised as a ‘virtual civic organisation in a

cyberspace'. During the Orange Revolution the dividing line between activist organisations, civic groups and online media outlets blurred for the first time (Diuk 2006, 73).

By 2013 few civic groups made themselves visible online, demonstrating that the internet is not merely an alternative source of information but also a platform to organise and coordinate civic activities.⁶⁴ Lutsevych acknowledged that new movements had successfully used social media to build informal groups, mostly among students, local activists and NGO leaders in Ukraine. The examples of such civic groups were 'We are Europeans', the movement for Ukraine's European integration, the public network for the preservation of the historic street Andriyivskyi Descent from commercial development, and Hospitable Republic (against the privatisation of Hostynnyi Dvir, a historical landmark in Kyiv). The nature of these networks was democratic and horizontal; for example, 'We are Europeans' functioned as a network of coordinators and members, which collaborated in terms of various working groups dedicated to media, public events, EU expertise, legal and information technology support, administration and new members (Lutsevych 2013, 14–15). Yet, some scholars argued that the low stakes involved in internet activism attract many members who are not really committed to the cause. In 2013, Lutsevych argued that many online movements so far failed to deliver because they lack thorough planning and a clear hierarchy, which is needed to confront socially entrenched norms and practices. Therefore, she argued, social media should not be a substitute for 'real' activism, or it would divert public attention from crucial social issues (Lutsevych 2013, 15). Yet, the growing number of digital civic groups that emerged during or just after the Maidan revolution and sustained their activities for the years to follow have revealed that online space can provide soil for real civic activism. Indeed, Lutsevych herself included a case study of the digital grassroots civic initiative

⁶⁴ The boundaries between the internet as a source of news and a platform for direct civic action become increasingly blurred as more experiment-based and survey-based studies gather evidence that exposure to information on the internet can translate into political behaviour under certain circumstances. For example, in 2011 a group of scholars from the Oxford Internet Institute conducted a field experiment to test whether the social information provided by the internet affects the decision to participate in politics (in this case, subjects could choose to sign petitions and donate money to support causes) (Margetts et al. 2011). Participants were randomised into several groups that received different information about how many others had participated. The control group received no social information. The experiment demonstrates that social information affects political participation. The highest propensity to participate was found in the group where participants were exposed to social information claiming that over a million other people were engaging in specific political behaviour. Therefore, the findings supported claims about critical mass and tipping points in political participation. For more details, see Margetts, H., John, P., Escher, T. and Reissfelder, S. 2011. Social Information and Political Participation on the Internet: an Experiment. *European Political Science Review* 3: 321–344. A more recent Canadian study using a two-way longitudinal survey data demonstrated that online consumption of news affected civic awareness of youth and indirectly impacted their propensity to participate in collective action online and offline (Boulianne 2015).

ProZorro – a public procurement system – in her analysis of successes of the informal side of Ukraine’s civil society (Lutsevych 2017).

I posit that the role of digital media for the civic engagement should not be seen as inherently positive or detrimental but must be contextualised. In the case of Ukraine, the internet was not a cause or a force behind civic mobilisation but rather the technical enabler for grassroots activism. In 2008–2013, the years preceding the Maidan Revolution and the emergence of digital grassroots public service institutions discussed in Chapter 4, the retreat of the classic political opportunity structures⁶⁵ coincided with the rapid growth of the internet in Ukraine. Ukrainian civic activists appropriated the internet and digital media in line with their values and goals. This chapter seeks to give a fuller, more detailed account of the role of digital media as a political opportunity structure for grassroots activism – an often tangential and intermittent subject in civil society scholarship.

The Retreat of Formal Political Opportunity Structures

The post-Soviet transformation did not bolster anticipated reforms in political institutions, depriving Ukrainians of a resilient and reliable political opportunity structure for the development of civil society. In anticipation of Ukraine’s first independent presidential and parliamentary elections of 1994, the Communist *nomenklatura*, elected in 1989, created a legislative basis for the new Ukrainian state in order to facilitate their re-election. Ex-Communist MPs raised the age of candidacy in Ukraine from eighteen years (as it had been set since the 1936 USSR Constitution) to twenty-five years, excluding, for instance, the emerging political leaders of the student-led Revolution on Granite of 1990. They also installed a compound electoral procedure to stymie competition, by which a candidate had to receive over 50% of votes in primary elections to become an MP (Kasianov 2008).

The Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada) elected in 1994 worked with President Leonid Kuchma to draft new electoral legislation. Some MPs pushed for the introduction of a proportional electoral system, which favoured MPs who did not have a constituency in specific electoral wards (Kasianov 2008). Others with a constituency in their electoral wards, who could utilise administrative or financial resources to mobilise voters, were in favour of the majoritarian system. President Kuchma vetoed the legislation introducing the proportional

⁶⁵ by which I mean the lack of the favourable institutional arrangements, typically seen as conducive to social mobilisation in Western democracies

system for thirteen times, arguing that Ukrainian parties were too weak to represent the interests of the public (Kasianov 2008). As a compromise, the parliament adopted the mixed system, with half of the MPs elected as individual candidates and the other half drawn from the ranks of the parties.

The adoption of new election principles allowed the centre-right party ‘Nasha Ukraina’ (‘Our Ukraine’) led by Viktor Yushchenko to gain a majority of votes in the proportional system quota in 2002, challenging the longstanding parliamentary majority of the Communist coalition for the first time. Scandal involving President Leonid Kuchma in 2000 also presented an opportunity for new political forces to step up. Kuchma’s security guard mayor Mykola Melnychenko leaked audio tapes that appeared to reveal Kuchma sanctioning violent action against Georgiy Gongadze, co-founder and journalist of online media outlet *Ukrainska Pravda* (‘Ukrainian Truth’). Since 2000, *Ukrainska Pravda* has been operating on the domain pravda.com, which Elon Musk sought to buy in 2018 to establish a high-quality media outlet dedicated to ethical journalism. Gongadze and his team had anticipated the salience of this domain eighteen years earlier, seeing this online media outlet as a tool to expose high-profile corruption, which typically bypassed the media censorship⁶⁶ imposed on traditional media outlets (Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group 2001). Gongadze was kidnapped and decapitated, allegedly by intelligence forces. From this point onwards, *Ukrainska Pravda* came to play an important role in the development of Ukrainian democracy as an information resource, a free arena of public discussion and an organisational means for what would become the subsequent Orange Revolution of 2004 [Prytula 2006]).

Following the release of incriminating evidence against president Kuchma in December 2000, the index of the protest potential in Ukraine saw an unprecedented spiked to 4.6 on a scale of 0 to 5, where 4.4 represented a critical value signifying readiness for mass protests (Matsiievskyi and Kovalko 2015). ‘Kuchma Het’⁶⁷ protests, sparked by Gongadze’s assassination, harnessed strong support from both leftist and right-centrist parties. Communist and socialist actively participated in the protests even though the freedom of speech had not been their priority before. In March 2003, a year before the next presidential elections, oppositional parties gathered people for the anti-Kuchma protest ‘Vostan, Ukraino’ –

⁶⁶ According to vice-rector of the Institute of Journalism of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Oleksandr Chekmyshev, state representatives regularly gave direct orders to media managers to avoid mentioning particular topics and personalities (Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group 2001).

⁶⁷ Also known as ‘Kuchmagate’ by analogy with Watergate (Karatnycky 2006), while the literal translation is ‘Kuchma Go Away’.

‘Ukraine, rebel!’ Viktor Yushchenko’s ‘Our Ukraine’ party organised 5,000 protesters, Yuliia Tymoshenko’s ‘Fatherland’, another 4,000. Six thousand more joined the columns of communists and 2,000 more marched with socialists (Podrobnosti 2003). Viktor Yushchenko, backed by ‘Our Ukraine’ and ‘Fatherland,’ became the major candidate for the presidential elections of 2004, competing against Kuchma’s protege and the prime minister at the time Viktor Yanukovych. The support of Kuchma’s allies and backing from the regional elites from eastern Ukraine gave Yanukovych a strong chance of winning. He secured access to an administrative resource to ensure that the votes got counted in the ‘right’ way, or so his opponents alleged after he won in the presidential elections of 2004 with 49.46% votes versus 46.61% of Viktor Yushchenko (Tsentralna Vyborkha Komisiia 2004). The electoral fraud signalled to Ukrainian society that the independent electoral system was at risk, launching the Orange Revolution. Under the pressure from the participants of the Orange Revolution, Ukraine’s Supreme Court made an unprecedented decision to follow the spirit of the law and announce the election results void. New elections were held, making Viktor Yushchenko the third president of Ukraine with 51.99% of votes (Tsentralna Vyborkha Komissiia 2004). While some scholars argue that the Orange Revolution was centred around Yushchenko’s personality and therefore should not be seen as a manifestation of high civic potential among Ukrainians (Aslund and McFaul 2006), Daphne Athanasouli (2016) claims that this social movement was a critical attempt to re-appropriate voice and accountability and reclaim the ability of citizens to participate in the selection of their government.

Viktor Yushchenko’s term brought yet another change to electoral legislation – for the third time in a decade. The parliamentary elections of 2006 (and re-elections of 2007) were held under the full-fledged proportional system, meaning that people voted for the parties and not individual candidates. Even though the elections of 2006 and 2007 were held following the model used in the Czech Republic, Poland and Lithuania, politicians, this move toward a more ‘European’ model played out differently in the Ukrainian political context. In Ukraine, the parties had to only disclose the names of the first five candidates from their list, and the Verkhovna Rada saw an influx of loyalists and cronies, including even the masseuses and drivers of politicians (Rohachuk 2018). In the aftermath, Ukrainian sociologists registered a consistent decrease in the level of citizens’ self-identification with political parties of both left and right ideologies (Vyshniak 2011; Dehteriova 2009; Ruchka 2012). Under such political circumstances, public distrust with political parties grew, while public accountability among politicians suffered. The principal mechanism of direct democracy – general elections –

became subject to rampant manipulation. In 28 years of independence, Ukraine have elected MPs nine times, but only twice – in 2002 and 2014 – did Ukrainians vote following the same rules that applied during the previous elections. What predominated was a practice by which every newly-elected parliament introduced new electoral legislation, which later proved useful to secure seats for MPs supportive of the sitting president.

The possibility of using lawmaking to secure electoral victory disrupted the anticipated positive outcome of political fragmentation. Legal scholar Alexei Trochev (2010) argues that the fragmentation of political and economic power in the post-Orange Ukraine was accompanied by a deepening of judicial dependency. This development runs contrary to the logic of classic rational choice scholarship, which posits that the multiparty system must be the principal guard of independent courts, because if any party can potentially win the election, then any party may later entice the dependent courts to prosecute its political rivals. Since no political party can ensure that dependent courts would not be used against them, the rational interest of every party is therefore to collectively safeguard the independence of courts. This appeared to be the case in Japan, Mexico, South Korea and Bulgaria (Ramseyer 1994; Magalhães 1999; Ginsburg 2003; Chavez 2004; Finkel 2008). In Ukraine, however, the high stakes of the political competition forced politicians to (mis)use the courts to undermine the political and economic base of the rivals in order to win the following elections, hold onto power and evade punishment for illegal actions due to the entrenchment of impunity, which subservient courts strengthened (Trochev 2010, 123).

Three years after the pro-democratic Orange Revolution, judges reported unprecedentedly high level of political pressure. Fifty-one per cent of the judges surveyed in 2007, for instance, said they experienced attempts to meddle with justice from the side of state attorneys, 19% – from the members of parliament, 18% felt pressured by the media, 11% received calls from the representatives of local authorities, 7% were pressured by political parties, 6% – by representatives of President Yushchenko's office, and 5% – by the government representatives (Alekseev 2007). The public attitude to the judiciary system developed along a similar trajectory. By 2012, only 15.1% of Ukrainians believed that judges typically base their rulings on the law, with this number further dropping to 8.9% by 2017 (Council of Europe 2019, 28). Despite substantial Western financial investment into the establishment of the independent judiciary⁶⁸ since the offset of Ukraine's independence, by

⁶⁸ By April 2009, the Rule of Law Assistance Directory listed 75 rule-of-law projects in Ukraine funded by the Western taxpayers (IDLO n.d.)

2019 only 11.4% of Ukrainians expressed at least some level of trust to the courts (Council of Europe 2019, 31). The judiciary system – the traditional check on legislative and executive power – thus became a largely unavailable legal opportunity structure (Hilson 2002) for Ukrainian civil society, deeming litigation unproductive way to counteract the misuse of power by the semi-authoritarian regime.

Chapter 1 discussed in detail how unfavourable political circumstances in 2008–2013 prevented NGOs from solving citizen problems or protecting them from the abusive state, bringing about the growing public distrust in NGOs. A comparable logic that prompted local businesses and even NGOs to adopt a cautious stance toward the state extended to the fourth estate – the journalistic media. A plethora of commercial TV channels did not lead to the secure entrenchment of freedom of speech in Ukraine, which would perform a robust checks and balance function. The vast majority of the Ukrainian commercial media market was concentrated in several media groups⁶⁹, the owners of which happened to be either directly connected to certain political parties or owned a business that could benefit from the state support. This news media landscape was thus a space in which ‘oligarchs’ used media ownership to further their business and political interests. By 2013 they had become monopolists in every field, including economy, politics and media (Kuzio 2016, 181). In the absence of public service broadcasting, the only alternative to the oligarch-owned media were the state media, directly influenced by the state, according to Yuliia Bankova, a former journalist of the state broadcaster *Pershyi Natsionalnyi* (Suspilne Detektor Media 2013). Journalistic media usually represent an important political opportunity structure for resistance in developed democracies (Cammaerts 2012), but Ukrainian society lacked a robust independent Fourth Estate to challenge the state – that is, until the emergence of *Hromadske* in the wake of the Maidan Revolution, as we will see.

When the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine asked Ukrainian respondents in 2012, ‘If the government were to adopt a policy that violates your lawful rights, would you be able to counteract such decision?’ 66.6% felt they could do

⁶⁹ Each Ukrainian national TV channel, except for Channel 5 owned by Petro Poroshenko, was a part of one of the four media holdings: Media Group Ukraine, StartLightMedia, 1+1 Media Group and Inter Media Group. Media Group Ukraine was owned by Renat Akhmetov, a donor to the Party of Regions led by Viktor Yanukovich. Dmytro Firtash and Serhii Liovochkin, co-owners of Inter Media Group, were also Party of Regions supporters. The owners of StartLightMedia and 1+1 Media Group (Viktor Pinchuk and Ihor Kolomoiskyi respectively) were both associated with Iuliia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko and owned businesses in metallurgy, steel and oil production, which are particularly dependent on governmental policies and subsidies.

nothing about it, a slight increase from 63.2% respondents who felt powerless in the same situation in 2006 (Boiko 2013, 376) (survey data presented on Figure 1).

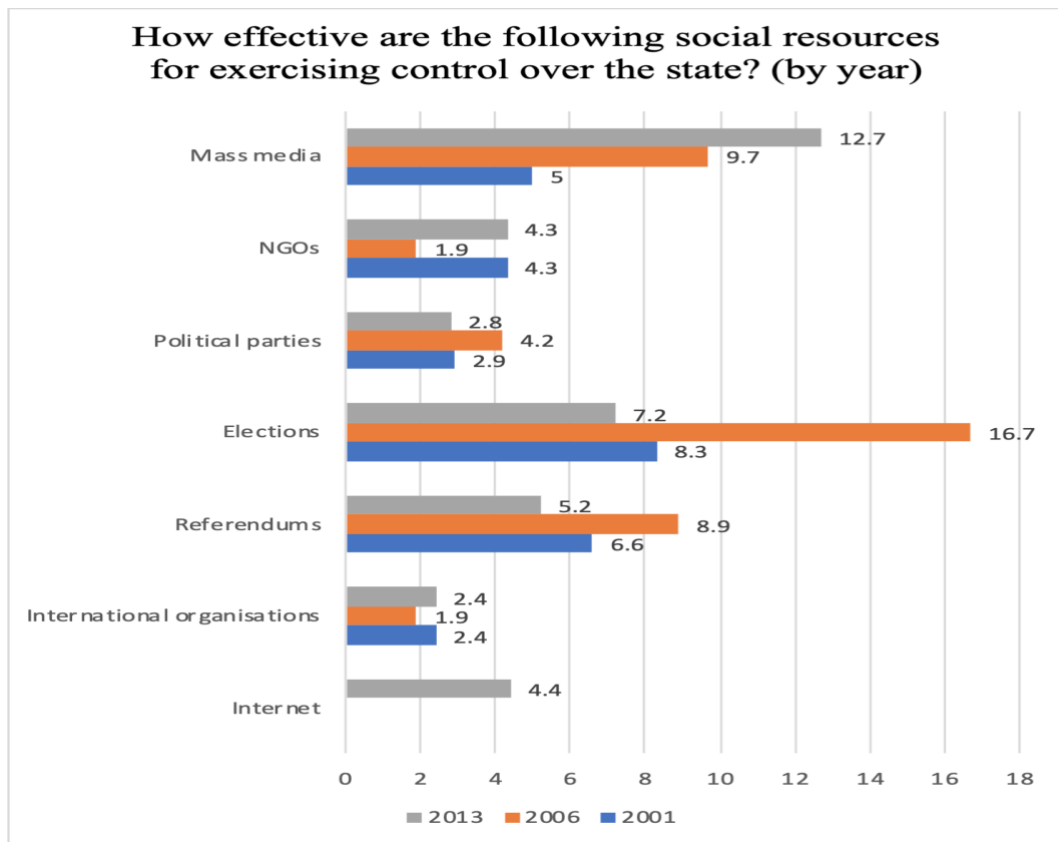


Figure 1. Perception of the effectiveness of social resources for public oversight over the state in 2001, 2006 and 2013. Graph by the author; data by Boiko (2013).

Moreover, when in 2013 Ukrainians were asked whether they believed that they had any possibility to exercise control over the state structures, 76.5% answered negatively, representing a rise from 70.5% of respondents in 2006 (ibid). Researchers then posed a choice of seven opportunity structures to exercise control over the state – news media, national NGOs, international organisations (e.g. the UN system and international aid organisations), political parties, elections, referendums, and internet – and asked which ones fit the purpose. By 2013, fewer Ukrainians then ever believed in the efficacy of elections (a drop to 7.2% compared to 16.7% in 2006 and 8.3% in 2001), referenda (plummet of 5.2% versus 8.9% in 2006 and 6.6% in 2001), and political parties (2.8% compared to 4.2% in 2006 and 2.9% in 2001 respectively). By contrast, civil society institutions (NGOs and international organisations) and media (both mass media and the internet) appeared to build up their capacity between 2006 and 2013 (Boiko 2013).

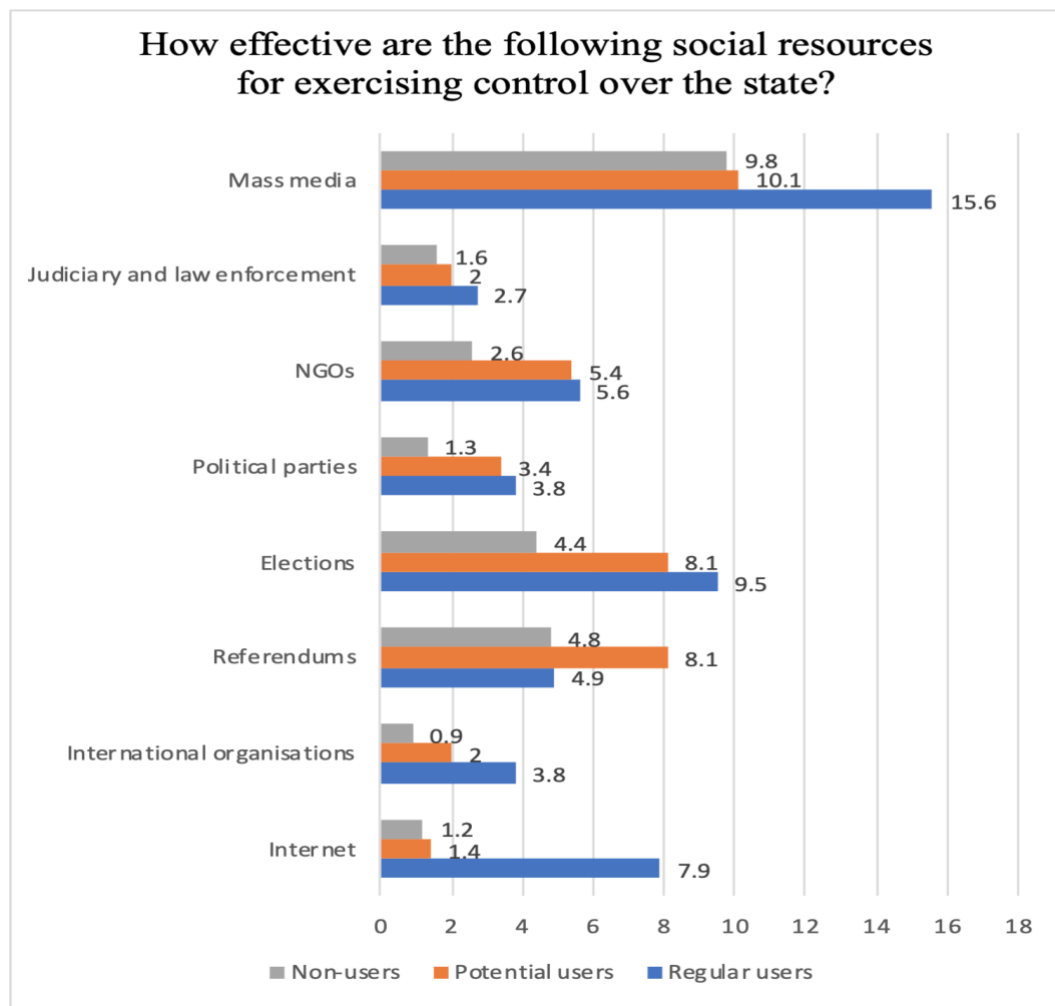


Figure 2. Perception of the effectiveness of social resources for public oversight over the state by frequency of internet usage. Graph by the author; data by Boiko (2013).

When Boiko (2013) sorted the survey data by the frequency of the internet use, it appeared that the regular internet users in 2013 had significantly more confidence in the effectiveness of the internet for public oversight compared to the non-users: 7.9% respondents saw the internet as a means of exercising control over the government, fourth only to the Fourth estate (15.6%), elections (9.5%) and referendums (4.9%) and more so than international organisations (3.8%), political parties (3.8%), NGOs (5.6%) and police and judiciary (2.7%) (data illustrated in Figure 2). Moreover, the regular internet users felt more empowered to use not just the internet, but *all* the available social resources for public oversight compared to non-regular users (potential users in Boiko's terms) or non-users. This cleavage in a perception of civic empowerment between users and non-users can shed light

on why the internet became a particularly fruitful soil for grassroots civic activism and a key instrument for civic mobilisation since 2013.

Across all the categories, survey data revealed a sense of caution about political institutions and a preference for opportunity structures perceived as horizontal – namely, the internet, media, and elections and referenda as instruments of direct democracy. This reticence around traditional political opportunity structures – political parties, the judiciary, local and international civil society organisations – was consistent with the low level of institutional and political trust. Marharyta Chabanna (2014) defines political trust as public perception that certain political institutions will work in the public interest efficiently, without the public exercising oversight over its activities. The reasons of political distrust to state institutions can be extrapolated from a survey conducted by KIIS in 2012, in which 54% of respondents named corruption as the principal reason of not trusting state institutions, 38% cited the lack of tangible results, 29% noted bureaucracy, 22% said state employees mistreated common citizens and 11% more said they did not trust state institutions because they did not communicate a clear vision of their development (KIIS 2012a). In Ukraine, this lack of political trust toward formal political opportunity structures clashed with the inherently accessible, egalitarian and transparent architecture of the digital medium, producing an alternative horizontal structure for public mobilisation.

New Media as a Political Opportunity Structure

The hegemony of the internet in all the spheres of social life started with a revolution in the media domain. Social media challenged the ‘gatekeeping’ role of television, radio, press and publishing houses. Consumers started to utilise social media platforms to discuss media content with its producers and other readers in the comments’ section, giving a rise to a ‘participatory culture’ (Jenkins, Mizuko and Boyd 2016). For Ukrainians, overloaded with entertainment content on commercial television, online media outlets and blogosphere filled a gap in uncensored socio-political content, allowing for the discussion of entrenched corruption and other pressing social issues (Prytula 2006). Digital media was appropriated by Ukrainians in a way that reflected a horizontal community ethos of public self-help, which proved to be the critical means of surviving the post-socialist transition in the 1990s. With attempts at political reforms in the 2000s worn down by clientelism and corruption in politics, law, and even the formal NGO sector (Hale 2016; Popova 2016; Pivovarsky 2016; Lutsevych

2013), Ukraine’s informal civic forces circumvented glass ceilings by embracing digital media as the critical opportunity structure for political change.

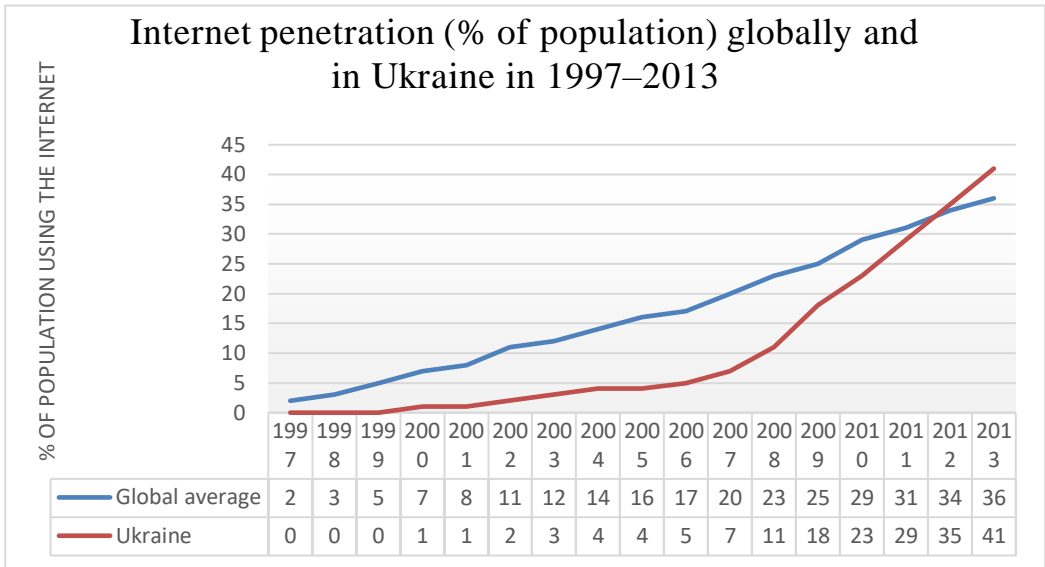


Figure 3. Comparison of the average internet penetration (% of population) globally and in Ukraine. Data source: the World Bank (n.d.d; n.d.e).

In the late 1990s–early 2000s, Ukraine appeared an unlikely ground for digital civic activism: figure 3 demonstrates that Ukraine had relatively low levels of internet penetration compared to the global average (the World Bank n.d.d). The period of accelerated growth of internet penetration in Ukraine started in 2007. It allowed Ukraine to close the gap between local internet penetration rates and the global average in 2011. In 2013 Ukraine already outperformed the global average by five percentage points (The World Bank n.d.d; n.d.e).

In Ukraine, the internet first and foremost attracted the young: by 2010, the internet has already occupied the first place in the least of the most commonly used media sources for the 18–29 age group. In 2012 GfK observed that 44% of Ukraine’s regular internet users were under 29 years old; 23% were in a 30–39 age group and 15% were 40–49 years old (Yarovaia 2012). Secondly, the internet connected urban dwellers, potentially disconnected from their local communities and extended families. According to the same study by GfK, 80% of the regular internet users lived in the cities, which was generally consistent with Ukraine’s demographic profile as the level of the country’s urbanisation stood at around 70% (Krainikova 2014).⁷⁰ Thirdly, it was appropriated by the most educated. In 2012 GfK Ukraine

⁷⁰ In 2012, for instance, the city/village digital divide was not as grave as one might have expected:

divided the internet users into three clusters – long-term⁷¹ users (over six years or regular use), midterm users (two to five years) and newcomers (under two years). The greatest proportion of graduate degree holders was observed amongst the long-term users – 49%.⁷² Ten per cent more were in a process of attaining such degree or holding an undergraduate diploma, while 18% more held an equivalent of UK professional degree (Krainikova 2014). The same dynamic applied to income levels: before 2006, the Ukrainian internet was primarily occupied by the high-earners, as 5% of users could afford buying home appliances at any time without a loan.

By 2013 the Ukrainian internet had democratised, attracting a greater number of people from villages, users from lower classes, users with lower educational backgrounds, and users from both younger (up to 16) and older (over 60) age groups (Vyshlinskyi 2013).⁷³ Ukraine's internet audience in November 2013 showed a dramatic increase in internet penetration in smaller cities with the population of 100,000+ (the corresponding per centage of internet users from such cities increased from 23% to 49.8% of all users between 2012 and 2013), villages (22.5% of the internet users) and small towns (27.8% of the regular users) (ibid). Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate a consistent increase in internet use in urban and rural areas and across all age groups from February 2011 to 2013.

Between 2008 and 2013, the internet penetration more than doubled, covering 19.7 million people. In addition, the number of households that had computers at home increased from 22% in 2008 to 33% in 2012. By 2013, the share of enterprises connected to the internet reached 95.1%, of which 38% had high-speed broadband (Natsionalna Komisiia... 2014, 42); and the share of educational institutions with the internet connection reached 74.2% (2012/2013 academic year) (ibid), facilitating the internet access for Ukrainians in all regions.

village dwellers, who represented 31.1% of the Ukrainian population, also constituted 19% of the digital citizenry. 28% of regular users lived in cities with a population of 500,000 people or more, 25% concentrated in the towns with a population of 101,000-500,000, 6% connected from the cities of 50,000-100,000, while 23% lived in the towns with a population of under 50,000 and around 19% came from villages around Ukraine (Krainikova 2014).

⁷¹ This category targets the first-movers of internet technology in Ukraine; only about 6% of Ukrainians used the internet regularly in 2006, according to the ESS 2006.

⁷² For the midterm users, the respective proportion was smaller: 38% of the regular internet users with two to five years of 'experience' had graduate degrees, 11% held an undergraduate degree and 17% – professional degree. By contrast, the 'newbies' were more likely to have school certificates – 2% held a 'primary education' qualification attained at Ukrainian schools at the age of 9, 10% passed the Ukrainian equivalent of GCSE, 30% – the equivalent of UK A-levels, 18% held professional degrees, while 8% and 25% of users held undergraduate and graduate degrees respectively.

⁷³ This category included respondents who reported struggling to afford basics such as food.

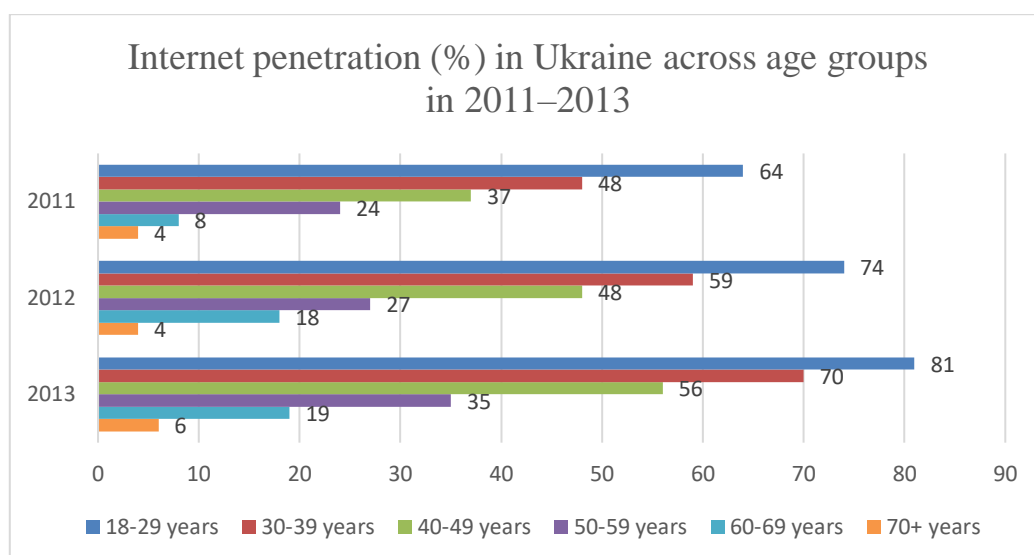


Figure 4. Internet penetration (%) in Ukraine across age groups in 2011–2013. Data aggregated by the author from two sources: KIIS 2012b and KIIS 2013b.

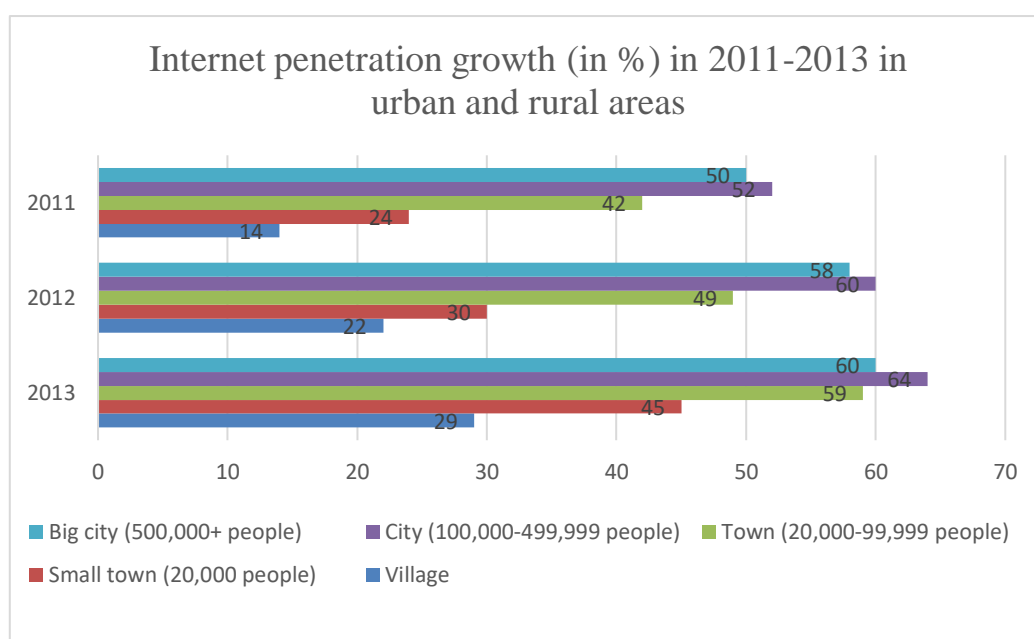


Figure 5. Internet penetration (%) in Ukraine in urban and rural areas. Data aggregated by the author from two sources: KIIS 2012b and KIIS 2013b.

By 2013 the regional disparities in internet access started to bridge. In 2007 there were 9.6 million internet users in Ukraine, 61% of whom lived in Kyiv (Boichuk and Muzyka 2010, 96). Ukraine's biggest cities cumulatively accounted for over 24% of all internet users: Odesa (6%), Dnipro (5%), Donetsk (4%), Kharkiv (4%), Lviv (3%), Zaporizhzhia (2%) (ibid). The rest of the regions accounted for the remaining 15%. Zhytomyr and Volyn regions had the

lowest internet penetration rates: 0.2% and 0.3%, respectively (Boichuk and Muzyka 2010, 96). Figure 6 shows that in 2013 Kyiv still accounted for the most significant proportion of internet users. In 2013 Kyiv accounted for 1.7 million users out of 19.7 million internet users in Ukraine (Natsionalna Komissiiia... 2014, 73), or 8.6% of the total Ukrainian internet users – far from 61%, which Kyiv had in 2008. Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Lviv and Odesa regions were joined by the Vinnytsia region in the list of the highest internet penetration in Ukraine. However, regional differences were not wholly erased: Zhytomyr remained amongst the least connected regions with 51,900 internet users (Natsionalna Komissiiia... 2014, 73), or 0.3%. Volyn also accounted for only 0.3% but improved the internet connection quality, with 16 out of 100 households having fixed broadband at home, in line with the national average (Natsionalna Komissiiia... 2014, 73).

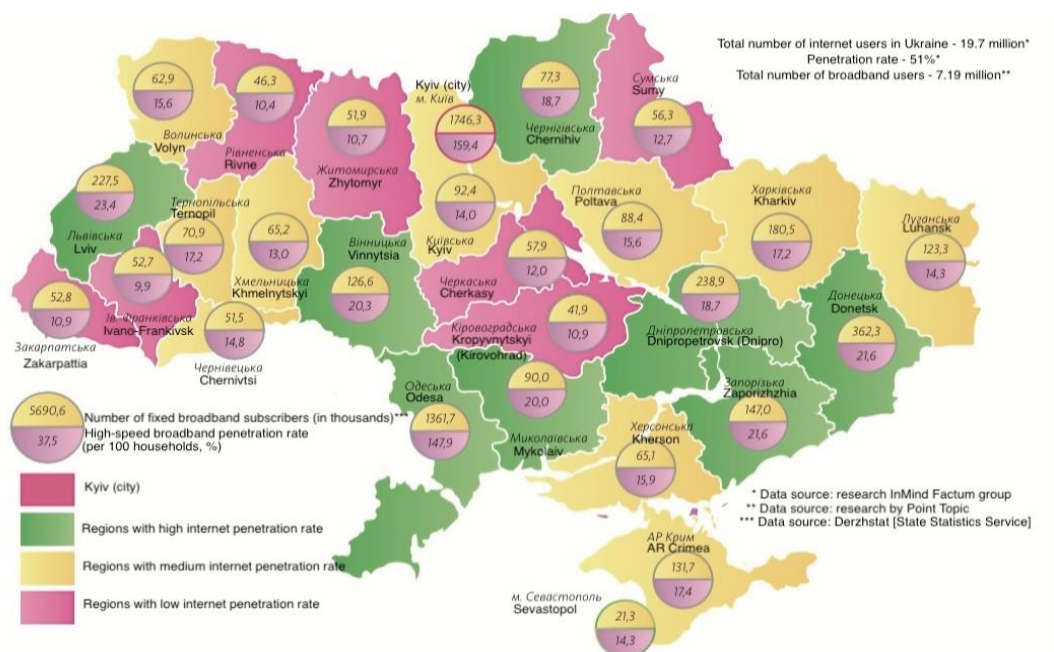


Figure 6. Regional disparities in internet penetration in Ukraine in 2013. Graph adapted by the author from the report by the National Commission for the State Regulation of Communications and Informatisation (Natsionalna Komissiiia... 2014, 73).

In addition to gradual increases in internet penetration rates across Ukraine, the 2010s saw the internet infrastructure gradually improve. By 2011 Ukraine already ranked eighth in the world for the download speed (1190 Kbps), according to a study by Pando Networks (AFP 2011). By 2013, a third of Ukrainian internet users had access to high-speed broadband (Natsionalna Komissiiia... 2014, 73). As demonstrated in Figure 6, Kyiv and Odesa were the

most significant outliers in terms of high-speed broadband connection, with an average of 159 and 148 high-speed broadband cables per 100 households, respectively (ibid).

The affordability of the internet in Ukraine further enabled rapid expansion, as the average cost of an unlimited broadband plan stood at around 10 USD per month in 2012 (Freedom House 2012). At the same time, the average monthly charge for residential broadband services globally cost between 20 USD to 60 USD per month (OECD 2013, 164).

The increasing affordability of mobile devices provided Ukrainians with an alternative means to access the internet. The survey conducted by Research & Branding Group on a representative sample of 2079 respondents on 20–30 June 2013 found that 83% of the adult population of Ukraine owned a mobile device (R&B Group 2014). Some owned several devices as the number of mobile services subscribers exceeded the total population of Ukraine. The nominal mobile penetration in Ukraine stood at 137% (Natsionalna Komissiiia... 2014, 71).

The combination of affordability and the high speed internet would later enable Ukrainian protesters during the Maidan Revolution to stream video content from the streets and post-Maidan civic activists to develop digital platforms to share educational content (the case of *Prometheus*) or even host public auctions for state procurement (the case of *ProZorro*), as we will see. The permissive architecture of the internet, allowing for organic growth of the network with a plurality of actors, made online media outlets and social networking websites less susceptible to centralised control, turning them into a valuable asset for civic activism. The anonymity of IP addresses created a sense of privacy and security, while a lack of government regulation diminished the abilities of state officials to influence online media outlets. In the following years, the internet in Ukraine outgrew its conventional sense as a platform for online media outlets and became itself a *medium*, a tool for the activation of Ukraine's informal grassroots civic forces.

This activation of civic activism seemed to take place under the radar. Rational choice institutionalism reads a lack of engagement with formal political structures⁷⁴ as political apathy, but the ESS surveys registered a consistently high level of interest to political affairs in Ukraine in 2002–2012. Between 2006 and 2012, Ukrainians watched between 30 and 60 minutes of political and current affairs content – that is, between a third and a half of the total

⁷⁴ As I will discuss below, the longitudinal study, conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, revealed that only 2.9%, 4.2% and 2.8% of Ukrainian respondents in 2001, 2006 and 2013 respectively, believed in the efficacy of political parties for exercising control over the state (Boiko 2013, 377).

1.5–2 hours a day typically dedicated to TV watching. Ukrainians also showed strong preference for political content in print media, radio, and internet media. In 2013, according to a sociological study by the Institute of Sociology of Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, 32% of regular internet users followed politics-centred news, 12% read blogs and posts of politicians and civic activists, 5.6% left their comments below the messages discussing social and political developments, 4% supported civic activities initiated by other users (including helping the sick or participating in protests against illegal construction), and 1.5% more initiated such activities themselves (Boiko 2013, 380).

And yet, Ukraine's president Viktor Yanukovich paid relatively little attention, focusing instead on taking under his control the oligarchs who owned traditional media outlets, a move that resulted in Ukraine's 'partly free' media status in 2012 according to the Freedom House report (2012), which also judged the Ukrainian internet 'free'. The lack of state legislation to regulate the internet activities in Ukraine naturally complicated the adoption of any openly aggressive measures to limit internet freedom. In Russia, what had been a largely uncensored online space in the early 2000s became an increasingly regulated one, consolidating internet users under the umbrella of the five biggest state-controlled internet service providers (ISP) (Freedom House 2011). In Ukraine, by contrast, the previously state-owned top-tier ISP Ukrtelecom was privatised (Freedom House 2012). If by 2010 Russia was already increasing the number of attacks and arrests of the internet bloggers – 11 bloggers were arrested between January 2009 and May 2010 (Freedom House 2011) – there were no known cases of either direct harassment of bloggers or websites blockages or filtering in Ukraine (Freedom House 2012).

The first indirect attempt to impose limits on the online space came in 2011 from the project of the law 'On protecting public morals.' The law suggested endowing the governmental National Expert Commission in the Protection of Public Morals with the power to block the pornographic content, hate speech and the vaguely defined 'other types of illegal content'. Another law project developed the same year aimed at combatting online piracy and protect intellectual property. Both legislative proposals sparked public discussion about the potential of being misused to threaten internet freedoms. Under public pressure from groups like Reporters Without Borders, both projects were rejected by the parliament. As a result, the semi-authoritarian political regime of Viktor Yanukovich brought much of Ukrainian public life under its watchful eye, with the exception of the internet, which remained 'free' according to the Freedom House assessment in 2013 (Freedom House 2013).

With the political establishment seeming oblivious to the potential of the fast-growing Ukrainian net for political change, Ukrainians channelled their interest to politics into under-regulated online space. Progression from passive (consuming political news and following politicians) to active civic practices (discussing politics and initiating or taking part in civic activism) went hand in hand with the development of social networking websites in Ukraine. By 2012, social networking activity overrode the use of email as the major form of internet activity in Ukraine for the first time (Yarovaia 2012), and by 2013, 50% of Ukrainians over the age of 16 used the internet regularly, naming social network websites as the primary reason to use the internet (GfK 2013). Social networking websites not only helped Ukrainians to sustain connections with geographically distant relatives and friends but soon became a principal means of civic activism. An example of its effective use in large-scale mobilisation for ‘public self-service’ came in March 2013.

The Internet and Civic Mobilisation before the Maidan Revolution

Unexpected snowfall on 23 March 2013 saw Kyiv hit with 40 million tons of snow (Delo.ua 2013) (see Appendix E for illustrations of the extreme snowfall in Kyiv).

The state failed to arrange the snow clearing efficiently, leading to public transport closures and all-night traffic jams. Thousands of Kyivans got stuck in the business-dominated right bank of the river Dnipro, unable to get home to the primarily residential left bank due to the overloaded bridges. Social media exploded with messages from the people looking for a place to sleep. Car-owners suggested free rides to compatriots immobilised by the public transport disruptions, whilst right-bank residents offered free food and hot drinks and helped drivers to push the cars stuck in the snow.

In the face of this crisis, Ukraine’s culture of self-help found a digital life. Almost immediately, an unknown volunteer team of IT professionals set up a website called helpkyiv.org, where people posted announcements whenever they needed help. Others used the existing architecture of social networks such as Facebook and vk.com. Outlined in the images below are few examples of the posts on the Facebook group ‘SOS!!Kiev.Emergency service (coordination)’ from 24–28 March 2013 (see Appendix E for screengrabs of the posts cited below):

March 25, 2013, at 12:17 am, Kyiv, Ukraine

Because of the severe weather conditions, the animal shelter Sirius (and other shelters as well) urgently need help! ... You can help by giving a lift to volunteers...

6 likes, 12 comments.

March 25, 2013, at 9:21 am

#help needed on Vanda Vasylevska street 12/16. [I] don't have either a car cable or a shovel (need help to dig and pull the car out of the snowdrift). Who is nearby?

6 likes 5 comments

March 24, 2013, at 8:37 pm, Kyiv, Ukraine

Dvoretz Ukraina neighbourhood, Vladimirskii market, call me if you need help to buy food or need medical care from a doctor. [I] cannot offer help in other neighbourhoods because my car is stuck in the snow and I am alone with three children.

4 likes, 8 comments

March 25, 2013, at 1:41 pm

The problem in Okhmadit⁷⁵ is solved. Now!!! URGENTLY!!! Help is needed in Darnitskii district, the ambulance station at Urlivska, 13 [...] We need 15 people with shovels and crowbars.

3 likes, 102 comments

March 25, 2013, at 9:38 am

#help We are currently calling all the hospitals in Kyiv to learn which ones first and foremost need help with snow clearing to free the roads to the A&E departments. Those ready to dig – stay tuned!

4 likes

March 25, 2013, at 4:33 pm

ROLL CALL Current tasks: calling/messaging the volunteers for tomorrow: Okyabrskaya hospital (Klovska station, Palats Sporta station); calling/messaging the volunteers for tomorrow: Pymonenko street 10 (Lukyanovskaya station); search for information about what help is needed [...].

5 likes, 17 comments (Figure 5).⁷⁶

Such posts reveal three characteristics of online self-help communities. First of all, they are open, inviting a wide range of activities, from helping individual drivers to supporting public facilities such as animal shelters, hospitals, and A&E departments. Secondly, they are transformative, turning individuals into grassroots coordinators of civic activism. In one example, a man who begins by asking for help to get out of the snow when stuck in a snowdrift

⁷⁵ Okhmadit is a paediatric cancer treatment clinic. They asked for volunteer help with a snow clearing earlier in that day.

⁷⁶ Translation by the author.

subsequently becomes a coordinator of volunteer snow clearing services for hospitals – all in a matter of a day. Thirdly, these communities are fluid. As one post illustrates, leaders actively recruit other leaders: ‘who is coordinating volunteers tomorrow?’ These unconventional grassroots forms of civic activism share the principal characteristics of conventional civil society associations envisioned by the liberal theory: namely, volunteerism, egalitarianism (all members have equal rights in decision-making), and proceduralism (Parsons 1971).

This emotive Facebook sums up the major civil value of this crisis moment (see Appendix E for a screengrab of the original post).:

I am grateful to God for this unexpected meteorological gift. I’m grateful to Mr Popov⁷⁷ for the ungifted disaster management. I’m grateful to Mr ‘Azirov’⁷⁸ for being true to his aspiration to ‘ameliorate’⁷⁹ the life of Ukrainians by cynically delegating [his] responsibilities to a common Ukrainian and a shovel. Today, the lonely soldier of Ukrainian Armed Forces, doomed to dig a tunnel in the snow near the checkpoint with a bayonet shovel, is a metaphor for the efficiency of Ukrainian state apparatuses. I’m grateful that in this critical moment, the residential road, swept by snow to such an extent that an ambulance cannot get through, stands in a sharp contrast to the perfectly cleared roads to Koncha Zaspa.⁸⁰

Thanks to this, I’ve seen dozens of people helping each other. I’ve seen how, without saying a word, people left their cars to free the cars of the others stuck in the snow. I’ve seen Jeeps patrolling the roads to pull stuck cars out of snowdrifts. The taxi drivers freed huge Suburbans from snow captivity. And a Porsche driver pushed an old Opel, together with the passengers of the 24th Volga. I heard the proud voice of my daughter telling me about her record of 24 pulled cars and 9-hour-long trip from Darnytsia to Obolon⁸¹ that night. I saw the officers of DAI road police, having stuck their batons in... and pushing the cars together with the drivers.

The city is overflowed by MUTUAL HELP. And this is not an accident – this is the rule! This, right here, is Kyiv, baby! This, right here, are we – the Kyivans. Patient individualists until the time comes, ready to unite in hard times, full of respect for ourselves and one another. Everyone guided by a willingness to help and the rule of mutual aid – the citizens of the Free City! Not that much time has passed since 2004...⁸² This is Kyiv, Sashenka.⁸³ And these are Kyivans, Kolenka⁸⁴ (Chumachenko 2013)

⁷⁷ The mayor of Kyiv at the time.

⁷⁸ The well-known nickname of Ukraine’s prime-minister at the time Mykola Azarov, given to him because of a peculiar Russian accent he had when speaking Ukrainian.

⁷⁹ The word used here is ‘pokrishchit’ from Ukrainian ‘pokrashchyty,’ to ameliorate, but it has been modified in such a way as to remind others of Azarov’s pronunciation.

⁸⁰ Koncha Zaspa is a prestigious suburban residential area south of Kyiv, where many Ukrainian MPs lived at the time.

⁸¹ Both Darnytsia and Obolon are residential areas in Kyiv, the former located on the left bank of Dnipro river and the latter on the right bank approximately 27 km apart, usually requiring a 25 minutes long car ride.

⁸² The year of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, which gathered thousands of Ukrainians opposed to the alleged electoral fraud by Viktor Yanukovych.

⁸³ Diminutive for Oleksandr, the name of Mr Popov, the aforementioned mayor of Kyiv in 2013.

⁸⁴ Diminutive for Mykola, the name of Mr Azarov, the prime minister of Ukraine in 2013.

This post sums up the civic values whose evolutionary development I traced earlier: a culture of mutual self-aid, a disregard for official power structures, and a cool individualistic attitude to everyday politics ‘until the time comes’. The March 2013 snowfall crisis revealed a potent ability to collaborate on a grassroots level, bringing to the forefront civic solidarity juxtaposed to the state bureaucracy perceived as self-interested, irresponsible, foreign – here are ‘we’ and there are ‘they’. The author of the post also stressed the sense of mutual respect for one another demonstrated by the people, who are disrespected by the political establishment when the latter prioritises cleaning the roads to politicians’ houses over roads to the hospitals.

This potent, organic voluntary organisation for mutual help in Kyiv in March 2013 stands in sharp contrast to failed attempts to mobilise Ukrainian citizens for a series of regional protests under the banner ‘Rise Up Ukraine’ [‘Vstavai Ukraino’]. They were organised by the political opposition parties *Batkivshchyna*, *UDAR* and *Svoboda* in the summer of 2013. The protests, which were supposed to gather 100,000 people, attracted only about a fifth of the planned number of participants around Ukraine (Bohdanova 2014, 134). The inability of political parties to achieve mass mobilisation was consistent with the previously discussed data from the sociological study by Boiko: in September 2013, only 2.8% of Ukrainians perceived political parties as a mechanism through which the society can exercise control over the state. By contrast, the internet was perceived as a viable resource to exercise such control by 4.4% Ukrainians in 2013 (Boiko 2013). The recorded lack of trust in political parties in 2013 is one plausible explanation of why oppositional political forces that possessed significant financial resources failed to achieve mass mobilisation for a protest in June 2013, just five months before the Maidan Revolution would begin, following a Facebook post from journalist Mustafa Nayyem calling out to gather on the Independence Square, commonly known as the Maidan. In other words, the lack of trust in efficacy of the traditional political opportunity structures pushed Ukrainians to find an alternative outlet for their peculiar social capital with a focus on self-organisation. This social capital was harnessed in social networks and channeled into the internet – a sphere as attractive to the young educated middle class as it was foreign to the middle-aged and less-technologically savvy political establishment.

The Maidan: Civil Society (r)Evolution

Mustafa Nayyem

21 November 2013

All right, let's get serious. Who is ready to come to the Maidan today before midnight? Likes don't count, only comments under this post saying 'I am ready.' As soon as we are over a thousand, we will start self-organising.

3,3K likes, 1155 shares (see appendix F for screengrab of the original post).

This post by Mustafa Nayyem helped drive what would become known as the Euromaidan Revolution, the Maidan Revolution, or the Revolution of Dignity. It gathered several hundreds Kyivans, who were upset by President Yanukovich's last-minute decision, in the face of Kremlin pressure, to pull out of the Association Agreement with the European Union. The initial low scale of public mobilisation between November 21 and 29, 2013 seemed to affirm sociological data from the nation-wide survey, conducted on 9–20 November 2013 by KIIS, in which only 12.3% of respondents expressed a readiness to take part in sanctioned demonstrations, with 3.4% more claiming readiness to take part in non-sanctioned demonstrations (KIIS 2013b). Given this low protest potential, Yanukovich's audacious decision to deploy violence to disperse protesters on the night of 30 November 2013 may have appeared, at least in one sense, to pose few risks. But in the days to follow, Kyiv's streets see gatherings of millions of protesters (Pali 2015, 579).

What motivated you to participate in the Maidan Revolution?

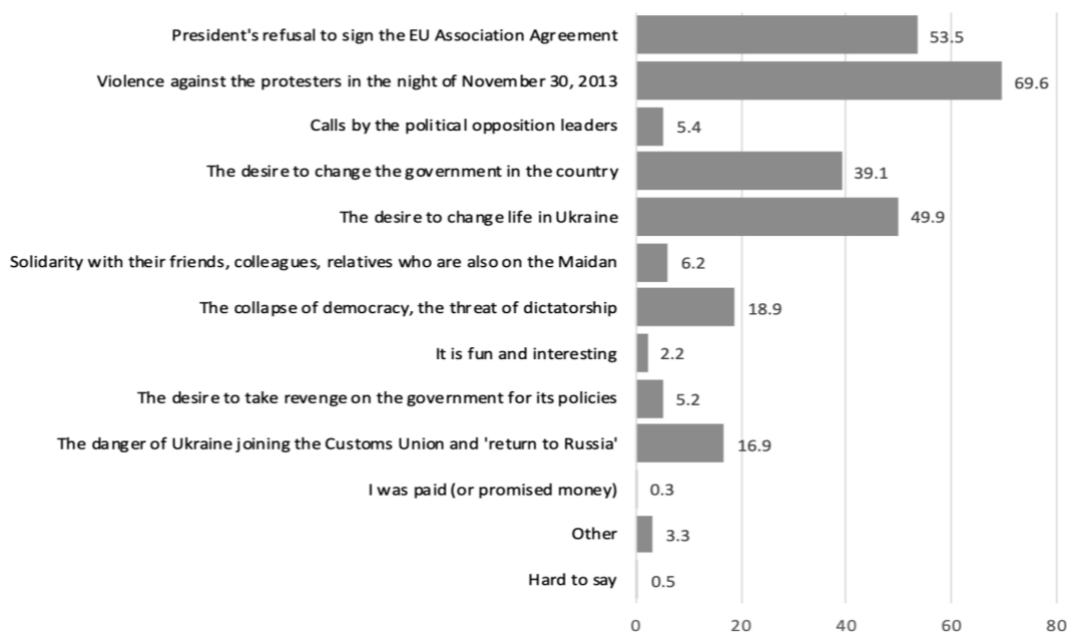


Figure 7. Graph by the author. Source of data: the Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2013b).

Seventy per cent of them claimed that the use of violence against peaceful student demonstration was the pivotal stimulus for their participation (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2013b), as Figure 7 demonstrates. According to a poll taken by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in December 2013, only 5.4% of respondents joined the protest because of calls to action by opposition politicians. Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse (2016) explain that the diversity of actors and the inability of activists and party leaders to coordinate the protest became the two central features of the Maidan Revolution. It was marked by a ‘disordered’ grassroots ethos that reflected Ukraine’s ‘informality’ culture and privileged horizontal over hierarchical organisational forms. Digital media accordingly became its principal resource. Already a well-proven tool for civic mobilisation in the Arab Spring and civic uprisings in Syria in the early 2010s, social media equipped Ukrainians with round-the-clock information about developments on the streets, allowing protesters to assess personal risks and participate in ways conducive to their personal motivations and expertise, from working in the *ad hoc* ‘field hospital’ or organising food provision. Eighty-three per cent of the respondents of another study by Onuch’s (2015), which was conducted on the streets of the Maidan, received relevant information via the internet – through personal emails and social media messages. Facebook was the most popular single source of information for 37% of respondents after traditional media outlets, on which 52% of respondents relied (Onuch 2015a, 228). Social media also fuelled the rise of viewership of new internet television channels like *Hromadske TV*, *Spilno TV* and *Espresso TV* (Onuch 2015a; Onuch 2015b; Piechota and Rajczyk 2015), which one respondent called ‘direct information for direct action’ (Onuch 2015a, 230). This ‘directness’ of information came from an unceasing stream of amateur documentary footage filmed on mobile phones, which shared via mobile internet and then circulated by internet television channels. The internet-mediated ‘immediacy’ of the protest did not only create a sense of solidarity with the participants of the Revolution but allowed them, even more crucially, to immediately learn when and where reinforcements of protestors were needed to keep the movement fresh and sustained.

Exploding with amateur photo and video, digital space became a creative outlet for ‘imagining’ the protest (Anderson 1983), for co-producing the shared *meaning* of the Maidan Revolution. The plurality of actors framing the protest represents the fundamental difference between the digital and the traditional media outlets. The latter, seen as a principal mechanism for the social construction of the collective action in the 1960s (Gitlin 1980; Johnstone and

Tuchman 1982), tend not to afford protestors the ability to exercise control over the ‘media stories’ (Entman and Rojecki 1993; McCarthy, Smith and Zald 1996). The more participatory architecture of the social networking websites, by contrast, worked radically differently. Social media platforms and video streaming tools gave protestors authority and opportunity to frame the protest and turn the social movement into a cradle of a new civic culture, a centre of a collective negotiation of a rapidly evolving national identity (Melucci 1980). The social networking websites permitted transparent public negotiations, allowing to voice, discuss, record and display all voiced opinions and enabling ‘frame articulation’ (Benford and Snow 2000). It facilitated ‘frame amplification’ as well (ibid), with social network algorithms highlighting particular events, experiences, actors and beliefs based on rates of popularity in the network. The potency of digital media came with risks. In Ukraine, some protestors purposefully avoided social media because the ‘spreadability’ of personal posts could make them easy targets for the Yanukovich regime (Onuch 2015a). Others were worried about radical groups misusing and distorting the meanings of their posts (ibid).

Social media contributed to framing the protest as a common man’s struggle against the infringement of their lawful rights by the government of President Yanukovich. Onuch explains: ‘Out of all respondents who identified Facebook as the most useful source of information on where to protest, 26% stated they were protesting because of the specific claim that their civil rights were infringed upon by the regime; only 16% of those who relied on mainstream media identified this specific claim as a central reason for their participation’ (2015, 229). The abundance of videos displaying police’s violence against the unarmed and often defenseless protestors further reinforced the image promoted by the social media hashtag #NeZlyiMaidan – #NoEvilMaidan. This hashtag represented a witty wordplay on Ukrainian word *zlyi* – an adjective for evil and a homonym of an imperative form of the verb *zlyvaty*, ‘to flush down’ or ‘betray’. It sought to remind the protestors that they should remain peaceful and not succumb to provocations, so as not to give the government the any reason to deploy physical force.

Another popular media frame circulated via social media underlined the grassroots nature of the protest. The online initiative ‘I’m a Drop in the Ocean’ (‘Ya – kraplia v okeani’) promoted the idea that everyone’s contribution, not matter how small (even ‘a drop’), counted toward the achievement of the common goal. A Facebook group operating under the same name brought together creative professionals, who developed the image of a water drop and the title of the community, which people could use for their profile picture. The group also

created a website that gathered a collection of stories about the participants of the Maidan Revolution (Tytysh 2014). Protesters could also download poster templates and customise the text to reflect on the meaning they assign to this movement. Traditional mainstream mass media offered nothing similar. As Onuch (2015) notes in her fieldwork study: '[the] framing effect of social media was supported in rapid interviews and focus group discussions, whereby protesters told our research team that they "saw this slogan on Facebook" and copied it for their poster to take to the protests, some even just simply printing out slogans and images that had gone viral on social media ... Thus, ... social media, where activists had more access and were more capable of setting the agenda, provided a framing effect to the protest claims' (2015, 229).

Both Tetiana Lokot (2016) and Olga Onuch (2015) made clear that social media were more readily used by 'new' protesters, while 'old' protesters typically preferred traditional media outlets. Inexperienced protesters were therefore more exposed to frames perpetuated by social media – namely, that of a grassroots movement demonstrating the might of self-help in conflict with the state. Digital media allowed 'new' protesters to expand the repertoires of collective action. If at first the organisational structures on the streets of the Revolution were set up by the 'old' protesters, who had previously participated in the Orange Revolution of 2004 (Lokot 2016), the 'new' protesters took advantage of digital media to advance, for instance, the efficient crowdsourcing of goods and services. First came 'digitised' versions of sheets of paper listing needed goods displayed on the protesters' tents. Then, a Facebook group 'Euromaidan' emerged, gathering over 70,000 followers in a fortnight. It was only one of the multiple outlets through which food, clothing and medicines for the protesters were crowdsourced (Lokot 2016). As one Maidan protestor recalled, 'We'd have people just show up and say they saw a post on Facebook – God knows who posted it or when – and say they could set up the Wi-Fi or train perimeter guards, or make posters' (Lokot 2016, 110).

The Facebook group 'EuroMaidanSOS' provided a platform for crowdsourcing volunteer services, including legal services to fight in courts (mis)used to exercise pressure on protestors. Once the government forces started to illegally detain and kidnap protesters, an organiser of 'Euromaidan SOS' named Oleksandra Matviichuk posted two messages: (1) 'contact us if you are a protester and require free legal help' and (2) 'contact us if you are a lawyer and can provide pro bono legal help' (Wilson 2017). Later, the 'Euromaidan SOS' Facebook community deployed 250 volunteers to create a comprehensive list of missing and detained persons (Soldatov and Borogan 2015). Sofia Wilson (2017) draws upon the example

of this Facebook group to challenge rational choice scholarship that doubted the possibility of efficient strategic litigation in the absence of accessible legal opportunity structures. In the case of Ukraine, she explains, state repression triggered the creation of an alternative informal opportunity structure for cause lawyering. Lawyers provided pro bono legal help to protesters, explaining citizens' rights whilst detained and in court and filing appeals to the higher authorities. Social media influencers, in their turn, drew crowds to the public hearings and under the court doors, leveraging social media as a means of exercising public pressure and control. 'A democratic revolutionary movement in the country offered the necessary social resources for cause lawyers to succeed' (Wilson 2017).

Social media not only accelerated protest participation, diffusing divergent segments of society; it also allowed the movement to spread to different regions (Garrett 2006). Indeed, the use of digital media for the tactical diffusion of activism-related knowledge, successful practices and organisational patterns (Earl and Kimport 2011) played a crucial role in fuelling local 'Maidans' in all Ukrainian regions. As Lokot points out, digital media connected Kyiv-based activists with protesters in the regions to share advice and lessons learned and coordinate protest messages and tactics; it built a broader informal, horizontal structure for the protest community (Lokot 2016, 154). Social media also strengthened a sense of solidarity among the participants of the social movement across the country, from Kharkiv to Lviv and beyond (Lokot 2016). One of Lokot's interviewees first participated in a protest in Kyiv and then returned to Kharkiv to manage the local protest camp. The protester recalled that on some days 'you could see dozens of people posting descriptions of the same moment, sharing the same photo [creating a feeling of] belonging to the same group in this one moment' (2016, 142). Social media websites allowed a protestor to mark her location, both on her own and in communion with others. As another one of Lokot's respondents argued, the ability to put the geotag on the Maidan created 'a certain sense of solidarity, especially when you looked at all the other people marked as being in the same location' (Lokot 2016, 150).

Finally, social media circumstantially came to play a critical role in strengthening social ties – and forming new ones – when it came to mass mobilisation for a protest. Onuch points out that protesters overwhelmingly – 77% – joined the protest accompanied by someone else (Onuch 2015a: 224). The respondents were most likely to join in with people from their personal networks: members of their family (32.9% of respondents) and friends (30.9%) or members of their professional communities (work colleagues, 3.8%; fellow students, 9%). Studies by Tetiana Lokot (2016), Tetiana Bohdanova (2014) and Grażyna Piechota and

Robert Rajczyk (2015) provide more survey-based evidence that a combination of personal networks and extended social media connections was the principal driver for protest participation.

For protesters who had engaged in civic activism since at least 2004, the personal networks within existing civil society organisations were more valuable than calls for participation circulating on social media. Such activists argued that the ‘existing civil society networks’ and the general level of ‘the citizens’ disillusionment with the political elites’ were the primary mobilising factors, coupled with the role of personal connections and face-to-face communication (Lokot 2016). Data from Onuch’s (2015) survey, however, stressed that for the experienced protesters, social media helped ‘bridge’ organisational and personal networks, easing the strain on social movement organisation and placing more mobilisation pressure on individuals themselves. For the new protesters, social networking websites compensated for the lack of any ‘strong social tie’, connecting them to a protest, by providing the multiplier effect of the ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter 1983). Social networks ‘permanentised’ new connections formed during the encounters on the streets of the Revolution (Piechota and Rajczyk 2015). The connections formed during the Revolution appear to have been lasting: 53% of respondents in Kyiv and 69% of respondents in L’viv said that, a year after the Maidan Revolution, they remained a part of online communities formed during the protests (Piechota and Rajczyk 2015). As Oleksandr Starodubtsev, the co-founder of the public-procurement system *ProZorro*, told me: ‘The best thing that I took out of the Maidan Revolution is the phone book.’

The overwhelming majority of 59 interviewees in Lokot’s (2016) study said that, with the beginning of the Revolution, they started following new users and new groups on social media in order to broaden their knowledge and awareness. ‘One respondent, a journalist from Kyiv, said that she was more inclined to start following someone new during Euromaidan if someone she knew commented on their post or recommended it by re-sharing,’ Lokot explains (ibid, 137–138).

Those participants who dealt with organising things, such as medical help or fundraising, as well as those who coordinated logistics and resources, said social media was a key ingredient in assessing people’s trustworthiness and reputation. The weak ties became important, and finding someone you knew and trusted on the list of mutual friends became an indication of “good standing”, as one respondent put it (Lokot 2016, 138–139).

All in all, since 2000, the development of social media had begun to change the face of civic activism in Ukraine. In the 2010s, grassroots self-help communities consistently utilised social media to self-organise and protest against illegal construction works, or create communal green spaces, or help fellow citizens in the midst of a dramatic snowfall. With more internet penetration, Ukrainians took advantage of the internet as an opportunity structure to influence the state, growing more confident in their ability to challenge the government if need be, in comparison to non-users (Boiko 2013). During the pivotal Maidan Revolution, digital media allowed civic activists to overcome barriers to effective civic participation laid out by classic rational choice theories – namely the financial constraints and the retreat of traditional political opportunity structures as a result of semi-authoritarian regime. As ever, Ukrainians turned to their informal social networks, only this time seizing on the digital media infrastructure to expand their reach and impact. Along the way, a newly re-imagined national community emerged, laying the foundation for a sustainable digital pro-reform movement to follow.

IV. Public (Self-)Service Initiatives in Post-Maidan Ukraine

Throughout the previous chapters, we have witnessed alienation of Ukrainian citizens from formal social and political institutions – but without diminishing the potency of informal civic forces. A dramatic lack of trust in the state, judiciary and law enforcement agencies – coupled with a cautious attitude towards media and non-governmental organisations – led to the cultivation of an alternative outlet for civic activity in the fast-growing, cheap and unpoliced internet. In Chapter 2, I argued that in Ukraine social networks of colleagues, relatives and friends had long been the indispensable resource for satisfying individual and public needs, with social media helping to extend these social networks across geographic and social boundaries. In Chapter 3, I demonstrated how social networks proved an essential resource for the success of the Maidan Revolution, and subsequently allowed for the appearance of volunteer-fuelled grassroots public service institutions. While independent from, and often critical of the state, these institutions nonetheless compensated for failures of the state delivering high-quality public services and advancing long-awaited institutional reforms. In this chapter, I add context to these developments and draw from empirical research on Ukrainian post-revolutionary digital civil society to illustrate how active citizens relying on digital media produce and distribute high-quality public services on a national scale. In a series of case studies informed by insights from semi-structured interviews, I aim to demonstrate that the case of Ukraine can inform the New Public Management (NPM) theory by offering empirical evidence of how ‘co-production’ of public services can be realised.

The New Public Management (NPM) doctrine, which emerged in 1970, represented a paradigmatic break with the bureaucratic model of public administration in pursuit of frugality (Hood 1991). The 2000s brought another quintessential change to NPM thinking by conceptualising citizens as co-producers of public goods as they engage with the public services delivered by the state (O’Flynn 2007). Before the 2000s, the scholarly consensus claimed that citizens would receive the most efficient public services from the professional staff of large bureaucratic agencies. Yet empirical studies of police services in several metropolitan areas in the UK revealed that a centralised bureaucratised system had in fact a detrimental effect on the quality of public service (Ostrom 1999). Thus, the 2000s saw the rise of ‘New Public Governance’ thinking (Osborne 2006), which focused on the ‘co-production’ of public services by the state, market, and citizens. As Gemma Burgess and Daniel Durrant (2018) define it, co-production refers to the organised involvement of citizens

in the design, production and delivery of public services. Through the lens of New Public Management logic, with its concentration on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness, co-production provides an opportunity to lower the costs of public service production for the state and to sustain adequate levels of service provision in a changing economic context (Pestoff 2006).

Indeed, the technological development that accompanied the emergence of the New Public Government thinking in the 2000s has provided citizens with efficient tools to facilitate networking and collective production in various spheres of life. While the role of social media in empowering audiences and fostering ‘participatory culture’⁸⁵ is a popular subject in the field of media studies (Jenkins 2006; Jenkins, Mizuko and Boyd 2016; Delwiche and Henderson 2013), the potential of the internet for efficient public service delivery remains relatively understudied in public policy literature. Digital media can empower citizens to act independently from the market or the state, which were previously assumed to be the most viable producers of public services (Griffiths, Kippin and Stoker 2013, 7). Patrick Dunleavy (2013) argues organisational development in the digital era should be characterised by ‘disintermediation’, which he defines as the stripping out or slimming down of intermediaries in the process of public service delivery. Ukraine provides real-life examples of disintermediation, or the emergence of what I call ‘public self-service media’ – the media allowing citizens to self-serve public interests.

Ukraine is a very peculiar exemplar. Here the state is not merely ‘challenged by groups of citizens who have as their main weapon an ability to... coordinate resources of large numbers of people’ through digital media (Margetts et al. 2016, 1), as witnessed during the Arab spring, Brazilian protests, and the Ukrainian Maidan revolution itself. More often than not, the Ukrainian state is being *supported* by groups of citizens when it fails to provide public services to satisfy public needs effectively. Indeed, the case of contemporary Ukraine contradicts Huntington’s predictions that a strong civil society in a weak state would lead to the collapse of the latter (Huntington 1963). Such projections did not take into account the possibility that citizens will not necessarily exercise pressure over the state, demanding it to

⁸⁵ Henry Jenkins (2006), the theorist of the ‘participatory culture’ concept, defines participatory culture as one: with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement; with strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations with others; with some type of informal mentorship, whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices; where members believe that their contributions matter (not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute when ready and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued); where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created).

deliver the public services that the state owes to them; they did not account for citizens taking upon themselves a role in fulfilling some of the state's functions in order to strengthen it as a guarantor of national sovereignty in the face of military, political, and economic aggression.

The following chapter focuses on four such examples from Ukraine's grassroots public service organisations, representing alternatives to the state public service institutions. The first case study is discussing the non-commercial public service media *Hromadske*, which emerged in 2013 intending to fulfil the function of then-absent public service broadcaster in Ukraine.

The second case study is dedicated to the fact-checking service and disinformation buster *StopFake*, which since March 2014 'volunteered' to protect the information security of Ukraine. By the end of 2014, there was a growing recognition of the impact of Kremlin-sponsored disinformation on Ukrainian politics – the recognition informed in part by research and media content prepared by the *StopFake* team – and the task of protecting information security of Ukrainians entrusted to the Ministry of Informational Policy created in December 2014. Before then, this fundamental state function was fulfilled by a group of volunteers from *StopFake*, which allows me to conceptualize this civic initiative as an alternative public service institution.

The third case study presents the emergence of the free educational platform *Prometheus*, which fulfils a function of a capacity builder for the state educational system. This platform provides, among other courses, exam preparation lessons for children living on uncontrolled Ukrainian territories; courses in civic education; teacher development programmes for state teachers, recognised by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine; and professional qualification training for unemployed, recommended by the State Employment Agency.

The fourth case study is tracing a grassroots development of the digital public procurement system *ProZorro*. Developed by volunteers through coalition-building with Ukrainian businesses and an international non-governmental organisation, this digital procurement system was subsequently donated to the state for the sake of the greater good, promoting transparency and combatting corruption in the state sector. The team behind *ProZorro* simultaneously 'equipped' Ukrainian civil society with the digital tool *DoZorro*. The latter provides advanced analytics for all state procurement auctions and allows any member of the public with internet access to track conspicuous activities suggestive of unfair auctions, and take action.

From the functional perspective, all these four grassroots initiatives are united in bottom-up emergence for public service delivery and state capacity-building. All four utilised digital platforms as critical means to achieve sustainability in an environment characterised by a dramatic lack of financial resources. These initially grassroots civic initiatives diverge, however, in the approaches they chose to sustain themselves in the process of maturation.

Grassroots Public Service Media *Hromadske*

Hromadske telebachennia (‘public television’), known as *Hromadske*, was organised in June 2013 by eight journalists: Roman Skrypin, Yuliia Bankova, Roman Vintoniv, Serhii Andrushko, Mustafa Nayyem, Andrii Bashtovyi, Dmytro Hnap and Danylo Yanevskyi (youcontrol.com.ua n.d.). *Hromadske*’s Twitter account described its purpose succinctly: ‘For us, Ukrainian public broadcasting is a social mission, a civic responsibility. Everyone can participate by providing financial, technical, organisational or volunteer support’ (Hromadske 2013a). *Hromadske* was registered as a not-for-profit organisation with its initial funding coming in equal parts from crowdfunding and international grants (Hromadske 2013b). In an unprecedented development for Ukraine, *Hromadske* made information on its owners and its financial reports available online.⁸⁶ ‘We agreed that we would never take money from businessmen, oligarchs or politicians and would never work in the interests other than the public, Ukrainians and Ukrainian civil society,’ recalled in an interview Iuliia Bankova (2020), the co-founder of *Hromadske* and its CEO in 2020 .

By the end of 2013, *Hromadske*’s team raised 1,135,997 UAH (140,000 USD at the time) through what had been the biggest crowdfunding campaign in Ukraine to date (Suspilne Detektor Media 2014) (see Appendix G for the first self-presentation of *Hromadske* on a crowdsourcing platform biggggidea.com). This significant public support signaled a high level of public trust in the initiative and an acute need for a public service media outlet, working in the interest of society. As Bankova recalled in an interview with me:

The year of 2013 [was] not the best year in the history of Ukrainian journalism. ... By that time I had already left one job because of the censorship. ... I wrote to Roman Skrypin, who worked on *TVi*. *TVi* was one of those channels at the time, which... was the place where one could criticise the government... I worked there for ... two years,

⁸⁶ A law obliging all Ukrainian media to disclose their owners was yet to be adopted upon *Hromadske*’s inception in 2013. Previously, the general public did not know who owned media channels and what vested interests they might represent. By contrast, *Hromadske* has always been open about the ownership of the channel (*Hromadske* is collectively owned by its journalists) and has even published annual financial and auditor’s reports since the 2013 launch (Hromadske 2013b; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2017a; 2018b; 2019).

even more. And then one day, in April 2013, we came to the office and saw the tityshki⁸⁷-type people – in sportswear, bold and in sports caps. They did not let the then-owner of *TVi* Kahalovskyi or the editor-in-chief inside. They said, “The owner has changed.” In Ukraine, this is called classic “raiding.”

As Bankova remembers it, Mykola Kniazhytskyi, who was general director of *TVi* at time, could not explain how this had happened. Bankova and her colleagues demanded that the channel’s management give an accounting of the raid live on air. They refused, and the entire editorial team – journalists, editors, directors, video editors, cameramen, around twenty or thirty people – got up and quit:

This was my last day working for *TVi*, ... and that was the last place, except for internet media outlets like *Ukrainska Pravda*, where serious journalists could work. ... Those of us who left *TVi* did not work anywhere for a long time because ... whenever you go – Yanukovych’s people were everywhere, the private oligarch-owned channels, where you would have no freedom, were everywhere. ... We did not have any other choice but to create *Hromadske*, because otherwise I simply did not have a place to go and work. Honestly, I did not see any alternatives for myself (Bankova 2020).

Powered by leaders like Bankova and Humeniuk, *Hromadske* sought to make a dramatic intervention not only in the media market but also in the public service sphere. Nataliia Humeniuk, who had worked at *Hromadske* since its early days and served as the Head of *Hromadske* in 2016–2020, explained the peculiar role of *Hromadske* in Ukrainian media landscape at the time:

Unlike other post-Soviet states like Georgia or Moldova, where there had been a pseudo-reform of public service broadcasting, Ukraine had not started this reform. And *Hromadske* had a right to say that it is taking this role: we might not have public service broadcasting in our country, but we have professional journalists who will create it themselves outside the legislative framework. Because the essence of public broadcasting is not in law, it is in the idea of the media which serves society. *Hromadske* was not just any civic initiative, not citizen journalism as it is sometimes portrayed. *Hromadske* was created as a parallel institution to the state public broadcasting in a situation where the state did everything in its power so that this institution, which exists in other democratic states, did not exist.

Indeed, according to the European Court of Human Rights, ‘Not only does the press have the task of imparting information and ideas ... on political issues just as on those in other areas of public interest. ... The public has a right to receive them’ (ECHR 1986). This was a right that animated the founders of *Hromadske*. Humeniuk (2021) explained that *Hromadske*’s mission to serve Ukrainian society became the unifying factor for *Hromadske*’s co-founders,

⁸⁷ Ukrainian colloquial name for the paid-for street hooligans, commonly used as a reinforcement for police forces during the Yanukovych’s administration.

despite their sometimes conflicting points of view, values and ambitions. All co-founders, Humeniuk claimed, agreed that Ukraine did not need an oppositional channel. The team associated the existence of oppositional channels with the typical media landscape of authoritarian states. ‘Ukrainian civil society at the time was mature enough to understand that the way forward is not in being in opposition... We reinvented the idea [of an independent media] as a values-based media; media, which serves the society’ (Humeniuk 2021).

Professional and practical constraints suddenly became opportunities. Political constraints motivated journalists to seek an alternative outlet for public television in a situation where getting a broadcasting licence for an independent TV channel would be virtually impossible for political reasons (Humeniuk 2016). The internet, by contrast, was legislatively unregulated, making websites immune to government pressure points like licenses or tax police checks. Bankova (2020) recalled that the *Hromadske* team approach the necessary formal processes with great caution. They decided against setting up a bank account for international donations, sensitive to the fact that the government could use international transfers as a ground to persecute them. In a sense, they were renewing the tradition of Soviet ‘self-published’ clandestine press. On a practical side, the internet broadcasting required lower image quality than television and allowed for substantial savings on professional equipment.

Hromadske planned its first broadcast for the day when President Yanukovich was expected to sign the EU Association Agreement at the EU summit meeting on November 28–29, 2013. *Hromadske*’s journalists had already finalised the broadcast plan and invited the experts for the live broadcast from Brussels when the government announced that signing the EU Association Agreement was put on hold (Bankova 2020). As a response, Mustafa Nayyem’s Facebook post called for people to go on the Maidan. ‘So we did,’ Yuliia Bankova recalled:

We were the first ones there and we started streaming. So, our first broadcast was a live stream from the Maidan. ... And then the events unfolded fast, we worked 24/7. We were few, we rented a room on Politekh⁸⁸, people brought us food and sent us money, no matter how small [хто що міг]. We received the first grants, we bought some equipment and furniture: two cameras, one table, and our viewers brought us two chairs. This was the studio where we interviewed the guests. Kseniia Sobchak⁸⁹ and Petro Poroshenko⁹⁰ were sitting on these chairs during *Hromadske*’s first live broadcasts when hundreds of thousands of viewers watched us (Bankova 2020).

⁸⁸ Politekhnichnyi Instytut underground station in Kyiv.

⁸⁹ Russian journalist and a candidate in presidential elections of 2018 in the Russian Federation.

⁹⁰ The Fifth President of Ukraine in 2014–2019.

Thanks to the relative ubiquity of digital media, *Hromadske* could stream videos from mobile devices owned by their own journalists as well as citizen journalists. This productive collaboration with citizen journalists and unique documentary content ‘from the ground’ allowed *Hromadske* to quickly gain a competitive advantage over established traditional media outlets. In eight days after the launch, *Hromadske*’s live broadcast was watched by over 100,000 viewers (Piddubna 2015). In under a month, *Hromadske*’s YouTube channel gained 126 million views, becoming a leading news channel in Ukraine and establishing a world record for live streaming (*Telekrytyka* 2015).

The journalists at *Hromadske* developed a practice of following social media conversations on Facebook and Twitter and integrating them into discussions with experts in the studio. Watching journalists scrolling social media feeds in the studio and commenting on them in real-time made *Hromadske* relatable. Their journalists interviewed experts via Skype and invited viewers to make Skype calls to ask a question or share their opinions (see Appendix G, Figure 2, 3).

The lack of a ‘glossy’ picture created an impression of ‘guerilla media,’ a grassroots television project co-created by the professional journalists and the members of public on equal footing. The use of such a common conversational tool as Skype in a television programme overturned the balance of power typical for the traditional television with its ‘talking heads’ and ‘passive recipients,’ helping *Hromadske* to establish an interactive two-sided communication with active viewers.⁹¹

In 2013–2015, *Hromadske* sought to ‘institutionalise’ citizen journalism further by launching a project called ‘Reporterska sotnia’ (‘Reporters’ Unit’). *Hromadske* created a brief handbook for citizen journalists on how to create and upload amateur videos covering topics of public concern. These videos were broadcast on *Hromadske* in January–April 2015 and remained available on-demand on the website until 13 May 2016, when *Hromadske* moved from *Hromadske.tv* to the new domain *Hromadske.ua* (Povzyk 2016).⁹²

In 2016–2017, *Hromadske* opened a new television studio, which helped them to ‘look more like television’ (*Hromadske* 2017b, 0:30). It joined 80 cable television networks to serve 7000 households across the digital divide (*Hromadske* 2017b, 1:06–1:11) and started broadcasting on satellite. This grassroots media outlet grew into an organisation with over

⁹¹ For more details on *Hromadske*’s interactive practices, see Terentieva 2016.

⁹² The videos by ‘Reporterska sotnia’ were subsequently lost with the closure of the initial website following the conflict with one of *Hromadske*’s co-founders Roman Skrypin.

178 employees (Bankova 2020). Yet *Hromadske*'s journalists remained on the equal footing with their viewers in terms of visual representation. Figure 4 in Appendix G shows how, instead of traditional live stand-up, a *Hromadske* journalist invites members of the public to take part in co-creation of content.

The practice of actively involving citizen journalists re-emerged during the national lockdown in Ukraine caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in March–May 2020. Unable to travel between the regions, *Hromadske* journalists asked their viewers to live-stream from their cities to share lived experiences of Covid-19 and to comment on the situation in local hospitals (Bankova 2020). This co-production of content allowed *Hromadske* to fulfil public service function amidst the crisis.

Hromadske's self-professed public service function mirrors one of the world's first Public Service Broadcasting organisations, the BBC. Former BBC Ukraine journalist Svitlana Pyrkalo adapted the BBC Code of professional conduct for *Hromadske* team (Bankova 2020). From an organisational perspective, however, *Hromadske* was different. 'Hromadske was not moulded after the BCC, which emerged in the 1920s or the European public service broadcasters of 1960s–1970s. *Hromadske* is an alternative public service broadcaster, launched directly online and grown from the grassroots,' Humeniuk (2021) pointed out in an interview with me.

As the 'digitally native' public service media with strong commitment to traditional public service functions, *Hromadske* leveraged its platform to support the innovation of the traditional public service broadcasting corporations. In 2017–2018 *Hromadske* collaborated with mentors from the BBC and provided BBC Ukraine with a platform for live news broadcasting. 'The most important thing is that we show that *Hromadske* is a tool that helps the Ukrainian audience get more high-quality news. There are not many independent media outlets in Ukraine. We created this opportunity for other independent media outlets to use our platform,' said Humeniuk (Hromadske 2018a). Indeed, in 2015–2016, *Hromadske* provided its public service content to be aired on the newly established state-funded public service broadcaster *UA:Pershyi*, helping both media outlets to expand their audiences. *Hromadske*'s willingness to share its content or provide its platform to other public service media represents a vivid example of the benefits of a co-production ethos.

Like its role model the BBC, *Hromadske* provides four strands of content: informational, educational, cultural and entertaining. To fulfil its informational function, *Hromadske* aims to project not only national but local news from particularly sensitive regions

of Ukraine, such as eastern Ukraine and Crimea. *Hromadske* has specially dedicated regionally news services called ‘Hromadske.Skhid’ (literally, ‘Hromadske.East’) and ‘Hromadske.Crimea,’ filling the lacuna in content left after Ukrainian outlets lost access to broadcast frequencies on territory now controlled by Russian Federation and Russia-backed separatists (Suprun 2018). A programme called ‘Donbas Reality Check’ amplifies local voices from Donbas, bringing to the forefront of public attention the hardships encountered by the war-affected population (see Figure 5 in Appendix G for an example of a local family featuring in the episode of ‘Donbas Reality Check’). It reveals pressing social issues, such as a lack of the mental health care for children born in the war-zone, the absence of hot water and central heating in the frontline towns, or the impact of the economic blockade of Donbas on Ukrainian farmers in occupied Luhansk (Zashko and Chernova 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). *Hromadske* is also outward-looking with global-oriented news services ‘Hromadske.Svit,’ which informs Ukrainians about salient global developments, and ‘Hromadske International’ – an English-language service covering current events in Ukraine for an international audience.

Political analysis programmes are a critical sub-strand of informational content. Dividing news and editorial commentaries underscores to viewers the critical distinction between *reporting* and *analysing* the news. *Hromadske* offers commentaries to the most socially significant news in the live daily programme ‘At the Moment’ (Nyni vzhe) relying on the reportages, expert interviews, live streams and debates. The live programme ‘Cuts Like a Knife’ (‘Po Zhyvomu’) invites experts and opinion leaders to discuss the issues of public concern: in May–September 2020, it hosted the Minister of Justice, the Chief Sanitary Doctor and the Director of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine. ‘Hromadske. Reforma’ brings together the citizens and public servants to discuss the strengths and drawbacks of the institutional reforms in post-Maidan Ukraine. The programme ‘Freedom of Choice with Andrii Kulykov’ (‘Svoboda Vyboru Z Andriiem Kulykovym’) gives the floor to politicians and experts to help citizens make an informed decision in the voting booth.

The principal strengths of *Hromadske*, according to Bankova (2020), lie in its ability to elucidate social phenomena through personal stories, which has led to a plethora of interview-based programmes. ‘Very Important Programme’ (‘Duzhe Vazhlyva Peredacha’) specialises on the expert interviews, and in October–December 2019 invited media propaganda scholar Peter Pomerantsev, the former Canadian ambassador Roman Vashchuk and Philip Breedlove, the former Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO Allied Command Operations.

‘Intelligent Ukraine’ (‘Ukraina Rozumna’) feeds on the expertise of Ukraine’s ‘great contemporaries’ – philosophers, sociologists, historians and art scholars. By contrast, the programme ‘My Dear’ (Dorohenka Moia’) centres on interviews with the modern ‘common woman’ of ‘non-female’ professions – soldiers, politicians, astronauts, police officers – thereby challenging gender stereotypes. ‘The Lives of the Others’ (‘Zhyttia Inshykh’) magnifies the experiences of the marginalised: single mothers, sex workers, transgender people and refugees. Finally, the programmes ‘I Will Hear Everyone’ (‘Pochuiu Kozhnoho’) and ‘Programme Albert’ (‘Prohrama Albert’) provide critical discussions with the emerging opinion leaders: journalists, politicians and celebrities (in the case of the former) and the online influencers (in the case of the latter).

Hromadske also seeks to educate the public. In 2017, *Hromadske* introduced the programmes ‘Business-plan’ and ‘Pro\$tonomika,’ which are aimed at developing business-thinking and financial literacy, serving the particular educational needs of older Ukrainians accustomed to the Soviet command economy. ‘Vox Check’ and ‘Programmes Unpacked’ (‘Rozpakovani Prohramy’) promote political consciousness. ‘Vox Check’, created in partnership with the NGO ‘VoxUkraine’, fact-checks public speeches of politicians, protecting citizens from misinformation. ‘Programmes Unpacked’ – a collective project by *Hromadske* and NGO ‘Centr UA’ – provides a comprehensive comparison of the candidates’ programmes amid the presidential elections campaign in the spring of 2019. *Hromadske* also provides cultural education by producing documentary films in a project called ‘Hromadske.doc,’ providing film reviews in the programme ‘Prokat’ and giving a floor to rising Ukrainian music bands in the programme ‘Stage 13’. *Hromadske* always seeks to implement the newest technologies: in 2017, it created the first Ukrainian documentary film in the 360-degree format.

After information and education, *Hromadske*’s third function is public oversight, which is executed through journalistic investigations. These include a programme following Ukrainian reforms called ‘Re:forma’ as well as one investigating instances of corruption called ‘Slidstvo.Info’.⁹³ In 2017, ‘Slidstvo.Info’ episode ‘The Double Life of the President’ was awarded a Pulitzer Prize as a part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists’ ‘Panama Papers’ project (Freepressunlimited 2017). Moreover, *Hromadske* has a dedicated webpage for ‘special projects’, which also hosts journalistic investigations. For instance, in January 2020, *Hromadske* investigated the sources of funding of the principal

⁹³ ‘Slidstvo’ means ‘investigation’ in Ukrainian.

political forces in Ukraine. In June 2020, it analysed the tax declarations of the politicians to assess their wealth and sources of income (Hromadske 2020a; 2020b). The September issue investigated the abandoned construction sites in Kyiv (Hromadske 2020c).

Finally, *Hromadske*'s fourth function is to entertain viewers. It produces a travel programme called 'The Milky Way to North America' ('Chumatskyi Shliakh v Pivnichnu Ameryku'), socio-political satirical show 'What For?' ('ShobSho?') and a reality-show 'Presidents' Babysitters' ('Bebisitery Presydenta') following the lives of young voters, who voted for the first time in 2019. In 2020, *Hromadske* launched its first dedicated YouTube show 'OK.Alina', which attempts to attract the key demographic of the YouTube platform.

Such a wide range of content – delivered through cable television, web domains, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube and Twitter – enabled *Hromadske* to serve two million unique readers/viewers a month in mid-2020 (Bankova 2020) and outperform⁹⁴ traditional governmentally-funded public service broadcaster *UA:Pershyi*. Speaking about the goal of *Hromadske* at the Lviv Media Forum in 2016, Humeniuk explained that the team's task was not simply to create public service broadcasting, but to create a cutting-edge multimedia product (Beliaieva 2016).

The coexistence of grassroots *Hromadske* and traditional public service broadcaster *UA:Pershyi* allows us observe the specific role played by the internet in 'disintermediation' by promoting cost-efficiency and public engagement. Whereas web-based *Hromadske* could start broadcasting just four months after the beginning of the crowdfunding campaign in 2013, the state-funded public service broadcaster *UA:Pershyi* took over two years to launch after the adoption of the law on Public Service Broadcasting to undergo the necessary bureaucratic procedures (*UA:Pershyi* 2016). In other words, by the time the Ukrainian state officially provided citizens with a public service broadcaster in October 2016, citizens had been already 'self-serving' their public needs for three years via *Hromadske*.

'Interestingly, I had the opportunity to work for Ukraine's official Public Service Broadcaster for a year after leaving *Hromadske* in 2020,' Natalia Humeniuk shared with me, continuing:

On a paper, ideational commitment to public broadcasting was the same [for official Public Service Broadcaster and *Hromadske*], but I could feel that the team [of the official Public Service Broadcaster] was less ideationally 'charged', that they lack the

⁹⁴ In May 2020, the size of *UA:Pershyi* audience was 0,11% of all Ukrainians (age 4+) (Tampanel 2020). With the current population of Ukraine estimated at 37,289,000 (Ukrstat.gov.ua 2020), the audience of *UA:Pershyi* stood at Bankova approximately 41,000 people or a fifth of *Hromadske*'s total audience the same month (2020).

understanding that this media was not just any TV channel with a pile of equipment. And this is probably why *Hromadske* remains ... a parallel structure to the public broadcaster, and to some extent shows even greater efficiency in terms of resources spent, if we talk about the total amount spent on these two media, and then compare audience reach. While the official public service broadcaster was engaged in administrative reform in 2015–2019, *Hromadske* was the public broadcaster.

Indeed, despite being taxpayer-funded⁹⁵ (with a budget fifteen times larger than *Hromadske* in 2018), *UA:Pershyi* provided public service content to sixteen times fewer people than the grassroots *Hromadske* in 2018 (Figure 6).

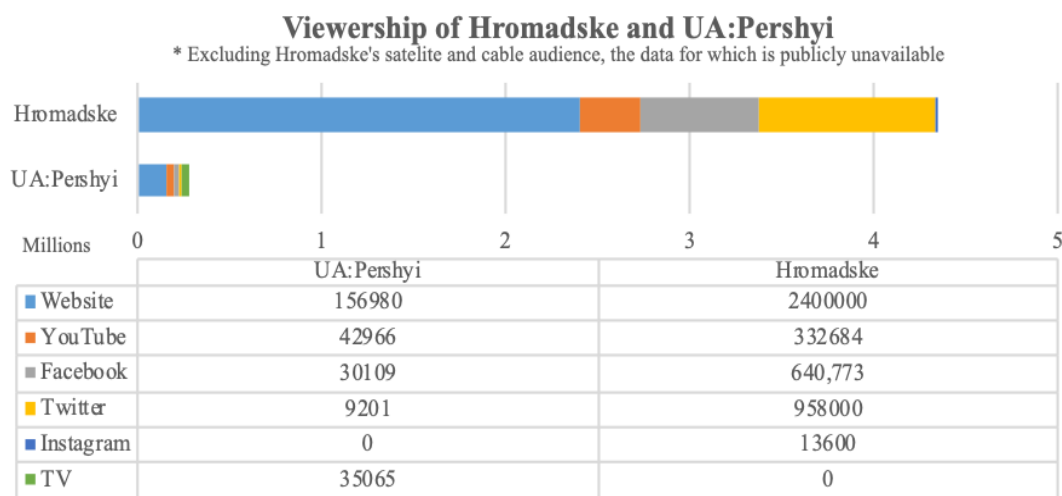


Figure 6. Viewership of *Hromadske* and *UA:Pershyi* in 2018. Data gathered by the author from the respective social media pages on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; website visitors were measured by the author using similarweb.com; the televisual rating of *UA:Pershyi* was provided by the Industrial Television Committee upon my information request⁹⁶

In July 2018, *UA:Pershyi* had a television rating of 0.09%, which means that the actual number of its viewers, together with the number of social media followers and website visitors, amounted to a total of approximately 274,321 people.⁹⁷ For *Hromadske*, the

⁹⁵ For instance, in 2017, the funding of *UA:Pershyi* was twenty times bigger than in the case of *Hromadske*: 1,1 billion UAH versus 54,4 million UAH respectively. In 2018, the funding of *UA:Pershyi* stood at 776 million UAH versus circa 51 million of *Hromadske* (Ukrainska Pravda 2018; Hromadske 2018).

⁹⁶ The graph appeared in my conference paper 'Internet as Public Self-Service Media: Exploring Digital Civil Society in Post-Maidan Ukraine', published in Oxford Internet Institute Blog available at <http://blogs.ox.ac.uk/policy/wp-content/uploads/sites/77/2018/09/IPP2018-Terentieva.pdf>.

⁹⁷ The number of television viewers of *UA:Pershyi* was calculated by the author from the monthly rating of 0.09% measured by the Ukrainian Industrial Television Committee for age group 4+; the total number of Ukrainian citizens (42 279 600) provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Finance; the percentage of people aged 4+ as provided by Ukrainian State Statistics Agency (95%) and the potential reach of *UA:Pershyi* – 97%

respective number was sixteen times larger: 4,345,057 people. This excluded *Hromadske*'s televisual audience, the data for which was unavailable due to the lack of rating measurement of satellite television in Ukraine.⁹⁸ Even though the numbers of viewers are approximate⁹⁹, they were measured using the most recent data provided by Ukrainian state agencies and give an impression about the size and structure of the audience of the bottom-up *Hromadske* versus top-down state-funded *UA:Persnyi*. They also underscore the superior cost-efficiency of *Hromadske* (Figure 6).

Hromadske's better performance might be in part explained by more financial flexibility compared to the official public service broadcaster, overly dependent on the state to provide the necessary funding. For example, from May to July 2018, *UA:Persnyi* lost 0,01% of its audience because of a lack of targeted financing for analogue broadcasting allocated by the government, which led to the debt of 75 million UAH and its subsequent disconnection from the analogue network. 'We cannot rob the National Bank', said Zurab Alasaniia, head of *UA:Persnyi* (Kalashnyk 2018).

In contrast, the sources of *Hromadske*'s funding are diverse, creating a vital precondition for its editorial independence. If in 2013 *Hromadske* had three donors – the US Embassy, the Embassy of the Netherlands and the International Renaissance Foundation, contributing approximately 111,680 GBP (*Hromadske* 2013b), in 2019 *Hromadske* secured grants from seventeen international donors, including the German Marshall Fund, the Omidyar Network, the Embassy of Netherlands, the US Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (Figure 7). International funding, however, had two unfortunate unintended consequences for *Hromadske*: a decline in crowdfunding activity and an organisational crisis.

of households or 35,065,000 people. *UA:Persnyi*'s YouTube channel has 42,966 subscribers, which is bigger than the size of the channels' monthly audience. Over nine thousand people follow the national public service broadcaster on Twitter, and 30,109 on Facebook. Over one hundred and fifty thousand people visited the website in July 2018 (measured by the author using digital tool similarweb.com), bringing the approximate total number of viewers in July to 274,690.

⁹⁸ With the beginning of cable and satellite broadcasting in 2017, *Hromadske* expanded its potential reach to 7,000,000 households, but there is no publicly available information on *Hromadske*'s actual viewership. Thus, the televisual audience of *Hromadske* is not represented in the table.

⁹⁹ The number is extrapolated from the television rating measurement in the case of *UA:Persnyi*.

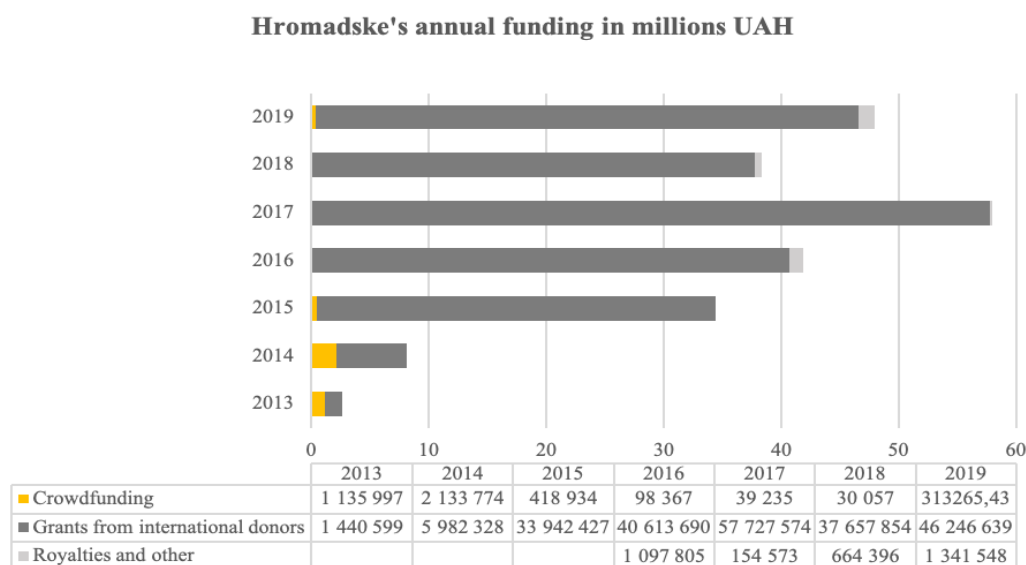


Figure 7. Hromadske's annual funding in UAH. Data compiled by the author from Hromadske's yearly financial statements (Hromadske 2013b; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2017a; 2018b; 2019)

Noting the increasing engagement with international donors since 2015, I brought up the commonly cited challenge of preserving independence from the donors in an interview with Nataliia Humeniuk, the Head of *Hromadske* in 2016–2020. Humeniuk responded strongly: ‘I think that this is a big myth and a conspiracy theory [that using donors funding compromises independence of a civic initiative]. There can be no greater independence than independence from [international institutional] donors’ (Humeniuk 2021). Humeniuk confirmed that the contracts with donors clearly state that donors can not interfere in editorial policy. *Hromadske* in their turn commit to publishing disclaimers that the opinion expressed may not coincide with the opinion of the donor.

‘The question is whether the media can synchronise their needs with what donors give money for,’ Humeniuk (2021) explains, ‘and whether the media can explain to donors what is the purpose of its existence.’ Humeniuk (2021) acknowledged that donors with whom *Hromadske* worked had very standard list of supported causes: the development of democracy, the rule of law, promoting pluralism, overcome the effects of the conflict in the Donbas, promoting sustainability etc. *Hromadske's* task was to demonstrate how its work has impact in these areas. ‘In reality, the agenda of the independent media very often coincides with the agenda of the large donors,’ Humeniuk explains, at the same time acknowledging that hypothetically there can be cases when the dynamic of power between the international donor and the media outlet, which receives funding, is distorted. Humeniuk

argues that such situations are caused by unprofessionalism, bureaucracy and opportunism rather than from the fact of partnership with donors itself (Humeniuk 2021).

I posit that the directionality of financial flows is the key differentiator between cases where a civic initiative is dependent on foreign funding as opposed to preserving its independence, proactively seeking and securing money from a range of donors in line with this civic initiative's own purpose and values. In an interview with me, Humeniuk brought up two examples of projects, which *Hromadske* rejected despite the fact that these projects were top-priority in donors' agenda and could have been particularly well-funded. Creating a TV programme debunking fake news constituted one such example; creating a cartoon on pressing socio-political issues was another one. Both projects, although perfectly reasonable for other media outlets, would not chime with *Hromadske*'s audiences, and thus would not be the most efficient way of spending resources, *Hromadske*'s team believed (Humeniuk 2021). And so, *Hromadske* rejected these opportunities. 'The key is to persuade a donor that you can get their money on *your* terms, not the other way around. If donor's terms do not suit you, you can reject the money,' Humeniuk concluded.

With the growing availability of international funding in 2015–2017, *Hromadske* moved from a co-production of television content (by crowdsourcing audiovisual materials and sharing expertise with citizen journalists) to a co-production of *value* with citizens (by sharing content on social media and giving feedback). This 'professionalisation' – common to public service broadcasters like *UA:Pershyi* and the BBC – appeared to cause *Hromadske*'s grassroots donors to disengage. It experienced both a substantial decline in viewership in summer 2015 (Humeniuk 2021) and a fivefold decrease in grassroots donations from 2014 to 2015, followed by the fourfold decline from 2015 to 2016.

A long-anticipated increase in donations came only in 2019 with the introduction of an initiative called *Hromadske Friends Community*. Everyone who had donated to *Hromadske* received an invitation to join the members' chat on Telegram. Moderated by *Hromadske*'s editors, the chat offered a platform for journalists to receive feedback, get new ideas for broadcasts, find heroes and experts for the stories or crowdsource editorial tasks. Yuliia Bankova (2020) shared one such example:

A few weeks ago, someone texted [in Telegram chat]: "People, you made a horrible illustration ... let me make you a better one!" And the person made a much better illustration for us, we published it and thanked them! So, this is a very genuine contact with our readers because this is what *Hromadske* is about: we are representing the public

and we want to connect with them as closely as possible (Bankova 2020).

Contrary to the expectations of resource mobilisation theory, which pivots on the availability of financial resources, the economic wellbeing of the citizens did not univocally correlate with their propensity to donate in *Hromadske*'s case. The largest number of grassroots donations to the date was received in 2014, the year when Ukraine 'was pushed to the brink of economic collapse' (The Economist 2015). What mattered more were ideational triggers: an association with the Maidan Revolution and a perception of membership in a horizontal community did the most to inspire crowdfunding activity. In response to my observation about a decrease in crowdfunding activity, Bankova commented:

If we convert donation activity into the graph, it becomes clear that the donations rose at the Maidan [Revolution] anniversary ... because people remember that ... *Hromadske* is monitoring the progress of the criminal investigation on the deaths [of protestors] on Maidan's deaths, so people visit our webpage to read about this and donate. [During] coronavirus, our revenues from readers' donations sky-rocketed ... My goal and my wish were to have an independent media outlet. Without a business owner. Media financed by the people. At this point, unfortunately, we [need] to get financing from [international] donors... But having 15-20 international donors is completely fine for our independence: all they demand is a report on our spending efficiency.

Nataliia Humeniuk (2021) gave a similar account of donor's focus on efficiency, recalling that at times donors demanded monthly reports on audience engagement, expecting *Hromadske* to reach the numbers they had at the wake of the Maidan Revolution. 'I will tell you this very frankly so that there is no myth around *Hromadske*: often *Hromadske*'s success is illustrated with metrics from the times of the Maidan Revolution, which *Hromadske* did not have since. The audience engagement started to decline in summer 2015,' Humeniuk admitted.

This decline can be explained through a host of reasons. Firstly, during the Maidan Revolution *Hromadske* was the only television channel that offered live streams from the Maidan; commercial television channels could not dare to do so because of political pressure. This means that *Hromadske* had a particular niche on a TV market with no direct competition. Secondly, the needs and expectations of *Hromadske*'s core audience have likely changed. At the time when the events on the Maidan unfolded abruptly, Maidan supporters were in constant pursuit of new information from the Maidan, checking *Hromadske*'s pages more often than they would need to do afterwards, meaning less frequent interactions. The former member of *Hromadske*'s supervisory Board Yevhen Fedchenko (2021) suggested in an interview with me that *Hromadske*'s pronouncedly neutral stance at the Donbas war is likely

to have alienated the audience, which *Hromadske* acquired during the Maidan Revolution. Thirdly, the sense of a common purpose of the independent media outlets in Ukraine, which flourished at the times of the crisis like the Maidan Revolution, Crimea Annexation, and the war in the Donbas, began to weaken with time. Humeniuk explained that during the Maidan Revolution, *Hromadske*'s live stream page was linked to the first page of a popular online media outlet *Ukrainska Pravda*. *Ukrainska Pravda* continued to drive a large proportion of the traffic to *Hromadske*'s website after the revolution. After 2015, however, *Ukrainska Pravda* removed the link and the number of visitors of *Hromadske* started to decline. This decline in audience engagement fueled difficult conversations within the team (Humeniuk 2021). Nataliia Humeniuk believed that this decline in popularity can be explained by *Hromadske*'s principal commitment to neutrality as a key professional standard of a public service media. Nataliya Humeniuk explained:

We understood that we could target ardent supporters of the Azov battalion marches; they are very active, they watch all the streams, or we could become a blogging platform and get loyal audiences as Bihus.info. But on the contrary, even when some of our people like Mustafa Nayem became politicians, we deliberately chose not to use this connection, we did not want them to be our presenters... At the same time, *Novoye Vremia* could invite Mustafa as their presenter because it was cool, he was popular. We could not do this. In some respect, this was frustrating for the team, because it prevented us from expanding our audiences. But this is precisely the reason why *Hromadske* had the right to ask for funding for its mission: we did not promote any political messages... *Hromadske* had always done and continued to do its job [of a public service broadcaster].

While supporting the cause, donors continuously educated *Hromadske*'s management on how to increase viewers' engagement and ultimately achieve financial self-sustenance, although Humeniuk remains skeptical about such prospects. Humeniuk argues that commitment to ideological neutrality puts *Hromadske* in an *a priori* commercially disadvantaged position in Ukraine because of two reasons: increased competition and the rise of news consumption through social media. New entrants with pronounced ideological preferences on the independent media market such as *EspressoTV* and *Priamyi* outcompeted neutral *Hromadske* amongst the audiences with conservative political preferences and nationalist views (Humeniuk 2021). According to Humeniuk, 'for them, *Hromadske* ceased to be "their" media because it did not necessarily broadcast what they wanted to hear. *Hromadske* lost particularly mobilised audiences with passionate eyes, who fell for more engaged media' (Humeniuk 2021).

The changing patterns of media consumption in Ukraine presented *Hromadske* with additional challenges. ‘At one point Hromadske was the most popular Twitter account for the news [in Ukraine]. But Twitter as an instrument for news was only popular in Ukraine for about a year... Then Facebook has grown. *Hromadske* was one of the two most popular media on Facebook, partly because *Hromadske* did not spend time promoting its website [at the time] ... At that time, other media outlets primarily worked as news sites and did not develop their social networks. In some ways, as a pioneer [in social networks], *Hromadske* gained its audience and remains popular with this audience’ (Humeniuk 2021) But *Hromadske*’s leading position in social media sites was challenged with the increased competition from the commercial TV channels with incomparably larger resources dedicated to social media marketing. Commercial media could also afford to buy traffic to secure top positions in search results, which *Hromadske* could not do for ethical reasons, contributing to *Hromadske*’s declining audience reach. ‘For some time, there were problems with indexing *Hromadske*’s content for search engines,’ Nataliya Humeniuk recalled, ‘It was difficult to find the money for search engine optimisation’ (Humeniuk 2021). Since *Hromadske* did not have a Russian-language version, it did not come up organically in search requests made in Russian until the adjustments to SEO settings were made in 2018. After readjustments that indexed *Hromadske*’s content with keywords in both Ukrainian and Russian, the number of visitors to *Hromadske*’s website immediately increased to five million views (Humeniuk 2021).

In a pursuit of boosting the popularity of *Hromadske*, its team attended a series of international pieces of training on media management. One of such educational events on social media marketing encouraged independent media outlets like *Hromadske* to publish the most socially significant pieces of content in-between entertaining social media posts which were likely to get more attention from the audience. This approach came from traditional commercial television, where news programs are typically broadcast after and before high-rating shows to improve the rating of the news programme itself. The hypothesis was that the entertaining content helps to grab a person’s attention, which then has a spill-out effect on the news content. The same applies to printed media, where physical proximity to the most attention-grabbing piece of news is likely to make other pieces of content noticed by the reader. The problem is that digital audiences are inherently different as they can browse in and out the posts published by different media outlets without seeing the rest of their content. When *Hromadske* adopted this approach, Nataliya Humeniuk and her team saw that the viewers who reacted to the entertaining content rarely went on to engage with socio-political

content. Instead, the overwhelming majority left *Hromadske*'s social media page or a website as soon as they got the entertaining piece of content that grabbed their attention in the first place. According to Humeniuk, *Hromadske* had particularly high rates of audience engagement when publishing content featuring cats, murals and environmental issues. These high engagement rates were encouraged by the donors but did not translate into an anticipated proportional rise in the audience's engagement with socio-political content, investigatory journalism, or pieces covering human rights violations. Thus, *Hromadske* changed its social media strategy to prevent alienating its core audience by publishing an excessive amount of 'lighter' popular content.

Instead, *Hromadske* persuaded their donors to change the metrics for measuring *Hromadske*'s impact. Rather than solely relying on the quantity of views, *Hromadske*'s team introduced an internal impact dashboard. 'With the impact dashboard, we measured the numbers of pieces of content which change life, inspire public debates, have impact on lawmaking, lead to dismissal of corrupt public servants, or set the trend for other media outlets,' Nataliia Humeniuk (2021) explained. 'All this time, we were looking for alternative instruments to show our success. We knew that we had on average of 3000 citations per months in other media sources, which is a large number for a relatively small media outlet. No Ukrainian TV channel was as highly cited [at the time]' (Humeniuk 2021).

Donors, in their turn, persuaded *Hromadske*'s management in the need of organisational transformation, as it emerged from the interviews with both Nataliia Humeniuk, the head of *Hromadske* in 2016–2020, and Iuliia Bankova, the CEO of *Hromadske* in 2020. In 2020 the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) hired a consulting agency to push *Hromadske* on a path of restructuring as one of the grant conditions. Yet an aspiration to adopt working practices used by Intel and Google inadvertently brought about an internal crisis at *Hromadske*. In 2013 *Hromadske*'s co-founders imagined organisation in breadth rather than in-depth. They gathered leading experts from civil society, media and academia into two principal supervisory bodies – the Supervisory Board and an Editorial Board. *Hromadske*'s Supervisory Board guaranteed an adherence to its civic responsibility as public service media. *Hromadske*'s most recent Supervisory Board included eight external experts, including British journalist and propaganda scholar Peter Pomerantsev, Chatham House research fellow Orysia Lutsevych, Ukrainian human rights activist and lawyer Yevheniia Zakrevska, and the former Head of the BBC Ukrainian Service Maciek Bernatt-Reszczyński. The Editorial Board, meanwhile, oversaw compliance with journalism

standards. For example, in 2016, the Editorial Board examined an episode dedicated to the leaked documents revealing the offshore accounts of President Petro Poroshenko. This episode was accused of factual inaccuracy by Poroshenko representatives, prompting the Editorial Board to double-check the integrity of the reporting. The Board concluded that, although the facts were well-substantiated, their framing in a context of the war in the Donbas added an unnecessary emotional component to the analytical content (Hromadske 2016b). As a result, an updated episode was aired on May 18, 2016. The project subsequently shared a Pulitzer Prize with journalist outlets in Tunisia, Nigeria, El Salvador, Malaysia, and Nicaragua (Freepressunlimited 2017).

Yet *Hromadske*, an employer to over 150 people as of June 2020, lacked a clear subordination structure (Bankova 2020). ‘When I became the executive director, I did not understand the structure of the editorial team,’ Bankova confessed. ‘It was so fluid that I did not know who was responsible for what. People could not tell who was whose manager; we all worked out of instinct. It worked out well because we are all dedicated to one mission, to a journalist’s calling, but it was a chaotic movement in one direction.’ An international consulting team soon discovered inefficiencies in *Hromadske*’s horizontal ethos. They pointed out, for instance, a conflict of interest in *Hromadske*’s ‘direct democracy’ approach to appointing managers: as *Hromadske*’s journalists collectively own the media outlet, some of them are also the members of the Supervisory Board and hence participate in the vote to appoint their CEO (Bankova 2020). Whilst Bankova (2020) welcomed the structural transformation and thanked Swedish donors for funding it, this transformation caused some journalists to leave *Hromadske*.

It is not the first time *Hromadske* faces an internal crisis. In 2016, *Hromadske*’s leader Roman Skrypin left after journalists accused him of appropriating 150,000 euro donated to *Hromadske* via PayPal’s account. Skrypin allegedly spent the money on creating a separate project *Hromadske.Kyiv*, without securing an agreement with the rest of the team, BBC Ukraine reported, citing *Hromadske*’s co-founders Dmytro Hnap and Bohdan Kutieпов (BBC News Ukraine 2016). In 2020, Nataliia Humeniuk left *Hromadske* stating as a reason the fact that the contract of *Hromadske*’s then-editor-in-chief Anhelina Kariakina was not extended (Hromadske.ua 2020). In 2021, *Hromadske*’s management changed again as Iuliia Bankova was replaced with Iuliia Fediv (Detector.media 2021). Both Humeniuk and Bankova remain the members of an NGO *Hromadske Telebachennia* which is *Hromadske*’s publisher and a guarantor of its civic mission. It is the dedication to this mission, which allowed *Hromadske*

to spring back from organisational crises before. ‘Even at the times when crises like the Maidan Revolution or the war in the Donbas made people shake emotionally and ideologically, leading to heated arguments within the team, *Hromadske* remained united around the institutional principles [of a public broadcaster], and did not deviate from its mission,’ Nataliia Humeniuk (2021) argued. In her view, after eight years, this fundamental agreement around institutional values which are in line with the mission of a public broadcaster remains the reason why *Hromadske* still exists as an independent media outlet and a civic organisation (Humeniuk 2021).

Ultimately the case of *Hromadske* reveals how, in the absence of a liberal-democratic political regime, the internet provided a critical ‘opportunity structure’ by which journalists circumvented media censorship and provided public service media content to Ukrainian society. The internet allowed a professional community of journalists to self-organise and reach the public to ask for financial, organisational and volunteer support to build and upscale a sustainable grassroots public service media outlet, and they succeeded. Despite a host of organisational challenges, *Hromadske* continuously managed to find new ways to engage their audiences, empowering viewers in processes of co-production and crowdsourcing. The implications of this empowerment, as we will see, have been profound.

Grassroots Fact-Checking: *StopFake*

In February 2017 Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed a Doctrine of Information Security, which aimed to counteract Russian disinformation in Ukraine (President of Ukraine 2017). By that time, an armed conflict with Russian-led and –backed militants had taken over 9,940 lives, injured approximately 23,455, and displaced an estimated 1,650,000 people (Sydorzhhevskiy 2017; Hodovan 2017). The success of Russian military operations in both Crimea and Donbas was complemented by a targeted disinformation campaign (The United States Army Special Operations Command 2015), which experts from NATO Strategic Communications likened to ‘weaponised information’ (Giles 2016, 12). By gaining control over broadcast media in Crimea and the ‘notoriously independent internet’ (Giles 2016, 12) during the military operations on the Black Sea peninsula in February–March 2014, the Kremlin could shape the perception of Crimean residents of events in the rest of Ukraine (ibid). Content-analysis reveals that Russian propaganda constructed an anti-Ukrainian narrative around the idea of a ‘fascist junta’; in 2014, for instance, 43% of all mentions of ‘fascists’ on news or informational programmes on *Pervyi Kanal*, Russia’s flagship state-funded television channel, were references to Ukrainians (Terentieva 2015). Russian *spetzpropaganda* created a virtual reality in the conflict zone, which either influenced perceptions or replaced actual ground truth with pro-Russian fiction (Darczewska 2014). Such ‘unconventional warfare’ urgently called out for a new kind of public service in Ukraine: fact-checking and informational defense as a critical component of national security. Yet the Ukrainian state was caught flat-footed. Its geopolitical opponent, for instance, taught information warfare doctrine – *spetzpropaganda* – in the Military University of the Russian Ministry of Defence (The United States Army Special Operations Command 2015). To lend a shoulder to the struggling state, Ukraine’s digital civil society sprung to action, energised by its ‘informal capital’.

On 2 March 2014 an aspiring journalist named Olha Yurkova was sitting in the editorial office of one of the Ukrainian media outlets, chatting on Facebook with her peers from the Digital Future of Journalism School, which is a project by the Mohyla School of Journalism in Kyiv. She and the other young digital-savvy professionals were discussing the deluge of Russian disinformation, and Olha suggested that they created a website to collate Russian disinformation, fact-check these stories, and publish the refutations. Other students instantly volunteered, and a new website was born: StopFake.org. These young journalists were not on

their own; they learned to rely on a emboldened, growing volunteer movement in the wake of the Maidan revolution (Sereda 2014; Wilson 2017). When the initial *StopFake.org* website, created on a free web engine, got more traffic in the first few days that it could handle, volunteers from the professional IT sector stepped in to maintain it. Given a dramatic lack of financial resources, the project relied on the pro bono work of journalists as well as crowdfunding and crowdsourcing (e.g. letters from the readers, who regularly supplied the suspicious news pieces requiring verification and often provided evidence of their falsehoods). Two months after its emergence, editor-in-chief Yevhen Fedchenko described *StopFake* as a civic project without any organisational structure, an initiative created and supported by volunteers (Fedchenko 2014).

According to Fedchenko, the state's inability to challenge the narratives of Russian propaganda and disinformation prompted civil society to step in. 'Russian propaganda was very professional,' he noted. 'It had a robust resource base, [and] it was noticeable that it was being produced and disseminated following a specific concept. Ukraine had nothing like that. So society had to do what the government should be doing' (Fedchenko 2014). Indeed, it was not until December 2014 that a specialised Ministry of Information Policy emerged in Ukraine. It took the post-Maidan state another year to adopt a Law on Foreign Broadcasting System and establish the foreign broadcasting service *UA:TV* as a means of countering Russian informational aggression (CEDEM 2018). By then, the online-based volunteer project *StopFake.org* had already grown to a public service organisation with international recognition and over 370,000 GBP of funding from international donors, including the International Renaissance Foundation, The Sigrid Rausing Trust and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *UA:TV* had overlooked the importance of fact-checking, focusing instead on promoting Ukrainian history, culture, art; advancing tourism projects; and telling stories of Ukraine's war with Russia in 2014. According to data from Similarweb.com, in July 2018, the *UA:TV* website had fewer visitors than *StopFake* (338,060 vs 414,770 respectively); four times fewer YouTube followers (7,400 vs 28,189); a smaller number of Facebook followers in total across official pages in all available languages (41,284 vs *StopFake*'s 53,400); and only 672 Twitter followers in comparison to 27,200 following *StopFake*. This difference is striking: a state-funded foreign broadcasting service with over 200 employees and a budget of 100 million UAH¹⁰⁰ (approximately 2,834,436

¹⁰⁰ The data was provided by the general manager of *UA:TV* Liudmyla Berezovska in an interview by *Detektor Media* (Ostapa 2017).

GBP) in 2016 had a significantly smaller audience than a grassroots web-based outfit with only seventh of its funding and a team of 29 dedicated members, alongside ad-hoc pro bono journalists and public volunteers. Unfortunately, *UA:TV* does not publish data about its viewership, and no rating measurement services conduct this kind of research for *UA:TV*. Like *UA:Pershyi*, *UA:TV* receives a fixed amount of state-funding regardless of its performance, a stability that may stifle motivation.¹⁰¹

A digital platform allowed *StopFake*, by contrast, to compensate for a relative lack of financial resource and to reach larger audiences rapidly. In the first two months, *StopFake*'s website attracted two million unique visitors (Yurkova 2014). Their team and their volunteers took advantage of open-access fact-checking tools such as Google Maps, Google Earth, Google Image Search, Exif Viewer and InVid. *StopFake* journalists created a virtual editorial office via online messengers, enabling fact-checkers to work from different places. This remote capability was vitally important for such a pro bono project, since many of its journalists were working full-time elsewhere. 'We use social media not only to disseminate our content but also as the base for our workflow,' Yevhen Fedchenko said in an interview to Marta Dyczok at Hromadske Radio (Dyczok 2021). 'Our experience proves that you can run a media organisation without big expenses. We have a website in eleven languages, television and radio shows, a newspaper, and we [conduct] training, [organise] hundreds of conferences per year, and manage to do all of it on a very modest budget. This is something we can really be proud of' (Fedchenko 2017).

The internet became an indispensable means to debunk Russian propaganda beyond Ukraine. *StopFake*'s services attracted particular attention from Russian residents, who represented 27% of *StopFake*'s visitors in July 2018, followed by 18% visitors from Ukraine, 9% from the United States, 5% from Germany and 4% from the UK (Similarweb.com 2018). By September 2020, however, the proportion of visitors from Russia plummeted to 3.63%, whereas visitors from Ukraine grew to represent 48.88% of *StopFake*'s 145,430 total visitors. The three other prominent categories of international visitors were those from the US (9.35%), Belarus (3.24%) and Germany (3.18%) (Similarweb.com 2020). The global reach is paramount, given a prevailing situation in which international media outlets rarely send or post regional correspondents in Ukraine. Such correspondents tend to reside in Moscow,

¹⁰¹ The law on foreign broadcasting obliges the government to allocate 0,06% of a yearly budget to *UA:TV* (CEDEM 2018) and 0,2% of Ukraine's budget for the public service broadcaster *UA: Pershyi* (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 2014).

increasing the likelihood of reliance on Russian sources of information. The Russian state-funded media outlet *RT*¹⁰² had annual funding of 18.7 billion RUR (approximately 218 million GBP) in 2017, when it reached 100 million weekly viewers in 47 countries (RT n.d.). One of the reasons for the popularity of Russian RT lies in the fact that it produces ‘spreadable’ sensational stories under the guise of professional journalism. The coverage of MH-17 tragedy is a good example. Although Ukraine provided proof of the Russian origin of the missile that downed MH-17 in 2014 – proof subsequently confirmed by an international investigation in 2018 (Deutsch 2018) – Bulgarian media, for instance, followed the Russian rather than the Ukrainian version of this tragic event at the time. ‘It’s not merely a case of sympathy or language,’ believes Christo Grozev. ‘The Russian media just tell better stories, and that’s what gets re-printed’ (Grozev 2014).

To counter-balance propaganda and disinformation in the Russia-controlled territories of Donbas and Crimea, *StopFake.org* grew into a multi-media project and a research hub on Russian propaganda in Ukraine – and beyond. *StopFake* uploads weekly television digests to its website and social media platforms. *UA:TV* and the national public service broadcaster *UA:Syspilnyi* (encompassing the national *UA:Pershyi* and regional public service broadcasters *UA:Donbas*, *UA:Krym* and the 23 others) in turn broadcast these *StopFake* digests, demonstrating a foundational strength of grassroots digital civil society in this context (StopFake.org 2019a). In 2019 *StopFake*’s weekly digests also appeared on online television platforms *Hromadske* and *espreso.tv*, while its programmes aired on *Hromadske radio* and as individual podcasts (StopFake.org 2019a). To reach audiences in occupied territories not controlled by Kyiv, *StopFake* publishes a Russian-language newspaper *Your Right to Know* (‘Tvoe parvo znat’) in 200,000 copies (StopFake.org 2019a) and circulates it on the borderlands of Ukraine’s ‘grey zone’ through postmen and personal networks (Romaniuk 2018). According to data provided by *StopFake*’s deputy editor-in-chief Viktoriia Romaniuk, in April 2018 Crimea residents represented 4% of *StopFake*’s audience, while 2% of visitors came from Luhansk region and 5% from Donetsk – totalling 11% of the audience (or 51,000 visitors).

With evolution of Russian propaganda and its increasingly resourceful use of the most popular media channels, the digital native volunteer-fueled *StopFake* needed to

¹⁰² RT says it offers ‘an alternative perspective on major global events’ with a ‘Russian viewpoint.’ Ofcom sanctioned the broadcaster for biased or misleading reports on the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria (Osborne 2016).

‘professionalise’ to counteract its unequal opponent. ‘StopFake started as a virtual networked volunteer project, but it could not be sustainable in the long run in such a form,’ Yevhen Fedchenko explained (2021), ‘So in 2015–2016, we started to move towards the professionalisation of *StopFake*. We targeted international audiences creating content in over a dozen languages, published a newspaper and aired on TV – all of which required substantial financial and people resources,’ Yevhen Fedchenko (2021) noted in an interview with me.

As with the case of *Hromadske*, after an initial sustained flurry of crowdsourced grassroots donations, *StopFake* began to rely on international donors after 2015. Romaniuk told me that this change was effected in recognition of Ukrainians’ difficult financial situation, although a relatively small number of individual grassroots donations still represent a part of *StopFake*’s budget today. The grassroots networked structure of the project was not suitable for many international donors, who have a requirement to support registered non-governmental organisations only. Therefore, *StopFake* receives funding through the Media Reforms Centre – an NGO registered in 2005 by Kyiv Mohyla Academy to organise and fund its Digital Future of Journalism School. In 2015–2019 *StopFake* secured approximately 800,000 GBP in international grants: 2,878,500 UAH came from the International Renaissance Foundation (International Renaissance Foundation 2015a; 2015b); 13,000 EUR from the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic (Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic 2015); 193,022 GBP from the Embassy of the United Kingdom (British Embassy Kyiv 2015); and 240,000 GBP came from the Sigrid Rausing Trust (Sigrid Rausing Trust n.d.; StopFake.org 2019a) (Figure 8). IREX contributed 20,000 USD, while the Atlantic Council gave 10,000 USD, and the UKMA Foundation, 14,375 USD, with another 4,878,384 UAH listed under the heading of ‘other donations, grants and bank interest’ in *StopFake*’s 2019 budget (StopFake.org 2019b). *StopFake*’s website provides several options for crowdfunding through PayPal, BTC, Monobank and PrivatBank (including SWIFT-accounts for donations in euro and dollars) but, as of October 2020, it does not publish information on the amount of citizens’ donations, leaving unclear what kind of domestic¹⁰³ contributors remained unnamed in the ‘other’ section (StopFake.org 2019a; StopFake.org n.d.b). However, *StopFake* makes a point of explaining that it does not receive funding from Ukrainian state organisations (StopFake.org n.d.a).

¹⁰³ The amount in this section is given in UAH in contrast to USD and GBP amounts noted under the names of international donors.

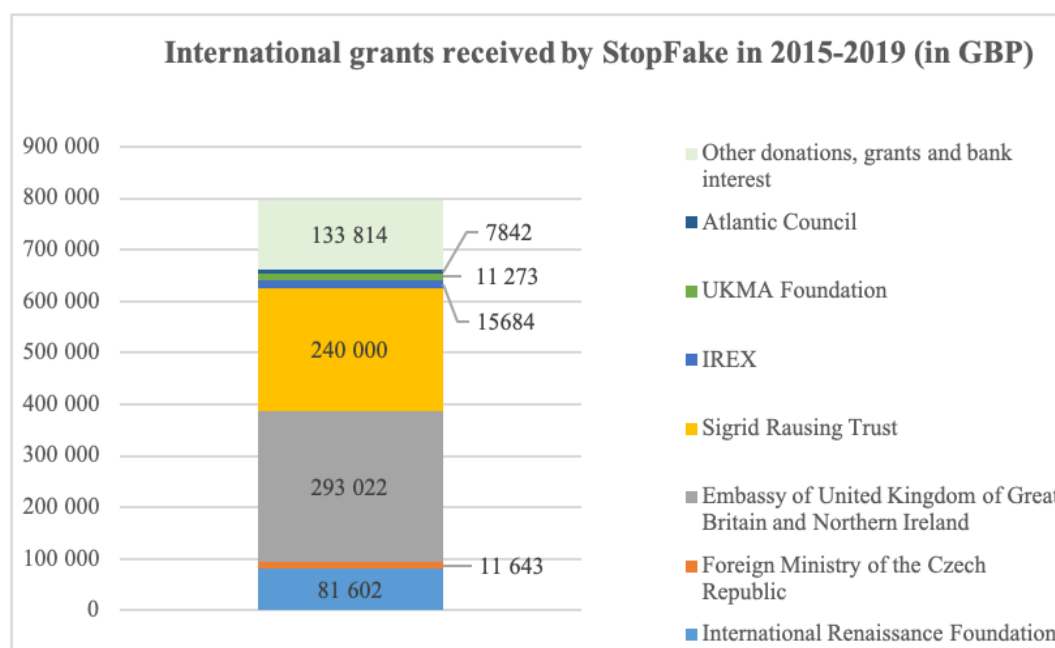


Figure 8. International grants received by StopFake in 2015–2019. Data aggregated by the author from financial statements on the websites of StopFake.org and the respective donors (International Renaissance Foundation 2015a; 2015b; Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic 2015; British Embassy Kyiv 2015; Sigrid Rausing Trust n.d.; StopFake.org 2019a).

Like in the case of *Hromadske*, availability of foreign funding from institutional donors enabled *StopFake* to start a full-fledged media content production and grow their audiences, while building up an international reputation. Unlike *Hromadske*, by 2021 *StopFake* has chosen to become financially self-sustaining and does not receive donor's funding anymore. *StopFake* is now funded from the proceedings of the professional services provided by the Centre for Media Reforms, which includes media content production, research materials publication and educational services in media literacy, contracted by various organisations in Ukraine and abroad. 'This does not mean that we were any less independent when we had institutional donors,' Yevhen Fedchenko stressed out. 'But donors are oriented towards short-term projects with clear and measurable impact; [we believed that] what really works is the long-term things' (Fedchenko 2021) In Fedchenko's experience, institutional donors also tended to overemphasise the requirement for political correctness, whereas *StopFake* team self-identify as civic activists with clear ideational stance at Russian aggression in Ukraine (Fedchenko 2021). Fedchenko (2021) also acknowledged that institutional donors tended to allocate funding globally to the most 'fashionable' topics, which were not necessarily fully in sync with Ukrainian realities and the needs of Ukrainian audiences, which is currently the target audience of *StopFake*.

The guarantee of *StopFake*'s adherence to the international professional code of conduct comes from its membership in the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), which it joined in February 2020. Any reader can leave the complaint or recommendation to *StopFake* directly on the IFCN website, which can be in turn investigated by the international team. Through this membership, this grassroots start-up project engendered sufficient international trust to become Facebook's official partner in tackling fake news on both Facebook and Instagram (Churanova 2020). *StopFake* proactively monitors Facebook for fake news, makes journalistic investigations to disprove them, and then marks the 'fakes' providing links to authoritative sources of refutation. The *StopFake* team also receives notifications when Facebook users mark¹⁰⁴ information as fake, setting off an investigation process on their end. At this point, Facebook does not delete disinformation; it uses algorithms to de-prioritise it, showing 'fake news' to fewer users and labelling it with precautionary text and a suggested refutation (Churanova 2020).

Even in the times when *StopFake* had substantial international grants and hired professional journalists and editors, it retained a horizontal relationship with their audience, involving them into the work process. 'It has always been important to us to keep in touch with our audiences. Hear them. Change. We listened to experts as well,' Fedchenko (2021) noted. Romaniuk said that the project receives five to seven letters a month from volunteers who monitor (pro-)Russian media sources and send suspicious texts for verification in 2018 (Romaniuk 2018). According to Olena Churanova, the coordinator of the StopFake-Facebook partnership, in 2020 *StopFake* regularly received texts for verification from their audience, via both their website and social media messaging apps (Churanova 2020). To expand its network with 'citizen fact-checkers', in 2018–2019 *StopFake* organised 69 training sessions for journalists, students and school teachers and developed a course on media literacy for 400 Ukrainian schools (StopFake.org 2019a). It has a dedicated website section on digital tools and tips on how to spot a fake (StopFake.org n.d.c; n.d.d). In the meantime, digital-savvy journalists and editors continue to bring cutting-edge technologies to the project: in February 2018, for instance, StopFake introduced a plug-in for Facebook warning users when a post comes from a source previously identified as spreading 'fake news' (StopFake.org 2018). *StopFake* also is a pertinent example of how public service organisation can successfully find a balance between a 'networked' organisational structure and a formal

¹⁰⁴ Every Facebook post can be marked as fake by clicking in the right top corner of the post and selecting 'create detailed report' option).

association with an NGO, which allows it to secure international grants while sustaining horizontal relations with its audience and volunteers.

Analysing the dangers of the ‘menace of unreality’ of Kremlin disinformation, British journalist Peter Pomerantsev recognised the importance of Ukraine’s digital civil society in the fight against ‘weaponised information’. ‘If media organisations are unwilling to take this step, then other outlets, modelled on Ukraine’s “Stop Fake” ... can be created,’ Peter Pomerantsev suggested (Pomerantsev and Weiss 2014, 41). With undemocratic regimes increasingly meddling in other countries’ politics through social media networks, the Ukrainian case has compelling resonance for the entire globe. The actions and approaches of *StopFake* have particular significance for both journalists and citizens whose governments are unable – or unwilling – to challenge the spread of ‘fake news’, leaving people with no choice but to self-organise on a grassroots level for the sake of the ‘informational self-defence’.

StopFake is therefore not merely an online media outlet, but an example of a digital civil society organisation enabling ‘connective action’ in Bennet and Segerberg’s terms (2013). According to Bennet and Segerberg (2013, 194–196), the logic of connective action relies on people in the crowd, some with technology development skills, to create networks and platforms that take the place of more formal organisations and enable layered networks to organise activity. Bennet and Segerberg explore this digitally networked action through the prism of protests like Occupy or Arab Spring, but the case of *StopFake* can complement their ‘connective action’ theory by extending its focus to *non-protest* civic action.

Ukraine provides us with yet another example of a digital civic initiative, which emerged from the grass roots in the wake of the revolution, but has managed to achieve sustainability well after a protest or revolution subsided. Answering what he sees as sustainability, Yevhen Fedchenko replied: ‘Sustainability of *StopFake* lies in its ability to continue existing after it runs out of funding. It means it can exist under any circumstances,’ Fedchenko (2021) explained simply. The key to *StopFake*’s sustainability, it appears, is in its team. ‘No matter what hard was the time we had – our people never left,’ Fedchenko (2021) pointed out. When asked to formulate what *StopFake* represents today, Yevhen Fedchenko summarised: ‘We are independent, sustainable, ever-evolving, outcome-oriented, challenging ideological dependencies... and the public need for our services is growing’ (Fedchenko 2021). As ever, *StopFake* remains ‘MAD about Russian propaganda’ (Fedchenko 2021), the internal joke the team had come up with to formulate their mission statement: Monitor,

Archive, and Debunk Russian propaganda. The unique contribution of *StopFake* to the theory and practice of combatting fake news is that they compiled a unique archive of Russian disinformation, which scholars around the globe are using in their research, promoting public immunity against disinformation.

All in all, contemporary Ukraine, with Hromadske, *StopFake*, and the other case studies to follow, offers empirical evidence in support of the Bennet and Segerberg's argument: connective action should not necessarily disperse in the end, even though it was the case for all the examples they studied. Ukrainian grassroots digital public service organisations, analysed in this thesis, show how the internet can be conducive to 'public self-service', especially in societies like Ukraine with an emphasis on 'informal social capital', which cultivates extensive social networks of dedicated pro bono professionals and enthusiasts amongst the public. More broadly, the cases of *Hromadske* and *StopFake* help inform the concept of 'co-production' in public policy literature. Ukraine offers us a compelling example of an exception to a trend, of a 'black swan' that challenges conventional approaches to the provision of public service media. In the EU, the function to establish and ensure the independence of public service media is assigned to the state. In a comparative study of the national legislations of EU member states, the Institute of European Human Rights revealed that 'the State is put in a position to act as the ultimate guarantor, having the obligation to develop the national media order as to guarantee that the public service broadcasting system provides for a pluralistic audiovisual service and to protect the whole communication process' (Institut Für Europäisches Medienrecht 2012, 10). In the UK, the public service broadcaster BBC is a public corporation of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whose public service remit is regulated by the Royal Charter (Gov.uk n.d.). In Germany, the ruling of the Constitutional Court stated that the legislator is *obliged to establish* a broadcasting system that is not only free of governmental influence but also complies with the 'serving' function of the freedom of broadcasting (Institut Für Europäisches Medienrecht 2012, 106). The responsibility of the state to establish and facilitate the functioning of public service broadcasting system also arises from the Amsterdam Protocol on the system of public broadcasting in the Member States introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam (The European Union 1997). According to this document, 'the provisions of the Treaty establishing the European Community shall be without prejudice to the competence of Member States to provide for the funding of public service broadcasting insofar as such funding is granted to broadcasting organisations for the fulfilment of the public service remit as conferred, defined

and organised by each Member State' (ibid). Thus, the state budget is one of the predominant sources of funding among the members of the European Broadcasting Union: direct public funds from the State budget accounted for the main sources of funding in 14.3% of public service broadcasters in Europe (Burnley 2017). Legal scholar Richard Burnley argued that 'in cases where smaller countries and new/emerging democracies cannot afford to introduce a complex system of funding like the licence fee, and consequently direct funding from the state budget appears to be the only option, a specific amount... enshrined in the law can help to maintain the independence of PSM, as well as the stability and adequacy of its funding' (Burnley 2017, 7).

Post-Maidan Ukraine teaches us that allocations in state budgets are not the only option to sustain public service broadcasters in emerging democracies. *Hromadske* and *StopFake* emerged on a grassroots level to fill in a gap in the state public service provision system, relying on crowdsourcing, crowdfunding and the third sector grants. Their digital platform not only meant cheaper organisational costs but also the involvement of citizen journalists in the co-production of civic knowledge. Their informal organisational structure enabled them to react quickly to changing public needs and removed unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. As a result, both *Hromadske* and *StopFake* became foundational precursors for state-provided services in the public service media domain and subsequently outperformed their better-funded state public service counterparts. Instead of challenging the state to deliver public service, activists created 'a proxy-state' in the digital space, accumulated knowledge and trust, and then proactively engaged in helping the state with institutional transformation in the interest of society.

Building a Grassroots ‘MOOC’: The Rise of *Prometheus*

In late 2012, Ivan Prymachenko went out on a limb and took a free online course in programming on EdX.org called ‘CS50: Introduction to Computer Science’ from Harvard University. A historian by training, Ivan Prymachenko was doubtful about possibility of acquiring an advanced technical skill online. He created his first website three months later. He realised that the internet has brought about the revolution in education:

The comparison with Gutenberg’s revolution comes to mind: before Gutenberg, there were only about 30,000 books. They were rare, expensive and hardly accessible to anyone. After the invention of the printing press, in 50 years, the number of books in Europe went up to 100,000. They became cheap and numerous. From the point of view of the mere economy, the massive open online courses mirror this effect: the courses by Stanford University, which were previously accessible to 50–100 people, are now available for the hundreds of thousands of people. I realised that we have to do this in Ukraine.

And so he did. In 2012, Ivan Prymachenko created the first massive open online course (MOOC) in Eastern Europe – ‘Brand management’ – on the newly established platform *University-online*, using his newly acquired skill in coding. Prymachenko engaged a volunteer professor to develop and deliver the course and secured the studio with cameras to record the lectures at his alma mater, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The support from the university management went as far as no actual involvement or funding was needed. Prymachenko had to use his student stipend to buy cassette tapes for the camera. Despite having attracted 10,000 online-students, the *University-online* did not last long: as soon as the demand for the courses outgrew the technical possibilities of the website Prymachenko created, hence the question of funding became pressing.

In an interview with me, Prymachenko recalled that the university management was not willing to push through the bureaucratic obstacles for officially integrating online classes into the university curriculum and officially support the project. Recalling his first probe at creating online courses, Ivan Prymachenko noted: ‘The most important thing is that we managed to physically create it – without any money, any grants or any financial investment... I decided that it should be an independent organisation because working with the university was ... impossible. This is the state structure, it is super-bureaucratized.’

Thus, Prymachenko started to look into informal connections as the most viable route to embodying his idea of free massive open online courses in Ukraine. He had presented this idea at the event on the future of Ukraine’s education, which was organised by the Scientific Society of Post-Graduate Students at Ukraine’s leading national university in engineering and

computer science – the ‘Kyiv Polytechnic Institute’ (later – KPI). There, in late 2012, Prymachenko met someone who would join him in founding *Prometheus*, Oleksii Molchanovskiy, who created a more advanced website on a WordPress engine and provided its technical support on a pro bono basis. Prymachenko involved his mother, Viktoriia, a film director, and Mykyta Kukulevskiy, a cameraman and video editor.

The three co-founders agreed to work on a pro bono basis to help the project gain scale before it attempting at raising grants or launch a crowdfunding campaign. The idea of free volunteer-made massive online courses caused scepticism from the pundits. ‘We talked to many famous Ukrainians in the start-up community – investors and just some experienced start-up creators – they told us that such a big project ... needs substantial investments. To do it alright, one would need around 500,000–1,000,000 USD ... So, they asked: “Well, how much you have got?” We said: “A thousand!”’ Prymachenko told me.

The appearance of the free Open edX open-source software platform on 1 June 2013, became a game-changer for the project. The open massive online courses website requires the engine powerful enough to simultaneously play educational videos for thousands of people at a time, the task with which the WordPress engine (on which the *Prometheus* website was functioning at the time) could not cope. This was in the scope of the open edX engine, created by the world’s first and largest American massive open online courses platform, which hosted the courses by Harvard and Stanford. Once it was made available for free to everyone, the young visionary in distant Ukraine received a technical opportunity to embody his idea of accessible high-quality education. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ever-increasing rate of internet penetration in Ukraine, its affordability and high speed, meant that the digital divide in Ukraine was less of a risk than the divide between the city and the village in terms of accessibility of high-quality education.¹⁰⁵ During the interviews, both Oleksii Molchaniovskiy and Ivan Prymachenko underlined the importance of the internet as the technical opportunity, without which *Prometheus* would not be feasible. At the same time, Molchanovskiy stressed that the digital media played a role of a ‘multiplier’ and enabler, but would be worthless without the idea behind it. The role of the internet in the diffusion of ideas from creative minds from the different parts of the world is both immeasurable and impossible to ignore. Would Ivan Prymachenko channel his activist spirit into the same idea if he had not benefited from a similar online course from an American university himself?

¹⁰⁵ Ukraine is the world’s second country in terms of the cheapest internet with an average monthly cost of broadband 6.64 USD in 2020 (Cable.co.uk 2020).

There is no doubt, however, that it was the local environment which had played the central role to their becoming as civic leaders. During the interview, Ivan Prymachenko noted in passing that he was imagining *Prometheus* when the feeling of the great changes was in the air. When I asked to specify when exactly did Prymachenko started feeling it, he went back to late 2012, the year famous for... nothing in particular. The autumn of 2012 was signified by the Parliamentary elections, in which the Party of Regions led by the president at the time Viktor Yanukovych, gained a victory with 30% of seats with the major oppositional party 'Fatherland' ('Batkivshchyna') came a close second at 25% (Tsentralna Vyborkha Komisiia 2012). Around the same time emerged the civic organisation 'Centre for Combatting Corruption', which would come into prominence during the pro-reform movement after the Maidan Revolution (Youcontrol.com.ua n.d.). The internet was tested as a tool for organising the volunteer movement during the weather storm in Kyiv in early 2013. The fifteen journalists, which were to introduce the idea of *Hromadske* in June 2013, started the organisational preparations. As Yuliia Bankova noted, there was 'public demand for *Hromadske*. This was evidenced by the abundance of the new media outlets introduced in the previous half a year. Everyone was trying to create the new television as an alternative to the old one, to which hardly anyone believes anymore...' (Stv.detector.media 2013). For a historian Ivan Prymachenko, however, the appearance of the first sparkles of civic creativity in late 2012–early 2013 seemed natural:

Ukraine has a rich history, but this is the rich history of a people, whilst the history of independent statehood is relatively recent. Respectively, the generation which grew up [in independent Ukraine] came to notice the critical position in which the state had found itself. This became evident during the times of Yanukovych, and for those for whom it had not been apparent then, it became obvious during the Maidan Revolution and the war [in the Donbas].

The principal aim of *Prometheus*, officially established on 14 October 2014, is 'a revolution in education' (Biggggidea.com n.d.). The meaning is two-fold. On the one hand, it seeks to digitise education to make it more accessible, flexible and able to meet the ever-changing demands of the job market. On the other hand, it communicates dedication to the civic values of the Maidan Revolution. In February 2017, Prymachenko published an editorial in journal *Novoie Vremia* (nv.ua 2017), asserting that the revolution, which had begun in late October–November 2013, had not been finished yet. Prymachenko acknowledged the role of the people who died on the streets of Kyiv during the Maidan Revolution and, later on, in warfare in eastern Ukraine. He stressed that completing the revolution was not up to the 'heroes' but up to millions of ordinary Ukrainians, who would bring reforms to Ukraine (ibid).

In an interview with the author, Prymachenko allegorically explained his public service motivation:

Do you know these popular anti-stress adult colouring books? ... In the Western countries, the founding fathers and mothers have already done the hardest job, they have built the foundations of the institutions, they have built the state. ... And now, to their citizens, this state is like an adult colouring book: the picture of the state – its contours – are already there, you just need to fill in the colours, no creativity required. In the developing countries, including Ukraine, you face a challenge: either you become a founding father or mother of this country ... or there will be no state at all. ... There is more comfort in life in the West, but in Ukraine... you know that you can create something new in principal, or join the creation of something new. ... The state formally was there, but I often hear people say that Ukraine gained its real independence only after the Maidan [Revolution]. I think that emotionally it charges you for the right thing. This was the feeling which motivated many to try to do something.

A recent graduate in his mid-20s and with no pre-Maidan activism experience would indeed go on to find thousands – if not millions – of people in the war-struck economically collapsing Ukraine to support free online education in Ukraine with their donations, expertise and technical resources. Due to the scope of this research project, I do not have the space to delve deeper into the motivations of the volunteers supporting this civic project, but these motivations are a fruitful avenue for further study. Prymachenko shared his hypothesis:

In his book, *The Flow*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes the flow as an optimal psychological state where ... the challenge which you are facing is great enough to keep you interested, but at the same time your skills are sufficient to hypothetically overcome this challenge if you perform well. This situation happened in Ukraine: civil society, even though it was weak, had the forces to fight the rotten political regime, not just Yanukovich himself, but the system of oligarchic feudalism, and it decided to act. This is the situation when you first feel the despair, that you need to leave the country, but then you suddenly realise that you have a chance and you instinctively make a move to use this chance.

Prometheus technical co-founder Oleksii Molchanovskyi was himself one of the people who left Ukraine in 2013 on Fulbright grant. He returned in summer 2014, having realised, by his own account, that Ukrainian society ‘was ready for change’, as he told me during the interview. A computer scientist by training, Oleksii naturally drafted towards describing technical prerequisites which had enabled *Prometheus*’ sustainability. For Prymachenko, by contrast, the experience of the protest and the consequent war seemed more central:

It happened so that the actual working process [on *Prometheus*] took place almost entirely during the Maidan Revolution and the beginning of the war, and this has particularly influenced me emotionally because my family and I am from Donetsk. ... All was happening in a very tense atmosphere – on a personal level, on a family level, on a state level. I think, this was a very powerful emotional nudge: understanding that the state is at the brink of collapse, at the brink of real occupation, not figuratively,

absolutely literally, and you can join in and do something in a sphere of your competence, where you feel that you can change something. ... So, there was a powerful emotional charge, which I think charged not only me personally but, probably, many people who joined us in the beginning as volunteers, all co-founders and the first members of the team.

Although no generalisations can be made about the motivations of *Prometheus*' volunteers, there is indeed some evidence supporting the idea that the Maidan Revolution positively correlated with a propensity to volunteer in a study by Viktoria Sereda (2014). Prymachenko recalled how volunteer work compensated for the lack of financial resources in the early days of the project:

I love to call *Prometheus* ... a 'people's project' because it has a very interesting structure: it has a very sturdy organisational core, right, we have become an NGO with 12 full-time employees, we have some formal contracts to prepare, but a huge amount of work is done by volunteers – up till today [2017]. For example, one huge strand of volunteer work is providing direct help in individual projects. ... For example, the course SC50 Harvard's course – 50 hours of video – was fully translated by volunteers, we did not spend a single penny on the translation! You can imagine, 160 people joined in as volunteers for that one single project.

Molchanovskyi in turn remembered that once the first four courses were published, the website went down because of the great number of the registration requests. Instead of complaints, the project's inbox got filled with letters from specialists in website administration reaching out to offer their help or share suggestions on how to improve the functionality of the website. According to Prymachenko, the extent of volunteer participation in the project stood at about 10,000 people by 2017. Each of them has contributed either through crowdfunding, crowdsourcing (e.g. a gifted mobile application or pro bono course development) or sharing information. Ivan specified that by sharing information he meant the systematic promotion of content through personal social networks. 'Even though mass media write about us often, for which we are very grateful, the majority of traffic is still driven by our users,' Ivan Prymachenko revealed. This observation is consistent with the preference for horizontal communication, discussed in detail in the second chapter, causing the majority of traffic to *Prometheus* to come from social networks rather than traditional media outlets.

All in all, the global digital infrastructure, pro bono partnerships and the wide-scale volunteer mobilisation played a crucial role in enabling *Prometheus* to gain the national scale on a relatively modest budget. While the first capital for the project was secured through crowdfunding in 2014, when the project managed to raise 50,000 UAH,¹⁰⁶ in 2015 the budget

¹⁰⁶ Approximately 3700 USD at the time.

of *Prometheus* was already 654,000 UAH.¹⁰⁷ In 2015 *Prometheus* had raised 515,281 UAH¹⁰⁸ on the crowdfunding platform biggggidea.com and is on the way to collecting 1,000,000 UAH¹⁰⁹ in 2020, having already raised 981,873 UAH¹¹⁰ between February and June 2020 (Prometheus n.d.c). Partnerships with universities allowed to cheapen the process of course production by providing access to best-in-class expertise of the leading Ukrainian academics as well as the university resources such as studying materials or rooms and equipment for filming. As of June 1, 2020, *Prometheus* has fifteen partners, a third of them – educational institutions: the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, the national university Kyiv-Mohyla Academy with its integral part, the Kyiv-Mohyla School of Journalism, as well as two private Lviv-based educational institutions: Ukrainian Catholic University, known for its high standards of teaching enabled by grants from American and Canadian Ukrainian diasporas, and Lviv IT School (LITS), awarded with an IT Jam ‘Meet&Mix!’ IT Education Awards as ‘The most innovative educational program’ in 2015 (Prometheus n.d.d).

The business-partnerships with companies in IT-sector were equally important to ensure the sustainability of the project, which achieved consistent growth in the past five years. For the launch of the project, the datacentre Parkovyi together with the BrainBasket Foundation provided *Prometheus* with a server (Molchanovskyi 2016), which was subsequently replaced by a new partnership with Microsoft. The IT company from eastern Ukrainian Kharkiv – Racoon Gang – helped *Prometheus* to set up the project on the Microsoft Azure server using the cloud service Microsoft BizSpark, made available to them for free or the first three years in terms of the support programme for emerging start-ups. The design company Represent created the design for some of *Prometheus* courses including the course promoting gender equality (Facebook 2015). Collaboration with Ukrainian third sector organisations Hurt¹¹¹, Brainbasket Foundation and Nova Ukraine helped *Prometheus* in its crowdsourcing and crowdfunding efforts. The US-based NGO Nova Ukraine with a mission statement of raising awareness about Ukraine in the US set up the crowdfunding campaign and raised over 4,000 USD to support the creation of the teachers’ development courses on *Prometheus* (Nova Ukraine 2018), while the Ukrainian BrainBasket Foundation supported the translation of the latest version of Harvard’s SC50 course in data science from 2019 (BrainBasket Foundation

¹⁰⁷ Approximately 28,500 USD at the time.

¹⁰⁸ Approximately 22,400 USD, the exchange rate as of 23 May 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Approximately 37,325 USD, the exchange rate as of 23 May 2020.

¹¹⁰ Approximately 36,649 USD, the exchange rate as of 23 May 2020.

¹¹¹ Ukrainian for ‘group’.

2019). Ukrainian media NGO Hurt, which is targeting civic activists, helped to share information about the upcoming courses from the civic education strand of courses. Finally, the national media outlets Dou.ua, Liga.net, Osvita.ua and Obosrevatel.ua provided the informational support for the launch of the new courses.

According to Prymachenko, *Prometheus* had been also financially supported by international donors such as the International Renaissance Foundation, the US Embassy, the UK Embassy, Crown Agents and the USAID. The International Renaissance Foundation (2019; n.d.c; n.d.d; n.d.e; n.d.f; n.d.g) published information on the seven grants with a total budget of 2,048,953 UAH¹¹² issued to *Prometheus* between 2015 and 2019. From the Department of Education and Culture of the US Embassy, *Prometheus* secured a one-time year-long grant aimed at fostering the digital development and capacity building of civil society in Ukraine. This financial support allowed *Prometheus* to create seven new online courses that attracted 35,000 students: ‘Men and women: gender for everyone’, ‘Urbanism: contemporary city’, ‘Sociology and social research: what, how, why?’, ‘How to make a mass open online-course’, ‘Foundations of public policy’, ‘Foundations of lobbying’ and ‘Combatting corruption’, which I examine in more detail below. The open information on the grants from the other donors, however, is lacking.

According to the information of the *Prometheus*’ grant applications published by the International Renaissance Foundation, the average cost of one online course stands at about 200,000 UAH or 10,925 USD. With the 120 courses launched, a million dollars would be required for *Prometheus* to reach this point. From the available data on *Prometheus* funding sources, it becomes clear that the international grants had only covered a small fraction of the projects’ costs. The unobtainable financial capital was replaced by a compound effect of many small partnerships forged between *Prometheus* and individual professionals, companies and organisations between 2014 and 2020. Reliance on such horizontal networks of partnerships with businesses, third sector and, subsequently, the state institutions, enabled *Prometheus* to remain immune to the danger borne by international aid, such as self-distancing from ‘the people’ and starting to work towards donors’ agenda instead, as had been often observed in Ukraine’s third sector by Allina-Pisano (2010). Instead, *Prometheus* built its organisational model in a way to engage with ‘the people’ at all times, building its sustainability on the foundation of Ukraine’s peculiar and most valuable capital – the informal networks of mutual

¹¹² Approximately 76,454.39 USD, the exchange rate as of June 2, 2020.

aid, which had diffused into Ukraine's social tissue as deeply as into Ukraine's businesses, third sector and the state institutions.

Knowledge for the Masses

As a grassroots pro bono educational initiative, *Prometheus* has a mission statement of delivering high-quality education to everyone (Biggggidea.com n.d.). Ultimately, Prymachenko aims to leverage technological innovation in the service of reforms to the formal education sector in Ukraine. In contrast to the international massive online courses platforms *EdX*, *Coursera* and *FutureLearn*, *Prometheus* creates its courses from end to end rather than hosting online courses by the third parties. The resulting selection of courses on *Prometheus* is therefore reflective of the dynamics of the peculiar educational needs and new job market demands in Ukraine, which have been evolving in 2014–2020 amid war, reform, and a global pandemic.

Prometheus is a non-commercial initiative with a public service function. Courses are free to take. They lead to an official certificate of completion, which distinguishes *Prometheus* from *Coursera*, where such certificates constitute a principal means of the platform's profit-making. The majority of *Prometheus*' courses launched between 2014 and 2015 were created on the pro bono basis by the joint effort of professors, translators, voice actors and IT specialists. The subsequent prominence of *Prometheus* showcases how – given the motivation for volunteering and the accessibility of digital technology – a grassroots civic project can successfully overcome a lack of financial resources and provide public service on a national scale. By forging occasional partnerships with the state, business and third-sector organisations, *Prometheus* has managed to curate an ever-expanding selection of courses, which currently stand at one hundred and twenty.¹¹³ It provides an example of how a grassroots civic organisation can successfully undergo the process of formalisation in order to receive foreign aid grants while simultaneously maintaining the public perception of the 'people's project' rather than a Western 'grant eater'.

A public demand for high-quality higher education had long exceeded the supply of Ukraine's state sector, a situation made evident in the fact that *Prometheus* attracted 100,000 students in just over a year after its launch in October 2014. In a testament to its high quality, it experienced consistent growth in the number of its regular users, which tripled to 275,000

¹¹³ As of 19 July 2020.

subscribers between November 2015 and November 2016 and continued to grow, reaching 1,000,000 registered users by May 2020. The range of courses also expanded apace: English as a foreign language, data science, civic education, continuing professional development for teachers, preparation for External Independent Testing¹¹⁴, entrepreneurship, and special vocational training courses for people living with disabilities called ‘You Can Do Anything! The Possibilities are Endless’. In this chapter, after contextualising these seven stand-alone course strands as investments in Ukrainian civic life, I offer insights from interviews about the motivations of the project’s co-creators as well as the peculiar socio-economic circumstances that gave form to ideas of a new ethos in Ukrainian education.

The first course strand consists of five modules of English as a foreign language, each set to promote different types of skills needed for business and entrepreneurship, STEM¹¹⁵, career building, media literacy and journalism. A necessary prerequisite for emigration, English is also a tool to bring the best from the outside world to Ukraine – free journalistic media, new business literature, educational courses, novel ideas or an opportunity to work remotely for a Western company. In other words, new technologies and English proficiency help make the ‘fruits’ of globalisation accessible for developing countries. Journalists, for instance, can benefit from free English courses to build a career in international journalism and bring more Ukrainian perspectives to a global information space, one in which foreign reporters too often ‘parachute’ into Ukraine from bureaus in Moscow or Warsaw.

The entrepreneurship course strand is designed to help Ukrainians to adapt to the dramatic change of economic circumstances brought about by the annexation of Crimea and the withering of crucial industrial output from Ukraine’s east, following the beginning of armed conflict with the Russian-backed militants in 2014. In 2014–2015 alone, Ukraine’s economy shrank by 17% (Yurchyshyn 2018, 86), losing a quarter of direct international investment (Khrapkina et al. 2018, 249) as well as three million jobs, according to Ukraine’s former minister of social policy Andrii Reva (5 Channel 2017). The minister added that in 2017 only 56% of Ukrainians of the working-age were in employment (ibid). However, the official unemployment rate in 2017 stood at about 10% according to the data of Ukraine’s Ministry of Finance (Minfin 2017). The lack of consistent data on the economic activity of the outstanding 34% of the working-age population – neither officially employed according

¹¹⁴ The national equivalent of A-level exams in the UK and SATs in the US.

¹¹⁵ An acronym for science, technology, engineering and math.

to the Ministry of Social Policy, nor unemployed as per Ministry of Finance – demonstrates a persistent inability of the state to address the needs of its labour force.

In light of this situation, *Prometheus* created a strand of courses for a national program called ‘Ukraine – Country of Entrepreneurs’ in partnership with PrivatBank, Ukraine’s largest bank, which was nationalised in 2016. The strand includes seven courses: ‘How to Create a Start-Up’, ‘Entrepreneurship: Business ownership in Ukraine’, ‘Business English’, ‘Marketing: Developing and Selling Value Proposition’, ‘Introduction to the Theory of Constraints and the Thinking Processes as a Powerful Approach to Business Administration’, ‘Financial Management’ and ‘Legal Aspects of Doing Business in Ukraine’. Alumni of the latter thanked their online ‘alma mater’ by creating two mobile applications for *Prometheus* on a pro bono basis in 2017, after the course taught them how to register their own company in the IT sector. This development coincides with a general upward trend in Ukraine. According to the Ministry of Justice, the number of individual entrepreneurs in IT-sector has consistently risen in Ukraine since 2016, when the figure stood at about 89,000 of private entrepreneurs in IT sphere (Dou.ua 2020). The figure has more than doubled since then, reaching 183,000 IT entrepreneurs in April 2020 (ibid).

In general, Ukraine’s IT sector has been developing at a high rate since 2006, when Ukraine’s income from the export of IT services exceeded 1 billion USD for the first time, reaching 5 billion USD by 2013 (Top Lead 2018). The exponential growth of this economy sector caused a growing divide between the ‘supply’ of the traditional university education and the new demands of the job market. It became a notably attractive and well-paid career path in Ukraine, especially after the economic crisis of 2014 brought about a devaluation of the Ukrainian hryvnia by at least 97.3% (or even 134.9% if the currency exchange rate on the Ukrainian black market in 2014 is taken into account) (Bereslavska 2015). In 2015 the export of IT services already constituted 31% of all Ukrainian export of services according to data from the World Bank and mobilunity.com, aggregated by the Top Lead (2018). In 2016 Ukraine ranked among the world’s top-forty countries by the size of IT services export, with 80% of its services being imported by the US (ibid). International IT companies, such as the US-based EPAM Systems, have been actively outsourcing software development contracts from their Western clients to a comparatively cheap and highly qualified Ukrainian IT workforce. With salaries fixed in hard currencies, Ukrainian IT professionals have been able to protect their income from the devaluation rate of the Ukrainian hryvnia.

Yet the skillset needed for such employment remained ‘reserved’ for a select few, pushing many to pay for expensive private courses in data science. *Prometheus* came in to fill the need. It launched a strand of IT-courses encompassing data analysis and programming in R15, machine learning, data visualisation, and big data processing and analysis. In 2020 *Prometheus* partnered with the professional association The Informational Technologies of Ukraine and the Ministry of Social Policy to launch a targeted suite of courses for the people with disabilities (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine 2020). The programme allowed its alumni to undergo a separate application process for jobs at IT companies in Ukraine. To be considered, applicants needed to submit a medical disability certificate alongside their CV as well as certificates of completion of two core courses: ‘Introduction to Computer Science CS50 2019’ by Harvard University, translated into Ukrainian by *Prometheus*, and the ‘Foundations of Software Testing’. The applicants also had to complete two additional online courses chosen from a list of ten: ‘Foundations of Programming’, ‘Java Programming’, ‘Foundations of Web UI Development’, ‘Communicational Instruments for Reputation Building’, ‘Foundations of Information Security’, ‘Data Analysis and Statistical Programming in R’, ‘Data Visualisation’, ‘English for Business Purposes’, ‘Design Thinking for Innovation’, or ‘Science of Everyday Thinking’.

The civic significance of this initiative cannot be overstated. Only 20% of disabled persons are employed in Ukraine (Prometheus n.d.b), but the majority of officially registered disabled people, which stands at 2,7 million in 2020, are of working age. Ukraine’s legislation defines the size of the disability benefit for people with group 3 and group 2 disability as a fraction of the pension that a given person would receive upon reaching the pension age (Pensiinyi Fond Ukrainy 2018), leading Ukrainians over 60 to abstain from officially confirming their disability status. The need to address the needs of disabled persons is particularly pressing in the face of the ongoing military conflict on Ukraine’s east, which has led to over 60,000 people officially receiving disabled status between 2014 and 2019 (Romanenko 2019). With only roughly 677,000 disabled persons in employment (Zanuda 2018), Ukraine struggles to protect the fundamental human right to work among the people with special needs.

Another course addressing the issue of equality of opportunities from a different angle is ‘Women and Men: Gender for Everyone’. The course seeks to fight gender-based discrimination by looking at current socio-political developments through the lens of the gender theory. My analysis of the European Social Survey dataset from 2004–2012 revealed

the Ukrainian men and women shared the view that women should be prepared to cut down on the paid employment for the sake of the family (Appendix C, Figure 17). Ukrainians agreed with this claim significantly more so than men and women in Europe, which is reflective of the high dependence of Ukraine's informal care sector on the unpaid work of women. This state of affairs created unequal career prospects for men and women and led to women's underrepresentation in the public sphere, a reality illustrated by the dynamics of female representation in Ukraine parliament. After the first parliamentary elections in independent Ukraine in 1994, only eleven women won seats in the Verkhovna Rada (2.3% of the total number of MPs). Two decades later, the situation modestly improved, with women making up 11.1% of the total number of the members of parliament by 2014. The post-Maidan landscape accelerated change. By 2019 the percentage of female MPs rose to 20.5% (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy n.d.). Ukraine doubled its female representation in parliament in the five post-Maidan years due to the joint efforts of the state, the media and the informal education sector, which has brought the issue of gender (in)equality to the public attention. A struggle for gender equality has been a particularly pressing public concern since the beginning of military conflict in 2014, which fuelled predictions of a reinforcement of patriarchal culture and traditional gender roles (Onuch and Martseniuk 2014).¹¹⁶

Despite the pervasiveness of patriarchal stereotypes and deep-rooted systemic deficiencies, such as the lack of the rule of law, of political will and of political opportunities for institutional capacity-building (United Nations Ukraine n.d.), post-Maidan Ukraine has taken several important steps towards fostering gender equality. In 2015 the Ukrainian government adopted a new strategy on enforcement of human rights, which included provisions guaranteeing equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life. In 2017, the parliament made amendments to the criminal code making domestic violence a capital offence in the face of the augmented risk of its occurrence as a result of the increasing number of former men-at-arms struggling with PTSD after taking part in the military conflict in the Donbas. Furthermore, the 'State Social Program on Providing Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men up to 2021' was adopted in 2018 to eliminate the institutional barriers to gender equality in Ukraine. One example of such an institutional barrier would be the initial lack of legal basis for officially employing women as the soldiers of Ukraine's army. In the

¹¹⁶ For a more recent account of the dynamics of the struggle for gender equality in Ukraine, see Olesya Khromeychuk 2018. 'From the Maidan to the Donbas: The Limitations on Choice for Women in Ukraine.' In *Gender and Choice after Socialism*, edited by Lynne Attwood, Elisabeth Schimpfössl, Marina Yusupova, 47–78. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

series of the interviews with the author conducted in December 2018, two Ukrainian female soldiers – Dariia Zubenko and Adriana Susak – noted that at the beginning of the war in 2014 they were officially registered as seamstresses and cooks (professions from the list of ‘female’ professions in the army) in the military units where they served. The female soldiers were issued assault rifles registered for the male soldiers’ names, even though the army, which needed volunteers urgently to withstand Russian-backed separatists, welcomed my interviewees into the ranks of assault brigades and military intelligence units at the battlefield on the Ukrainian east. Serving and dying alongside men without legal foundations to officially register as a soldier, Ukrainian women were deprived of the official status of participants of the military conflict and the war veterans, losing rights for state support. A national holiday, introduced 2014 to celebrate the national effort to protect Ukraine’s territorial integrity, was named the ‘Day of Ukraine’s Defender’. The noun ‘defender’, however, is of the male gender in the Ukrainian language, reflecting the unconscious bias of the politicians, who could have opted for the gender-neuter plural form for ‘defenders’. In September 2018, four years and four months after the beginning of the war, Ukraine’s parliament voted for the amendments to the laws on ensuring the equal rights and opportunities of men and women during the military service in the Ukrainian Army (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 2018). As of March 2020, 29,760 women are officially serving in the ranks of the Ukrainian Army, 902 of which are senior officers (ArmiiaInform 2020).

Despite numerous positive developments, however, the Ukrainian parliament still resists ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the international agreement on combatting violence against women and domestic violence. Even though Ukraine signed the convention in 2011, it did not become the part of national legislation without ratification by the parliament. Thus, in February 2020, Viktoriia Zinchuk (2020) launched an electronic petition addressed to President Volodymyr Zelenskyi calling on him to support the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The electronic petition, which required 25,000,000 signatures to get an official response, took almost three months to get the necessary number of signatures, 14,000,000 of which were gathered in the last 17 days between April 28 and May 15 following an online social media campaign with the hashtag #підпишемо_петицію_разом (Ukrainian for ‘let’s sign the petition together’) (Hromadskyi Prostir 2020). This helicopter view of efforts to promote gender equality by institutional and non-institutional means over the past five years helps illustrate the importance of *Prometheus* and the course on gender within its informal civic education curriculum.

The course strand ‘Economics for Everyone’ aims to promote economic literacy, with a particular focus on older generations grappling with the post-communist economic transformation. In Ukraine, free market economic thinking has not taken deep roots among the majority of the population, putting many into a disadvantaged financial position. Another course of this cycle is ‘Urban Planning: A Contemporary City’, which introduces the foundations of urban studies to enable civic activists to make informed decisions about transforming their cities. The course is an answer to the growing public interest to the local activism: not only in the forms of the commonplace strikes against illegal construction, but also in the development of clean communal green zones in residential areas, one of the most widespread forms of civic activism in Ukraine (Sereda 2014).

The course ‘Sociology and Social Research: What, How, Why?’, meanwhile, introduces the foundations of sociology. It raises crucial practical issues such as *who is conducting* and *who is funding* a study, and what hidden biases sociological research could have as a result. The need for ‘popular sociology’ stemmed from the abundance of the popular live political talk shows in Ukraine, which may inadvertently become a platform for unscrupulous speakers to misuse sociological data and manipulate public opinion. The Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2020) raised one such example: on March 5 2020 in the studio of the live talk show ‘The Right to Power’ (‘Pravo na Vladu’) Ukraine’s former prime minister and a presidential candidate Yulia Tymoshenko cited a *non-existent* survey by Rating Group claiming that 75% of Ukrainians disprove of the governments’ political course. Live television is not conducive to real-time fact-checking, and the efforts of fact-checking projects and media outlets – even if they are quick enough to disprove unsubstantiated claims minutes after the show is aired – cannot rival the reach of the prime-time television. Fostering ‘damage prevention’ through a promotion sociological thinking via *Prometheus*’s course selection has clear civic value.

The three last courses of the civic education strand – ‘State Policy Foundations’, ‘Foundations of Lobbying’ and ‘Combating Corruption’ – seek to redefine state-society relations in Ukraine by promoting political culture (Prometheus n.d.a). These courses teach students how to organise anti-corruption investigations and civic campaigns and how to spot and prevent corrupt mechanisms in state procurement auctions. In previous chapters, I have discussed in detail a lack of experience among Ukrainian citizens in dealing with the state, which led to the promotion of informal means to achieve individual goals. These courses aim to compensate for this lack of experience. ‘State Policy Foundations’ explains to students how

state policies are developed, officially adopted and implemented in real-life political situations. Without longstanding traditions of formal third sector organisations and political movements – the Tocquevillian ‘school of democracy’ – Ukraine benefits profoundly from such courses that promote the skills necessary to re-appropriate agency of citizens in political-decision making.

The course on political lobbying, meanwhile, enriches the foundations of the state policy to help civic organisations develop an effective strategy to interact with the state institutions. Its principal aim is to give third sector organisations an efficient toolset to become active subjects of legislative activity and to establish new political ‘rules of the game’ in their relevant sector. Given that no Ukrainian university has a course on political lobbying, *Prometheus* invited a merited practitioner from the international consulting company PBN Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Olena Prokopenko, who previously advised Visa, Apple, Sanofi and Unilever.

The final course of the strand, ‘Combatting Corruption’, teaches Ukrainian citizens how to ensure that no organisation undercuts the need for legitimate political lobbying by building networks of corruption within state institutions. Ukraine’s long-standing struggle with corruption is so infamous that it formed a pretext for attorneys defending US President Donald Trump in his 2019 impeachment trial. In an interview to *USA Today*, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyi had to refute Trump’s claim that Ukraine is ‘the third most corrupt country in the world’ (Wu 2020). As an informal practice, corruption in Ukraine is difficult to quantify, which has led to data discrepancy across different studies. For example, in 2016, *E&Y* – one of the world’s top-four auditing companies – assessed Ukraine as the world’s second most corrupt country after Brazil. Its survey, however, only encompassed 57 countries, while a larger dataset of the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index ranked Ukraine 131 out of 176 countries in the same year, meaning that at least 45 countries ‘outperformed’ Ukraine in the sphere of corruption. According to the Trading Economics data aggregator (2020), which collected the data from Transparency International, the Ukrainian score on a corruption scale registered improvement, reflecting the slow movement of anti-corruption reforms and the persistence of activist efforts to exercise the public oversight over the state. All in all, Ukraine’s civic sector has demonstrated a sustained dedication to the anti-corruption effort and to the promotion of public awareness of the available instruments to combat corruption, as the example of *Prometheus* here attests.

If the courses above help citizens develop skillsets to influence the state, the following strands support the state in serving its citizens. The first is instrumental for fulfilling the constitutional right of every Ukrainian citizen to a free and full state education. Its courses on preparation for the External Independent Testing¹¹⁷ (later – EIT) help children to pass the national examination successfully and progress to university study. Since applicants can choose up to five universities, the children with good EIT scores are likely to receive a state-funded place (50% of all university places) at some of their universities of choice. Indeed, the introduction of the EIT in 2005 has been arguably the most successful educational (and by extension – anti-corruption) reforms in post-Orange Ukraine. The anti-corruption component arises from the improbability of the leak of the tests' questions: there have been no such occurrences reported in the past 15 years. As a result, according to the sociological study by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2017) conducted in 2017, 63% of respondents believed that EIT created equal opportunities for everyone.

There was, however, one group of children disadvantaged by the External Independent Testing (EIT) system: children residing on the occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea, whose constitutional right for a free full state education was taken from them abruptly in 2014. The passports and the school certificates issued on the occupied territories are not valid in Ukraine. Therefore, until 2017, parents had to take their children across the contact line to apply for Ukrainian documents and enroll them at remote learning programme at one of the Ukrainian schools for the sake of the official school certificate.¹¹⁸ Only then could children sit the EIT in Ukraine. But how could children prepare for the EIT in such circumstances? According to *Prometheus*' co-founder Ivan Prymachenko, a native of Donetsk, the idea of creating EIT preparation courses in Ukrainian language and literature, the history of Ukraine, math and English for these children came to him as soon as the war in the Donbas started in 2014. By 2016, he forged a partnership with Ukraine's Ministry of Education, which has officially approved the content of courses and helped the project secure external grants from the UK Embassy and the British Council.

This goal of evening out the playing field for Ukrainian children from the occupied territories, however, could not be achieved by informal means only. In 2017, the Ministry of Education opened specialised educational centres 'Donbas–Ukraine' and 'Crimea–Ukraine'

¹¹⁷ As previously mentioned, EIT is the national equivalent of A-level exams in the UK and SATs in the US.

¹¹⁸ Since 2017 the children from the occupied territories were officially included into the list of people who can benefit from simplified enrollment in the official home-schooling program – 'externat'.

on the governmentally-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and in Vinnytsia, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Kherson and Odesa oblasts. At these centres, children from occupied territories can sit the examination on Ukrainian language and the history of Ukraine. Upon successful completion, they receive a Ukrainian school certificate and can apply to the designated Ukrainian universities without EIT.

In general, for those aiming to attend Ukraine's most prestigious universities, *Prometheus* MOOCs are an indispensable asset. Taught by the leading professors from the capital's finest universities, the online preparatory courses were created to ensure equal access to knowledge of the high school disciplines for all Ukrainian children, regardless of the family income or the quality of instruction at local schools. The Covid-19 lockdown has further reinforced the public need in high-quality online courses, helping students to prepare for final exams. The teachers can also use *Prometheus*' courses as a part of 'mixed-learning' method where multimedia pieces are integrated into conventional teaching.

Indeed, teachers have become the target audience of the most recent specialised cycle of courses offered by *Prometheus*. In an interview with me in 2017, Ivan Prymachenko bitterly acknowledged a lack of political will to support his idea of online qualification-improvement training for Ukrainian teachers, even though it could save millions for the state budget and significantly improve the quality of teaching. The need for the latter could not be more pressing: according to the results of Pisa-2018, 25.9% of Ukrainian teenagers could not achieve the basic level in reading, 36% failed the minimal requirements for math and 26.4% failed in science (Mon.gov.ua 2018). With a change of government after the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019, and with its evolution from a provider of informal massive online courses portal to an influential educational NGO, *Prometheus* received an official licence to provide services in professional development training. Since March 2020, a set of ten courses by *Prometheus* have been officially approved by the state as a legitimate alternative to the traditional teachers' qualification improvement training sessions. The respective strand of online courses encompasses 'The Science of Learning: What Every Teacher Needs to Know' developed by Columbia University; 'Ukrainian literature' by Ukraine's leading artistic NGO *Mystetskyi Arsenal*; 'Innovation in Schools' developed by the MIT; 'Science of Everyday Thinking' by the University of Queensland; 'Design Thinking in Education' by Stanford University; 'Prevention and Counteraction of Bullying in Educational Institutions' co-developed by *Prometheus* and the Ministry of Education; and the three original courses entitled 'Media Literacy for Educators', 'Teaching Critical Thinking' and

‘Critical Thinking for Educators’. The final course in this cycle – ‘Professional Development of Teachers: New Requirements and Opportunities’ – is designed for school headmasters in order to help them navigate the official requirements introduced in January 2020 by new amendments to the laws ‘On Education’ and ‘On the Complete General Secondary Education.’ According to the latter, the school administration is solely responsible for defining where and when their teachers will undertake the qualification improvement training. In this free online course by *Prometheus*, Prymachenko works alongside the Minister of Education of Ukraine as well as representatives from major Ukrainian educational NGOs to provide detailed explanations of new opportunities in teacher development in this newly monopolised field.

The opportunity to learn from the world’s leading educational institutions and Ukraine’s leading experts from the comfort of one’s own home is particularly valuable in Ukraine’s peculiar social conditions. According to a teachers’ survey based on the international Teaching and Learning International Survey methodology (n=3600)¹¹⁹, the generalised sociological portrait of Ukrainian teacher is represented by a 45-year-old woman with 21 years of teaching experience (17 of which are in the same school). An average Ukrainian teacher works 52 hours a week (Kyselova 2020), significantly more than teachers in other countries surveyed by TALIS, where a 38-hour work week was typical (ibid). Given that 84% of Ukrainian teachers are women, they are also expected to be the principal carers for young children and elderly parents, making female teachers particularly time-poor. This state of affairs puts additional constraints on the kind of travel they would be able to undertake for the sake of professional improvement training. *Prometheus*’s online courses, therefore, can be an efficient way to overcome the lack of time-related, financial and cultural constraints, which prevent Ukrainian teachers from the most distant parts of Europe’s largest country¹²⁰ from undertaking high-quality teachers’ training in the capital.

Unfortunately, *Prometheus* teachers’ development courses do not include a specialised training programme on teaching in inclusive classes. In Ukraine, 60% of teachers have never taught a child with a disability, and only 1% of teachers have had experience working in a classroom where 10% of students had special needs (Osvitoria n.d.). This observation is concerning, given that Ukraine’s Cabinet of Ministers allocated 504,458,000 UAH (15,5 million GBP) in 2020 for the development of inclusive education in educational institutions,

¹¹⁹ The survey was based on a representative sample of 3600 teachers and 201 school headmasters.

¹²⁰ Including the uncontrolled territories, the area of Ukraine is 603,628 km².

welcoming hundreds of thousands of children with special needs to take places in the ordinary classrooms. With the majority of teachers lacking experience or training in special needs and neurodiversity, this progressive reform risks a backlash from teachers and families. In this context, *Prometheus*'s development of relevant courses to provide conditions for this reform to succeed has never been more important.

How *Prometheus* Gave Fire to the State

Prometheus has emerged as a digital grassroots public service provider thanks to the cultural normativity of horizontal self-help in the face of the state's failure to satisfy public needs and the accessibility of the digital opportunity structure. Having evolved from crowdsourcing and crowdfunding efforts on digital platforms in 2014, *Prometheus* came to rival – and at times outperform – the formal state education sector. It has led the way for a change of approaches and further institutional reforms, which have been gradually implemented through collaboration with Ukraine's Ministry of Education. By initially retaining distance from the state education system in a social climate characterised by the lack of trust to the state, *Prometheus* gained long-term partners in business and the third sector. The compound effect from investments, pro bono services and resource-sharing from local Ukrainian businesses and third sector organisations allowed *Prometheus* to thrive in Ukraine despite a dramatic shortage of financial resources. It also allowed the project to accumulate public trust and engage the citizens into the process of creating the courses as translators, voice actors or design professionals. Having developed the necessary expertise and national recognition, *Prometheus* channelled its energy into helping the state to save public resources by providing it with high-quality educational content, ready to be integrated into the official school, university and vocational training curricula. Among the 120 courses, created throughout 2014–2020, *Prometheus* introduced courses for teachers' professional development, professional development for people with disabilities and training for state employees on how to fill tax declarations¹²¹ or use the innovative digital procurement system for state procurement *ProZorro*. The latter also emerged as a grassroots public service provider and progressed to play a central role in the transformation of Ukraine's state procurement system, as I will demonstrate in the following section.

¹²¹ The compulsory tax declarations for public servant were only introduced in Ukraine in the past five years, so many lack experience in dealing with them.

A Civic Initiative for E-Procurement: *ProZorro*

ProZorro is a volunteer initiative that has transformed Ukraine's state procurement by introducing an electronic system which allows state enterprises to initiate reverse auctions for products and services. Business-led marketplaces provide access to these auctions to over 200,000 local and international suppliers (ProZorro 2019). While the European Union is holding discussions on how to make state procurement systems more accessible for small and medium businesses (Pircher 2020), in Ukraine small and medium businesses already represent 90% of the participants in state procurement auctions via *ProZorro* (ProZorro 2019). Participants auction in real-time, and all the information about the completed, ongoing or upcoming tenders is accessible online. Hundred Terabytes of this data is available in a few clicks alongside the digital tools to analyse it at bi.prozorro.org and DoZorro.org (ibid). These tools allow users to identify the companies which have won the biggest number of state procurement tenders in a matter of seconds, empowering third sector activists to spot conflicts of interest (i.e. tailoring the tender information to target a particular company close to the political elites) in time to prevent vested interests from influencing the outcomes of procurement auctions. Indeed, even established democracies are not immune to procurement scandals: a *Sunday Times* investigation in late 2019 revealed that Boris Johnson's close friendship with Jennifer Arcuri coincided with the allocation of 126,000 GBP in public money to her firm in 2014-2015 (The Sunday Times 2019). While in the UK 'watchdog journalists' receive procurement information through official information access forms, Ukrainian 'citizen auditors' *directly* oversee the allocation of public funds at all times on *ProZorro* platform. Such transparency shortens the backlog between the occurrence of suspicious activity and its coming to public attention. Hence the name *ProZorro*, which is a wordplay on 'prozoro' (Ukrainian for 'transparently') and Zorro – Johnston McCulley's fictional vigilante defending the poor against the forces of injustice. Thus, in the following section, I will first review the establishment of state public procurement system in independent Ukraine. I will proceed to illustrate what added value *ProZorro* has brought to the Ukrainian state and society. Finally, I will discuss the social and political preconditions for the emergence of *ProZorro* and argue that, in the case of Ukraine, the bottom-up institutional capacity-building represents a legitimate form of civic activism.

The lack of institutional capacity for efficient state procurement in Ukraine takes its roots from the Soviet plan economy. As a member state of the USSR, Ukraine had been

executing the state procurement orders from the Gosplan USSR¹²² in Moscow. Gosplan USSR decided that the Soviet Union would produce 100 million socks in Ukraine. Gosplan sent the respective allocation order to the Gosplan¹²³ of Ukrainian SSR, and the latter sent the order to a sock-manufacturing enterprise in Ukrainian Zhytomyr. The latter requested threads and dyes from Ukrainian Gossnab¹²⁴, which sent the allocation order to Gossnab USSR in Moscow. Gossnab USSR then sent the respective instructions back to the Gossnab of Ukrainian SSR, which executed the logistical side.

Once Ukraine proclaimed independence, its state procurement system faced an existential crisis. To some extent, the Ukrainian experience was similar to the other post-Soviet states including Russia: after elimination of the Gossnab USSR, the state enterprises in Russia started receiving direct funding from the state budget to spend at the discretion of their managers without any controlling body (Yakovlev, Demidova and Podkolzina 2015, 13). ‘Heavy under-financing of the government bodies and their procurement, galloping inflation that stemmed from overnight price liberalisation, mushrooming corruption against erratic formal rules ..., preventing not only efficient spending of budgetary funds but procurement in principle,’ as Vladimir Melnikov and Olga Lukashenko noted (2017, 111). However, the lack of professional expertise in managing – as opposed to executing¹²⁵ – state procurement orders made the situation in Ukraine even more challenging.

Between 1993 and 1996 issues of public procurement were regulated on an *ad hoc* basis by the yearly decrees ‘On State Contract’ issued by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The latter defined the number of goods, works, services ordered by the state, leaving the choice of a contractor at the sole discretion of procurement managers (Zdyrko 2019). It was not until 1995 that Ukraine adopted the law ‘On State Procurement to Meet the Prioritised State Needs’ (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 1995), laying the legal foundation for competitive

¹²² The State Planning Committee of USSR.

¹²³ This institution is called ‘Derzhplan URSR’ in Ukrainian sources.

¹²⁴ The State Logistics Committee of Ukrainian SSR (‘Derzhpostach SRSR’ in Ukrainian sources).

¹²⁵ To illustrate the peculiar relationship of subordination between state procurement systems of the USSR and Ukrainian SSR, I bring an example of the decree N 291 from 14 August 1986 of the Council of Ministers of Ukrainian SSR on the provision of the firewood in Ukraine. Firstly, the Ukrainian Council of Ministers issued a decree to inform Ukraine’s public procurement body – the Derzhpostach (Gossnab) of Ukrainian SSR – about the new policy adopted by the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and to the task it with five functions: 1) *collect data* on the needs of Ukrainian population (in fuel for the houses lacking central heating system in this particular case) 2) *execute* the preparation of the firewood including setting up the firewood warehouses; 3) *draft a policy* on the distribution of the firewood for Ukraine’s Council of Ministers; 4) *exercise* control over the firewood provision locally; and 5) *prepare* the report to the State Plan Agency (Derzhplan Ukrainian SSR), which would then present the data to the Council of Ministers in Moscow, ‘closing’ the circle (Soviet Ministrov Ukrainskoi SSR 1986).

state procurement tenders and defining the means of control over the state contracts (ibid). The local administrations, however, developed and adopted their provisions on state procurement tenders, according to which the top-manager of the state enterprise controlled the procurement process (Shatkovskyi 2015). Such institutional build-up created fertile soil for informal agreements between state managers and suppliers. The former, even if caught red-handed for signing a state procurement contract with a firm owned by an acquaintance, could argue that this was the best available counteragent for the procurement order. Given the Soviet legacy of the lack of systematised information about manufacturers and their products (Melnikov and Lukashenko 2017, 111), law enforcement agencies could hardly prove the contrary.

The collapse of the Soviet technological chains and the impossibility of their restoration under the frame of mutually beneficial cross-country cooperation (Melnikov and Lukashenko 2017, 11) pushed Ukraine to seek international aid funding and sign new international agreements. Ukraine aligned its legislation with international norms, including the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Government Procurement and the UNCITRAL Model Law on Procurement of Goods, Construction and Services, which provides a template for reforming regulatory systems on public procurement in developing societies (World Trade Organisation 1994; UNCITRAL 1993). In 2000, the government adopted a renewed decree on state procurement of goods, works and services declaring the creation of a broad competitive environment in the public procurement market, ensuring transparency and fairness of tender procedures. The next year, legislators adopted a law on the protection of the economic competition (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 2001) and introduced framework agreements¹²⁶ – multisided agreements between several state institutions and one set of suppliers, which allows benefiting from the wholesale price, saving public funds (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2001). Such harmonisation of the national and international procurement legislation resulted in favourable conclusions about Ukraine's progress in the reports by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (The World Bank 2001; International

¹²⁶ This legal norm had not been in use up until 2013 (Shatkovskyi 2015), indicating that the state institutions and enterprises holding procurement tenders were not necessarily interested in collaboration for the sake of decreasing budgetary spending. The emergence of e-procurement system *ProZorro* gave a second life to the long-existing provision by introducing a separate procedure for long-term (up to four years long) framework agreements between state organisations and a minimum of three suppliers in 2018. The provision for the minimum number of supplies created the competitive environment, ensure fair pricing and avoid the delays in public service provision caused by the unexpected inability of the supplier to fulfil the contract (Lavrova 2020).

Monetary Fund 2004). The World Bank acknowledged Ukraine's progressive legislation for 'decentralised procurement systems, transparent and appropriate procurement methods, effective advertisement process, improved anti-corruption measures, and a regulated appeal process' (2001). The IMF stated:

Ukraine has made significant progress in improving key aspects of fiscal transparency. The budget code has established a solid legal framework for budget management. ... These and the other achievements described above, combined with its considerably improved growth and fiscal performance, placed Ukraine in a sound position to further improve transparency and establish ... sustainable fiscal policies' (International Monetary Fund 2004, 33).

In public perception, however, this progressive legislation did not result in the reduction of corruption in public procurement. The World Bank report mentioned that 'some privatisation tenders have been insufficiently advertised. Perceptions of corruption and unfair selection of bidders ... emerged' (International Monetary Fund 2004, 8). The World Bank report noted the *ad hoc* authority vested in the Cabinet of Ministers to suspend provisions of the Public Procurement Law, which allowed authorities to extend contracts without competition and excessive pre-qualification requirements (World Bank 2001). The latter enabled corrupt managers to deliberately tailor the pre-qualification requirements and tender documentation for a specific supplier for the sake of illegal benefit (Khusanova 2010).

An attempt at halting corruption in the public procurement sector came from the amended public procurement law in 2005 (Verkhovna Rada 2005), which outsourced oversight over state procurement procedures to a third sector actor – the coalition of NGOs *Tenderna Palata*¹²⁷. The progressive legislation imagined *Tenderna Palata* as an independent NGO, prohibited to provide paid services and obliged to make all its activities transparent for the public (President of Ukraine n.d.). *Tenderna Palata* assumed a range of crucial state functions such as the authority to examine complaints on the tender procedure violations and issue the official conclusion on the legitimacy of the tender procedure and efficiency of the budgetary spending. *Tenderna Palata* could suspend or annul any tender or prevent any vendor from participating at their own discretion, accountable to no state institution (Robocha Grupa... 2007; Kindzerskyi 2013, 442). As a result, instead of supporting the development of Ukrainian state procurement system towards fairer, more transparent and efficient budgetary spending – the function entrusted on *Tenderna Palata* by the law (Vodolaskova 2011) – this NGO allegedly left the participants of the state auctions with 1 billion UAH¹²⁸ in

¹²⁷ The tender chamber in Ukrainian.

¹²⁸ Approximately, 20,000,000 USD in 2007.

losses accumulated in the first half of 2007 alone (Bihus.info 2017). To enter the competition for state procurement tenders, *Tenderna Palata* encouraged suppliers to use the services of the *European Consulting Agency*, owned by relatives of the *Tender Chamber* founder Oleh Fadeev.¹²⁹ In 2007, the analytical newspaper *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* sent an official information access request to the Ministry of Justice to retrieve the copies of the protocols from the Extraordinary Congress of the *Tender Chamber*. The protocol № 1/5 from the meeting held on 26 January 2007, indicated that union of NGOs *Tenderna Palata* encompassed 26 NGO members, 24 out of which were led by the people with a name Yatsenko (13 organisations) or Vrublevskiy (11 organisations). Some of these NGOs shared registration address with *Tenderna Palata* at Khreschatyk, 6 in Kyiv (Dzerkalo Tyzhnia 2007). As Jessica Alisa-Pisano (2015) noted, Ukraine had long mastered creating the ‘legitimising facades’ of civil society institutions; the infamous ‘Potemkin villages’ got built in the Ukrainian steppes, after all.¹³⁰

Tenderna Palata diminished the trust in the third sector to such an extent that the creators of *ProZorro* shied away from registering an official NGO opting to work on a pro bono basis without any aid funding to avoid associations with *Tenderna Palata*. ‘Every time we started speaking about a possibility of officially registering as an NGO, we heard: “If you create an NGO which will have some influence in the process of state procurement, [the public] will destroy you, saying that you are the new *Tenderna Palata*, and no one would ever speak to you again,’ the founder of *ProZorro* Oleksandr Starodubtsev shared during the interview. Consequently, the updated law, which dissolved *Tenderna Palata* in 2008, prohibited *any* involvement of the third sector organisations in the management of the public procurement tenders. The amendment of 2008 also cancelled the provision for publishing data on the results of the state tenders and rejection of tender proposals. This amendment allowed for the *post-factum* changes in tender conditions after the allocation of the tender (i.e. increasing prices, reducing supplies, or substituting the contracted product with another product within the same product group) leading to unreasonable increases in budget

¹²⁹ The latter was allegedly the proxy of the MP Anton Yatsenko in 2002–2006, when the respective law was adopted by Verkhovna Rada, as per the materials of the criminal case opened by the General Prosecutor Office in Ukraine in 2017 (Bihus.info 2017).

¹³⁰ Grigorii Potemkin was the favourite of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great made the governor-general of the ‘New Russia’ – the southern Ukraine – and the prince of Tauris (also, southern Ukraine including Crimea). Attempting to colonise Ukrainian steppe, Hryhori Potemkin underestimated the cost of such colonisation and famously ordered to build the mere facades of prosperous villages in Ukraine to disguise the drawbacks of his administration from the Empress touring in the newly acquired lands in the south of Ukraine (Encyclopedia Britannica 2006, 1535).

expenditures, according to Yurii Kindzerskyi (2013). In the absence of effective mechanisms of public oversight, the state institutions adopted thirty-five legislative changes to the Law of Ukraine on Public Procurement between 2010 and 2013, exempting forty-three different types of key goods and services from any competitive process (Starodubtsev and Buhai n.d.). Some of these changes raised suspicions of hidden vested interests as procurement of food for circus animals and supplies for outdoor events were exempt alongside nuclear technology (ibid). The special conditions for the provision of the ‘outdoor events’ proved permissive to diminish fair competition for state procurement contracts during the European football championship EURO-2012, which Ukraine hosted jointly with Poland. The new law ‘On organising the European Football Championship Final 2012 in Ukraine’ enabled the Agency for the Preparations for the European football championship to override the national state procurement law and allocate state contracts without competitive bidding. Such uncompetitive procedure was used for procurement to the tune of at least 143,295,074,000 UAH¹³¹, 477,863,000 USD and 316,374,000 EUR in 2011 (Public Procurement Department 2012). The audit by Ukrainian Treasury identified multiple violations including the failure to publish announcements about upcoming tenders and the results of the allocated ones, allowing corruption to flourish hidden from the public eye.

All in all, by the beginning of 2013 both the legislative mechanisms and the third sector involvement failed to increase transparency and openness of the lucrative 274 billion UAH state procurement market (Ukrstat.gov.ua 2013), constituting 13% of Ukraine’s GDP (Ministry for Development of Economy n.d.). According to Transparency International, by 2015 44,9% of respondents personally experienced – or knew someone who had personally experienced – demands for a bribe or the need to trigger personal connections to win the procurement tender (Davydenko and Kuts 2019, 43).

The lack of fair competition and substantial barriers for effective public oversight was the most commonly cited violations of procurement procedures before 2013 (Khusanova 2010, Public Procurement Department 2012, Kindzerskyi 2013). Thus, the architecture of the new e-procurement system *ProZorro* evolved around the idea ‘Everyone sees everything.’ *ProZorro* also sought to prevent the abuse of power by state procurement managers by introducing additional stakeholders to the process – the commercial marketplaces. *ProZorro* system connects the government-owned database of all state

¹³¹ Almost 18 billion USD at the time (17,950,702,644 USD based on an average UAH/USD exchange rate of 7,9827 in 2011).

procurement tenders (such sensitive governmental data could not be entrusted to commercial companies) with several commercial marketplaces, which serve as an entry point into *ProZorro*'s state procurement auctions. Competing for the fees paid by vendors for participating in the auction, commercial marketplaces persistently monitor the new tender announcements, share information with potential bidders, provide training on how to submit the competitive proposal and help to file complaints whenever they see grounds to suspect corruption. By doing so, the creators of *ProZorro* made the platform cost-efficient (as each marketplace was solely responsible for developing front-end access to the *ProZorro* procurement auction system) and self-sustainable (as commercial marketplaces pay 40% of their fees to *ProZorro* [Starodubtsev 2017]). Any person can watch the reverse auction unfolding in real-time in one click. Although most of the public tender information is in Ukrainian, the tender announcements with the exceptionally high value are translated into English to allow international organisations working in Ukraine to participate in overseeing state procurement (ProZorro n.d.b).

The tender auction procedure at *ProZorro* consists of four steps (ProZorro TV 2016). Firstly, a state procurement manager logs into the personal profile page through any of the commercial marketplaces authorised by *ProZorro* without paying any fees¹³² and creates a new procurement tender, choosing the most relevant specification for the goods, works or services from the library available at infobox.prozorro.org. Standardisation of tender requirements facilitates the search for relevant tenders for the potential bidders. The state procurement manager provides a detailed description of the required goods, works or services, alongside any peculiar requirements to the vendor in the attached tender documentation. Once the tender information is downloaded into the central *ProZorro* database, it gets published on every authorised commercial marketplace. As a second step, the businesses submit their proposals via their accounts on any of the authorised marketplaces. During the so-called 'clarification period', prospective bidders can anonymously send the questions to the tender organiser through the online system to tailor their business proposals accordingly. The questions and answers are automatically published in open access on the tender webpage to ensure fair competition. All the proposals should be uploaded by a deadline, after which all participants are sent a link to the reverse auction online.¹³³ The third step is the three-round-

¹³² This was the initial agreement between the volunteers, who developed *ProZorro*, and the marketplaces, which supported the initiative before it became the only official state procurement system in Ukraine in 2016.

¹³³ The type of the auction where the lowest bidder wins.

long reverse auction, during which the anonymised bidders are competing by decreasing the price on their proposals. Anyone can watch the allocation of the procurement order in real-time. After three rounds of the auction, the system identifies the lowest bid and informs the state customer about the outcome of the auction. At this point, all the documentation alongside the names of the participants appears on the tenders' webpage at ProZorro.org. The last step is confirming the order and signing the contract for this procurement order. The state customer checks whether the proposal documentation of the lowest bidder is in good order, the product meets the technical specifications (procurement manager can request a sample) and the supplier meets the qualification requirements. If so, the state customer confirms the tender and signs the contract. If the supplier's documentation has faults (or if the supplier had previously refused fulfilling procurement orders twice), a state procurement manager will receive the proposal of the second-lowest bidder from the same reverse auction. The disqualified lowest bidder can submit an official complaint which will be officially examined by the National Anti-Monopoly Committee of Ukraine. Since 19 June 2020, businesses which win an appeal will have their costs refunded (Danyliuk 2020).¹³⁴ The disqualification report and the official reply from the National Anti-Monopoly Committee will also be attached to the tender's profile webpage. Finally, the signed contract gets uploaded to the tender's webpage, and the tender is officially closed.

Such amounts of data can get a 'citizen auditor' buried into details, so *ProZorro* created two analytical modules to facilitate public oversight – *bi.prozorro.org* and *DoZorro.org*. *DoZorro* is a wordplay on Russian word 'dozor' – 'watch' – as in the Rembrandt's famous 'The Night Watch' painting. *Bi.prozorro* arranges the data on all the procurement tenders in Excel spreadsheets available for download, providing a potentially powerful tool for the civic activists, well-versed in advanced statistical modelling and data analysis. It also automatically generates interactive infographics as a more user-friendly option, which allows to sort out the data on procurement tenders by region, state customers or amount of budgetary spending. The data gets updated daily, and as of 19 June 2020, it reveals that *ProZorro* has already held 5.14 millions of tenders created by 41,670 state customers in which 301,100 participants have participated. The total value of all the allocated procurement orders reached 3.65 trillion UAH with estimated savings for the state budget up to 123.2 billion UAH (see Appendix H for an online analytical module by *Bi.Prozorro.org* enabling real-life tracking of public funds allocation) ([Bi.prozorro.org](http://bi.prozorro.org) n.d.). The estimated

¹³⁴ An equivalent of 0.3% of the tender cost in the range of 2,000 UAH to 85,000 UAH.

savings emerge from the difference between the expected cost as per original tender documentation and the final price provided by the contract holder.

DoZorro is an online monitoring ecosystem for civic activists, comprised of web-platform and a set of intelligence tools. The web platform includes a newsfeed, blogs and instructions on how to initiate the overruling of the tender allocation in the case of suspicious activity. *DoZorro* community involved 36¹³⁵ NGOs which collectively identified 35,588 procurement violations according to the data available at DoZorro.org (n.d.) as of 19 June 2020. *DoZorro*, launched in 2018 in partnership with *Transparency International*, deployed machine learning to analyse tender documentation for potential vulnerability to corruption schemes utilising the risk-assessment tool called ‘Risk indicators’. This tool became obligatory for use by the State Audit Service according to the Law of Procurement monitoring in Ukraine. *DoZorro* includes not only an advanced professional analytical module available for anti-corruption controlling and prosecution bodies but also a free public analytical module, essentially creating a tool for ‘crowdsourcing’ the procurement audit to over 900,000 of its unique users (Digital Social Innovation n.d.). A separate analytical module was created for medication procurement given its high social significance, particularly amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.¹³⁶ *DoZorro* is one of the world’s top 12 projects for engaging citizens as corruption watchdogs according to the Open Government Partnership of Reforms’ ranking and a recognised showcase of the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovations. It is available as open-source software and replicable by any civil society organisation around the globe (Digital Social Innovation n.d.). This open-source software, hence, bears potential to revolutionise public oversight in the countries affected by the misuse of public funds in state procurement sector.

The impact this civic initiative has brought to Ukraine in five years between 2015 and 2020 demonstrates the high potential of grassroots digital civic initiatives for institutional capacity-building. It was a group of volunteer professionals with expertise in financial and IT sector who developed *ProZorro*’s open-source software and ‘donated’ it to the state through *Transparency International*. By doing so, civic activists opened up the state procurement

¹³⁵ As of 19 June 2020.

¹³⁶ For instance, on 20 April 2020, a group of Ukrainian lawyers *Tysny* (Ukrainian for - ‘to press’) has prevented the allocation of tender for the Covid-19 protective equipment for an organisation of communal property in Zakarpatska oblast at a price 3,5 times higher than the market average (NashiGroshi.org 2020). The tender in question was investigated and annulled, saving 2,8 million UAH of public funds and allowing to buy surplus 46,500 respirators on the allocated budget of 4,2 million UAH. With Covid-19 3–4% mortality rate as per World Health Organisation (World Health Organisation 2020), 46,500 surplus masks (ProZorro 2020) translate into preventing 1627 surplus death.

market for small and medium businesses and facilitated public oversight over state procurement without getting into the trap of the infamous *Tenderna Palata*. An in-depth interview with the co-founder of *ProZorro* Oleksandr Starodubtsev revealed the importance of individual motivation for volunteering, extensive social networks of trust and the formative role of the glass ceilings imposed by public perceptions, state bureaucracy and international aid policy.

Oleksandr Starodubtsev's motivation for reforming Ukraine took roots in his frustration with the political regime in 2012 and crystallised during the Maidan Revolution. An accomplished entrepreneur, Starodubtsev founded commercial broker house, which he subsequently sold to the Russian financial corporation 'Otkrytie'. At the end of 2012, the newly established Ministry of Income and Charges penalised Ukrainian offices of the international asset management firms – Kinto, Concorde Capital, Dragon Capital and Troika Dialogue – alongside the firm run by Starodubtsev. The tax police equalled the trade turnover to the gross income, taxable at 21%, re-calculating the amount of tax to pay, adding up the 25% penalty on top, according to the financial director of Kinto Ukraine Nadiia Radzievska (iPress.ua n.d.). Two investment companies – Concorde Capital and Ukrainian Central Contragent – sued the tax police and returned the 5 million UAH and 16 million UAH in penalties accordingly (iPress.ua n.d.), but Starodubtsev had to sell his company as the estimated tax penalties were greater than his company's value. 'I finished as a managing partner of the Broker House "Otkrytie" Ukraine with a clear understanding that we should not be living this way,' Oleksandr Starodubtsev told me in an interview, stressing every word. He continued:

Once we'd sold our business with "Otkrytiye" at the beginning of 2013, I spent the next half a year travelling around the near-abroad looking for a place to immigrate. On the one hand, I did not find a good place, on the other – I did not truly want to leave. ... This is *my* country, so I'd rather *they* left.

This peculiar vision of the country ownership – *my* country – is uniform with the recollections of *Prometheus* co-founder Ivan Prymachenko, who similarly pondered about emigration before opting to help reform state institutions through his particular area of expertise – online courses. *Hromadske's* co-founder Yuliia Bankova also argued that since the media censorship left her without free media outlet to work for, she had to co-create the media with high ethical standards. Hence, motivated professionals seized the moment to create civic initiatives in the fields of their professional expertise.

Peculiar life circumstances defined Starodubtsev's development as a civic leader: unemployed with sizeable personal savings from the sellout of the firm, Starodubtsev was one of the few participants of the Maidan Revolution engaging in the protest all day long. In contrast to the activists from other non-working groups, Starodubtsev, with his dozen years of entrepreneurial and managerial experience, had the necessary soft skills to bring people together in an impactful civic initiative. He had started with an educational one, the Open University of Maidan [later – VUM], which accidentally became an enabler of *ProZorro* later on. 'There were not that many things to do on the Maidan,' he explained, 'hence the idea to hold some educational events. Given that we went to the Maidan as a cohort of the Kyiv-Mohyla Business School [later – KMBS] alumni, it was very organic.' 'Imagine that we have already won this protest – what comes next?' Starodubtsev asked, according to the recollection of another participant of VUM initiative, Ostap Stasiy, in an interview with me. Thus, a group of civic activists invited lecturers from the top Ukrainian business schools to educate protesters about the ways to reform Ukraine after the revolution. Along the way, they forged connections which would become instrumental for the collective action for reforms in post-Maidan Ukraine. 'The *best* thing that I took out of the Maidan Revolution was the phone book, which subsequently helped me *a lot* with *ProZorro*,' Starodubtsev noted. Yuliia Tychkivska, with whom Starodubtsev co-organised VUM, happened to be an assistant of Pavlo Sheremeta, the head of KSE. So, when Pavlo Sheremeta became a Minister of Economy in 2014 and gathered a group of professionals and consultants from the Big Four¹³⁷ and the Big Three¹³⁸ at an informal meeting at the KSE to find partners for institutional reform, Starodubtsev attended. Moreover, he appeared the only person ready to dedicate himself to the task full-time, so the Minister suggested Starodubtsev to pick between decentralisation and state procurement reform. 'I told him I knew nothing about any of that, and he said: "Then, go dig into it",' Oleksandr Starodubtsev recalled during the interview. Social networks became instrumental for him to accumulate the necessary expertise:

Knowing nothing about public procurement and having no previous experience in public service – nothing! – I simply posted on Facebook that I wanted to do the reform of state procurement, and everyone who wants to do the same, everyone who is fed up with the fact that state procurement is a synonym of corruption, is invited on Saturday to 'Chasopys'.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Deloitte, EandY, KPMG and pwc.

¹³⁸ McKinsey and Co, BCG, Bain and Co.

¹³⁹ The 'anti-cafe' in Kyiv where you pay for the time spent there with all refreshments free.

The owner of ‘Chasopys’ Maxym Yakover provided the group of activists with a separate room, typically reserved for business meetings, for the minimal fee. There, Starodubtsev met Andrii Kucheriakha, who became the technical architect of *ProZorro*. Andrii Kucheriakha, who had worked for *E&Y* for 15 years on a pre-partner position at the time, had an extensive business experience and deep understanding of big data systems. There was also a lawyer in the group, Nataliia Abesadze, who assumed responsibility for the legal issues.

Understandably, half of those who came for the first meeting did not come for the second but step by step, the team, which developed the first concept of *ProZorro*, has crystallised. ... Then, merely by chance, we found a developer – Myroslav. ... Myroslav texted me on Facebook: “I am developing the auction systems for the West, I am very interested in what you are doing.” ... We met up, shook hands, and this is how the system was born. Myroslav wrote the MVP – minimal viable product – and in February 2015 we had already demonstrated a fully functioning system (Starodubtsev 2017).

Oleksandr Starodubtsev explained to me that all but one¹⁴⁰ person in *ProZorro* team were new people in his social circle, which extended significantly during and directly after the Maidan Revolution. ‘The Maidan was a colossal point of crystallisation of trust, so people trusted people – as simple as that,’ Oleksandr Starodubtsev argued. His account illustrated how social networks (offline and online) merged to form new social ties between dedicated civic activists, creating a basis for sustainable volunteer movement in post-2013 Ukraine.¹⁴¹

Civic entrepreneurs deliberately opted to work on a grassroots level: ‘We realised that the reforms from top to bottom do not work well in Ukraine, but bottom-up reform could do,’ Oleksandr Starodubtsev explained to me. So, *ProZorro* team forged partnerships with multiple commercial marketplaces to reach large volumes of sellers through them quickly. Each marketplace wanted to promote a competitive environment in public procurement, so they donated small sums (totalling up to 35,000 USD [Manthorpe 2018]) to help *ProZorro* pay a few developers who could not afford working pro bono. Experts from the public sector, in their turn, helped *ProZorro* to find a niche to test the e-procurement system on the under-the-threshold state procurement tenders. For the e-procurement system

¹⁴⁰ One person, whom Oleksandr Starodubtsev knew before the Maidan Revolution, was Dmytro Palamarchuk. Palamarchuk joined *ProZorro* in late 2015–2016 and subsequently became one of the leading experts in risk-management in electronic procurement, according to Oleksandr Starodubtsev.

¹⁴¹ As previously mentioned, around 20% of the Maidan Revolution participants in Piechota and Rajczyk’s (2015) study noted the contribution of social media to expansions of personal networks. Moreover, the connections formed during the revolution seemed to be sustainable as 53% of respondents in Kyiv and 69% of respondents in Lviv said that a year after the Maidan Revolution, they remained a part of online communities formed during the Maidan Revolution (ibid).

to function at a larger scale, the legislator had to change the law – the process requiring political lobbying, or, as Oleksandr Starodubtsev put it, ‘time and money’. The emerging civic entrepreneurs did not have either, compensating their lack by crowdsourcing professional advice through extensive social networks. ‘We were building the coalition [of state procurement stakeholders] promoting the idea that we are all in this together,’ summarised Starodubtsev during the interview.

The history of *ProZorro* could be told in a variety of ways: as the history of trial and error leading to the final project or as a story of an ambitious idea embodied with minimum resources through digital technology. Yet, in Starodubtsev’s account, the emergence of *ProZorro* is the story of people from different professional backgrounds and parts of the country, building a network of self-help diffusing through the state, business and civic sector. It demonstrates how personal activism experience during the Maidan Revolution was instrumental for meeting the future decision-makers of the key state institutions (the Minister of Economy Pavlo Sheremeta and, through him, the head of President’s administration Dmytro Shymkiv). Thus, grassroots activists secured political will for the implementation of the volunteer project on a national level.

The availability of political will to ‘outsource’ creation of the transparent digital procurement software is specific to Ukrainian context at that particular time however the international community can learn from this case how civic entrepreneurs can revolutionise the national procurement in a cost-efficient manner. International aid organisations, in their turn, could start acknowledging the decisive role social capital plays in ‘emerging democracies’. After all, the advanced software for *ProZorro* was developed *independently* from the state and without any international grants employing pro bono work in the face of the glass ceilings imposed by peculiar state-society relationship in Ukraine on the one hand, and international aid policies on the other.

With the cautiousness of formal hierarchical structures, discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the team behind *ProZorro* understood that the informal status of post-Maidan volunteers helped them to win public trust. Indeed, since 2014, when the level of trust in volunteers as a distinct civil society group started to get measured in social opinion polls, volunteers steadily occupied the first place in the public confidence rating. In 2015 the level of trust in volunteers stood at a record 67% with the balance of trust of +44% in comparison to the balance of trust of +13% in the case of the NGOs, -33% in the President and -63% in the parliament (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2015). Hence, developing *ProZorro* as a formal state

project was out of the question: this would bury *ProZorro* in bureaucratic requirements, rendering the testing process of the minimal viable product inefficient. It would also require all the team members to become state employees. Given the uncompetitive state salaries ranging between 200 and 500 USD a month in 2015 and a requirement to give up for-profit activity, *ProZorro* volunteer developers and consultants could not afford to switch their offices in the Big Three, the Big Four or IT sector companies for public office. Besides, volunteers did not trust the state enough to be developing the architecture of *ProZorro* under its close oversight. ‘ProZorro involves commercial platforms so that even if you ‘steal’ *ProZorro* – you will not steal the entire procurement system. [ProZorro’s architecture ensures that] the state’s influence is partial, there are multiple stakeholders. ... As founding fathers, we were creating [*ProZorro*] with a clear understanding that we cannot know what the next generation [of the state employees] will do with it,’ Starodubtsev explained to me.

But who should own the platform to protect it from the endemic corruption in state procurement? Ownership by inherently profit-driven commercial marketplaces could potentially harm public interests in the future: the business entity would be legally able to impose a service fee for the state to use it at any point, benefiting from the monopoly. Partnership with an international organisation would tick all the boxes. Yet, since the predominant approach to civil society funding centres around the ideas of liberal institutionalism, the informal after-work gatherings of pro bono professionals could not qualify for financial support. Moreover, the idea of grassroots development of the digital project, which would later assume control over 300 billion state procurement market of the geographically largest European state, did not necessarily agree with the external vision of what civil society should do. For instance, British scholar Laura Cleary (2016) called Ukraine’s post-Maidan civil society initiatives ‘pseudo-plenipotentiaries’ for supporting the state in fulfilling its function instead of challenging the government to deliver. Such criticism, however, does not account for the lack of institutional capacity and expertise in the state institutions for impactful reform from the top in Ukraine – the local specificity, which Western donors cannot address without changing their universally-applicable policies. Chapter 1 discussed in detail that liberal civil society theories predominant in the US posit that civil society is preconditioned on the liberal-democratic governance and relies on the state to create institutional foundations for civil society to exercise its public oversight function. Consequently, as Starodubtsev explained:

From my experience, civil society organisations are 90% about “beating up” the state and 10% about helping the state. Why? Because donors are much more active in giving money for criticising than for supporting the state. From the perspective of the donor, the state does not need help. [The assumption is that] the state must be able to do everything on its own ... Given such rules of the game, many [Ukrainian] civic activists are “working this money off” and “beating up” the state. However, you must realise that the patient is half-dead. There is no point in beating [the patient] to make him perform better, he is hardly breathing. He should be helped. Some things should be done on his behalf, you should show him sympathy, praise him for trying to do the little something he is doing. ... We need the change of approach.

In the case of *ProZorro*, *Transparency International* made an unprecedented move of partnering with a grassroots volunteer group aiming at strengthening state institutional capacity. Such dramatic change of approach resulted from the bottom-up influence of the informal social networks, which is reflective of a Ukrainian social culture that has been strengthened by the peculiar post-Maidan social climate of trust and horizontal self-help. Here follows one of such examples from Starodubtsev’s recollections:

Initially, we and the commercial platforms gathered in KMBS¹⁴². KMBS provided us with an auditorium for the evenings, coffee, tea, “you’re welcome, just do something good.” ... And at some point – when we started to discuss where to get money for the system – Andrey Marusev, who attended all our meetings, stood up and said: “Let me speak to [Oleksii] Khmara and we will try to support your project from the side of Transparency.”

Transparency International could not provide *ProZorro* with financial support, but, having a legal entity, *Transparency International* could register the intellectual property for the software, which *ProZorro* volunteers developed, in an unprecedented case of the ‘gifted aid’ from an informal volunteer group to the international organisation. The principal challenge, however, emerged from the embedded function of collecting service fees¹⁴³ from commercial marketplaces, which could be construed as a commercial activity – a risk, an international non-profit organisation could not bear. Once again, the post-Maidan social networks, which connected Oleksandr Starodubtsev with consultants from Ukrainian offices of the Big Four, helped civic entrepreneur to secure the pro bono consulting advice from a partner at Ukraine’s Deloitte office. This advice helped the team to shape *ProZorro* in a way acceptable for international aid policy: while marketplaces charged the clients for accessing the reverse procurement auctions, the fees due to *ProZorro* were not collected as *Transparency International* could not accept the money.

¹⁴² Kyiv Mohyla Business School.

¹⁴³ Equal to 40% of the service fees paid by business vendors participating in procurement auctions.

The platform received its first monies after Oleksandr Starodubtsev became the head of the State Procurement Department of the Ministry of Economy and *Transparency International* legally provided the open-source *ProZorro* software to the state as a basis for development for the ProZorro.gov.ua platform. The state procurement reform progressed to its new phase, in which the assets of the informal digital initiatives were to be ‘concreted’ through high-quality state bureaucracy building with the active involvement of pro bono professionals. For example, the business-coach Vache Davtian, who had once given a lecture on leadership for the Open University of Maidan (VUM), developed four five-mode training courses for the newly established *ProZorro* team at the Ministry of Economy. Vache Davtian helped Starodubtsev in building a team from the public servants of the State Procurement Department and the new hires from the business sphere, and ‘obviously all for free’ in Starodubtsev’s words. Andrii Dlyhach, the general manager of Advanter Group and marketing consultant, co-produced a logo for *ProZorro* in collaboration with his team at Advanter Group on a pro bono basis. ‘*ProZorro* is essentially many a nickel makes a muckle,’ Oleksandr Starodubtsev pointed out in an interview with the author.

The grassroots spirit of *ProZorro* remained thoroughly guarded as the new office building for the State Procurement Department had a dedicated floor with the photos from the Maidan Revolution. Even though for some civic activists coming to work for the state equals betraying the ideals of the revolution, in the particular case of Starodubtsev, the Maidan Revolution became the point of no return, which made him change his critical towards the public office:

I was on the Maidan on 20 February¹⁴⁴ 2014, and I have seen such horrors which I had never seen in my life. And for me, it was very important to make this worthwhile. I felt that everything that can be done, must – must! must! – be done ...

Starodubtsev confessed that he was too afraid of war and too sceptical about his military abilities to volunteer to serve in ATO.¹⁴⁵ Yet he felt that, with his experience and abilities, he could serve the society in a different way.

I truly wanted to do everything I could. So, psychologically, I was prepared for many things, including partnering with the state, working for the state, even though at the beginning... well, I can say honestly that I was trying to delay this moment. Yet, when it came to making a choice, Maksym Nefiodov¹⁴⁶ persuaded me quite quickly that I

¹⁴⁴ The day of the mass killings on the Maidan.

¹⁴⁵ ATO stands for the Anti-terrorist Operation, launched by the Ukrainian government after the Russia-backed separatists seized government buildings in Luhansk and Donetsk in April–May 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Deputy Minister of the Ministry for Development of Economy and Trade of Ukraine in 2015–2019.

needed to become a part of the system or I will not be able to change anything in the country of 40 million people. He was right (Starodubtsev 2017).

All things considered, the case of *ProZorro* illustrates the potency of grassroots volunteer initiatives to reform institutions from the bottom-up given three principal circumstances: strong personal motivation of the civic leader; a shared experience or shared civic values, bringing together professionals willing to work on pro bono basis in the absence of financial resources to push for particular reform; unrestricted access to the extensive social networks of trust, additionally facilitated by social networking websites, which pierce through state, business and civil society sectors and thereby enable efficient coalition-building. The availability of cheap high-speed internet became the principal physical enabler of such initiatives, endowing them with the quasi-institutional status by making them universally visible and useable whilst remaining informal. Informality allowed civic activists to walk the way of trial and error, accumulate the public trust and continue gathering the motivated volunteer-professionals along the way. The digital institutionalisation, by contrast, permitted an informal project to harness data on its effectiveness and cost-efficiency to subsequently provide the state and the third sector with a proven working model, able to outperform existent public services. In Ukraine, the sustainability of *ProZorro*, in the long run, was achieved through formal institutionalisation, provided that it retained the grassroots ethos in the public eyes. In this case, such grassroots digital public service provider came to form a buffer between ‘the people’ and their traditional ‘other’ – the state. By doing so, *ProZorro* contributed to the gradual change in state-society relations in post-Maidan Ukraine.

The case study of *Hromadske*, *StopFake*, *Prometheus* and *ProZorro* all demonstrate how the strong grassroots social networks, previously deemed the reason for inherent impossibility of democratic transformation in Ukraine, proved more efficient in reforming the state sector than the progressive legislation and the international aid spent on the state capacity-building and formal NGO development. Instead of swimming against the mighty wave of centuries-old cultural informality, Ukraine came to ride this wave for the public good, providing a propitious example for other post-communist and post-colonial societies. The case of Ukraine is likely to be similar to other countries with underdeveloped institutional capacity, where institution-focused international aid deepened the divide between state elites, benefiting from the international funding, and local populations.¹⁴⁷ The latter, having lost the

¹⁴⁷ The World Bank (Andersen, Johannesen and Rijkers 2020) report concluded that the increase in the amount of the international aid funding coincided with the increases in the deposits made into offshore accounts of the political elites in the aided societies.

access to institutional opportunity structures due to the consolidation of authoritarian regimes, become reluctant to engage with state institutions, opting for informal collective action. The international donors' policies with a preference to the third sector activism aimed at criticising the state (coupled with the growing prominence of social media for spreading such critical messages) more often than not leads to revolutions. These revolutions, however, further impede institutional capacity-building, closing up the vicious circle. The example of Ukraine can, therefore, inform a new public debate on the purposes of international aid. It suggests that providing support to the digitally-enabled informal grassroots civic projects for state capacity-building might be a more productive way towards sustainable coalition-building between states and their citizens.

Conclusions: The Missing Piece of the Global Civil Society Studies

In 2009 the Nobel Prize Winner Yuan-Tseh Lee opened the second conference of the Council of National Associations with a call to academics to focus their attention on the ‘incompleteness’ of the globalisation project (Yuan-Tseh Lee in Burawoy 2010). According to Yuan-Tseh Lee, *a priori* fruitless attempts to tackle global issues by applying unsystematic tools at the country level posed the most threatening risk to humanity. For Yuan-Tseh Lee, neither climate change nor disease control can be efficiently addressed without the international community acting as a unified front. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has tragically illustrated his point. Warning about the devastating consequences of ‘incomplete globalisation’, Lee challenged the International Sociological Association (ISA) with the task of developing ‘global sociology’ which would provide a theoretical framework for the emerging communities to tackle the global problems of tomorrow (Yuan-Tseh Lee in Burawoy 2010).

As a response to this call, Michael Burawoy – the Vice-President for National Associations of the International Sociological Association and a renowned sociologist from University of California (Berkeley) – cautioned against ‘globalising’ sociology without defying the intangible power structures transfixing sociology as a field of knowledge production. In his highly thought-provoking piece ‘Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for a Global Sociology’ (2010), Michael Burawoy gathered evidence of a persistent academic dependency of the ‘excluded’ countries on the Global North. He cited the Bangladeshi sociologist Shaikh Mohammed Kais and Nigerian scholar Ifeanyi Onyeonuru, both of whom stressed that a lack of financial resources for research attributed to the legacy of different forms of colonisation. Polish sociologist Janusz Mucha, meanwhile, turned his attention to the institutional ‘architecture’ of European social sciences, which turned nineteenth-century non-institutional ‘Polish sociology’ into ‘sociology in Poland’ deprived of national specificity (Burawoy 2010, 6–7). By contrast, Japan has developed particular sociological concepts – *aidagara*, *en*, *guanxi* – in reaction to the inadequacy of the ‘social capital’ framework (Putnam 1995) for Japanese culture. Japanese sociologists, however, did not proceed to conceptualise these locally-derived concepts further so as to make them ‘transferable’ to other contexts, as Yoshimichi Sato posited (Burawoy 2010, 7). As Burawoy points out, for Lee’s ‘global sociology’ project to succeed, it should ‘stitch together commonalities in a complex

global mosaic' (2010, 4) by starting to look upon sociology as defined by its principal standpoint – the standpoint of *civil society* (ibid, 25).

Promoting a bottom-up ethos in social sciences by making civil society a spinal column of an emerging 'global sociology' is a promising approach. Yet as Chapter 1 makes clear, civil society as a concept has not escape the 'Western hegemony' that Burawoy seeks to dismantle. A buzzword of international development studies, 'civil society' is a highly contested sociological construct taking its roots from the European Enlightenment. Historically, it referred to the social activity which took place outside of the state, but which simultaneously helped to maintain a state fit for the ever-changing societal needs – a constitutional *Rechtsstaat*¹⁴⁸ of civilised institutions and citizenship roles (Mouritsen 2003, 652). From Locke to Rousseau, from Hegel to Tocqueville, minds were occupied by defining the legitimate scope of state power and by imagining the frontier beyond which the social and economic relationships of free citizens begin.

Interpretations of the concept have been legion. Chapter 1 reviewed three such approaches, largely dominant in academic debates in Europe and Northern America: the 'Lockean', 'Scottish' and 'sphere concepts' (Jensen 2006). All of them, however, define civil society through its relationship to liberal-democratic governance. 'The very origin of civil society is inseparable from the theory and practice of limited government,' American political scientist Nancy Rosenblum and legal scholar Robert Post posit (2002, 12). Even though their 'sphere concept' recognises the inherent fluidity of forms in which civil society can manifest itself, the scholars underline that civil society emerges only if the state creates the vital preconditions for it. 'The legal framework is the means by which government performs its civilising role of transforming arrant pluralism into civil society,' Rosenblum and Post argue (2002, 8). All the schools of thought represented in Rosenblum and Post's volume on civil society (2002) – from classical liberalism, liberal egalitarianism and critical theory to feminism – start from the basic notion that the state speaks for the common good, while participants in civil society engage in various enterprises (2002, 20). Yet with the proportion of people living in non-democratic regimes increasing to 51.6% by 2019 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2020, 3), liberal-democratic states have ceased to represent the majority on

¹⁴⁸ In the Germanic concept of the *Rechtsstaat*, or 'state-under-law', the state is limited by laws and by fundamental principles of legality. For a more detailed account, see 'The Rule of Law' in Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy available at <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/rule-of-law-rechtsstaat/v-1>.

a global scale, calling into question the applicability of a classical liberal civil society framework.

Rosenblum and Post (2002, 19) recognised that their concept is ‘unmistakably a product of Western culture and institutions,’ but anticipated that the concept would grow in value with globalisation extending the reach of Western institutions throughout the world. Indeed, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) set up a Centre for Democracy and Governance in 1994, and the New Partnership Initiative in 1995, which funded civil society organisations. The World Bank began to invest in projects carried out by local civil society organisations since 1995. By 1998 roughly half of all bank projects included a component that funded civil society organisations. By the mid-1990s the majority of bilateral and multilateral donors such as the Department for International Development (DFID) (UK), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Ford, Kettering, Rockefeller, and MacArthur foundations had adopted the language of civil society (Alvarez et al. 2017, 8–9).

The failure of Structural Adjustment Programs to provide benefits for the majority of populations was noticed by the World Bank as early as 2006. The World Bank concluded that ‘state-dominated development has failed, but so will stateless development’ (World Bank 2006 in Alvarez et al. 2017). Thus, the flows of funding created a new power structure, promoting an Americanised version of civil society. The latter shaped the programmatic plans of many NGOs throughout the developing world in such a way as to help them secure international funding instead of representing the peculiar organic interests of their societies. In places as diverse as Ukraine and Latin America, the reliance of NGOs on Western funding trumped ideological commitments (Alvarez et al. 2017, 10), turning them into mere ‘legitimising facades’ of civil society (Allina-Pisano 2010). In 2019 14,6 billion GBP of British taxpayer money were spent on international aid (Birell 2020). Yet a study by World Bank entitled ‘Elite Capture of Foreign Aid’ (Andersen, Johannesen and Rijkers 2020) concluded:

[In] the 22 most aid-dependent countries in the world (in terms of [World Bank] aid), disbursements of aid coincide, in the same quarter, with significant increases in the value of bank deposits in havens. Specifically, in a quarter where a country receives aid equivalent to 1% of GDP, its deposits in havens increase by 3.4% relative to a country receiving no aid... While other interpretations are possible, these findings are suggestive of aid diversion to private accounts in havens (ibid, 1).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ The sample comprised Afghanistan, Armenia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kyrgyz, Republic Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger,

This data points to an urgent need for the change in the international funding paradigm.

The example of post-Maidan Ukraine, I argue, should inform new approaches to international aid policy. The case studies in this thesis clearly demonstrate the benefits of bottom-up institutional capacity building and of the co-production of public services at a grassroots level. Civil society in post-Maidan Ukraine has become the backbone of the country's development in an era of military conflict, military turmoil, and economic depression since 2014. Yet this movement to support the state prompted Laura Cleary to criticise Ukraine's civil society organisations as 'pseudo-plenipotentiaries' (2016). Cleary posited that a functional civil society must hold the state accountable, not replace the state or serve as a proxy in providing social services to citizens with its own resources (2016). This line reasoning is problematic. In the case of Great Britain, for instance, it could be extended to criticise Britain's civil society for its large-scale public mobilisation of financial support of the National Health Service (NHS) amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The example of Sir Tom Moore, a hundred-year-old veteran of World War II who collected over 33 million GBP for the NHS, is a particularly salient case in this respect (Sky News 2020). The NHS is funded by tax contributions – the NHS England alone received 114 billion pounds from the UK budget in 2019 (Harker 2020) – and represents a fundamental public service institution. Given that NHS is not a third sector organisation, British civil society could have exercised pressure on the state to ensure, for instance, that an adequate amount of personal protective equipment was provided to the hospitals. In a 'ticking time-bomb' situation, however, British citizens used crowdfunding as the most efficient way to protect the workers of the state healthcare system. In other words, the Covid-19 crisis has revealed the occasional dysfunction of state institutions in more long-standing democracies, inviting scholars to reconsider, I would suggest, the public remit of the third sector.

The case of post-Maidan Ukraine demonstrates that the existence of a robust civil society is not necessarily preconditioned on the democratic state. Taking Ukraine as an example of 'hybrid' political regime (Economist Intelligence Unit 2020) with a vibrant informal associational life, Chapter 2 traced the development of Ukraine's peculiar 'informal' social capital, which permeates the values of cooperation, care for the others and self-governance. Drawing from the fieldwork studies by Joseph Berliner from the 1960s and Catherine Wanner from the 1990s, I explored informal practices in the Soviet and post-Soviet

Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.

Ukraine to demonstrate the pervasiveness of grassroots self-organisation for the individual and common good. I proceeded to measure Ukraine's peculiar informal social capital in 2002–2012, deploying statistical analysis of the dataset of the European Social Survey. Data analysis revealed that a lack of democratic governance did not prevent social cohesion in local and professional communities; instead, it normalised mutual help as acceptable group behaviour. Neither ethnicity or mother tongue, nor the level of trust to friends, family, neighbours and fellow citizens reached the threshold of statistical significance as a predictor of ability to cooperate with others to solve personal and collective problems. Yet the amount of trust placed in colleagues did (Reznik 2015, 181–183).

The case studies of key grassroots civic initiatives in post-Maidan Ukraine – *Hromadske*, *StopFake*, *Prometheus*, and *Prozorro* – illustrated how pro bono work, mobilised through social networks of colleagues, collided with digital technology to engender long-term sustainability. The internet became the second principal enabler of collective action in this resource-poor emerging democracy. In Ukraine, the relatively affordable, widely accessible internet created conditions for activists to overcome a lack of trusted political parties, an independent judiciary, and free media and work in the interests of the public. In other words, the case of post-Maidan Ukraine illustrates that a focus on studying formal civil society institutions has limited utility in understanding emerging democracies. By contrast, I advocate an approach that takes into account the particularities of the national historical, cultural and socio-political context, particularities that shape civic values alongside unique 'mediating institutions'. Like Ukraine, the cases of Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru demonstrated that orderly civic participation through institutional channels can subvert the agendas of movements, discourage alternative forms of collective action, and channel movement energies into procedures and policies that do little to change the status quo or deepen democracy (Alvarez et al. 2017). By contrast, political activism that did not pursue institutional channels played more of a critical role in pushing governments towards democratisation, challenging dominant discourses, and creating new possibilities for the formerly excluded segments of society in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru (Alvarez et al. 2017). In Ukraine, the Maidan Revolution similarly brought about vibrant *grassroots* civic initiatives in media, healthcare, education and military sector, which contributed to the prevention of a collapse of the state in the face of Russian military aggression (Shapovalova and Burlyuk 2018).

In other words, the case of post-Maidan Ukraine illustrates that a focus on studying formal civil society institutions has limited utility in understanding emerging democracies. By contrast, I advocate an approach that takes into account the particularities of the national historical, cultural and socio-political context, particularities that shape civic values alongside unique ‘mediating institutions’. In the grand scheme, the sustainability of grassroots civic initiatives in post-Maidan Ukraine illustrates the benefits of the constructivist approach to civil society research. As Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit (1998, 259) concisely summed up, constructivism ‘advances a sociological perspective on world politics, emphasising the importance of normative as well as material structures, the role of identity in the constitution of interests and action, and the mutual constitution of agents and structures.’ The constructivist turn in civil society studies could inform the new international aid policy with an emphasis on supporting grassroots self-help communities in the developing democracies with low levels of citizen engagement with the formal civil society organisations.

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Whereas local communities in Western democracies worked as a counter-balance to the state, communities in emerging democracies are more ‘communicating vessels’. They step up when the state fails to deliver. In India, for instance, self-regulatory mechanisms have given rise to a ‘self-help group’ movement, providing micro-financing in segments of society where banks are not present. These loans sponsor micro-enterprises or help to secure other paid employment. Self-groups effectively promote the empowerment of women, deter predatory lending in rural areas and help develop labour market in distant Indian villages (Adolph 2003; Sundaram 2012), contributing to the sustainable development of the formal economy sector.

In places as diverse as India, South Africa, South Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, there is a growing body of empirical evidence demonstrating that grassroots civic forces fuel social movements and subsequent neoliberal reforms. Such informal civil societies, however, remain classified as ‘uncivil’ in currents of social sciences scholarship (Rahman 2002; Avritzer 2004; Kopecky and Mudde 2003; Fatton 1995). This examination of the civil society of post-Maidan Ukraine invites us to reevaluate such labels. Amid violence and transition, grassroots start-ups serving the public interest helped build national cohesion and save a beleaguered state that happens to the largest within the European continent. These remarkable achievements of Ukraine’s digital civil society have global resonance and urgent implications for the concepts of ‘global civil society’ – and ‘global sociology’ itself.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Illustration of appropriation of the Cossack myth during the Maidan Revolution



This photo captured a tent with a poster featuring Repin's 'Barge Haulers on the Volga' (left) and 'The Reply of Zaporozhian Cossacks' (right) with a call to choose [obyrai] at the top. Photo was taken by Dr Rory Finnin during the Maidan Revolution in Kyiv in December 2013.

Appendix B. The Letter from Zaporozhians to the Ottoman Sultan printed in *Russkaia Starina* (1972, 450–451)

Султанъ Мухамедъ IV въ запорожскимъ казакамъ.

1680 года.

Я, султанъ, сынъ Магомета, братъ—солнца и луны, внукъ и на-мѣстникъ Божій, владѣтель всѣхъ царствъ: Македонскаго, Вавилонскаго и Іерусалимскаго, великаго и малаго Египта; царь надъ царями; властитель надъ всѣми существующими; необыкновенный рыцарь, никѣмъ непомѣданный; хранитель неотступный гроба Іисуса Христа; по-печитель Бога самого; надежда и утѣшеніе мусульманъ, сущеніе и великій защитникъ христіанъ, повелѣваю вамъ, запорожскіе казаки, сдаться мнѣ добровольно и безъ всякаго сопротивленія, и не имѣя ваши-ми нападеными не заставляйте беспокоити! Султанъ турецкій Мухамедъ.

Запорожцы — турецкому Султану.

Ти шайтанъ турецкій, проклятого чорта братъ и товарищъ и самого люцифера секретарь! який ти въ чорта лицарь, чортъ с...е, а ти и твое войско поживае. Не будешь ти годенъ синіи христіань-скіхъ підъ собою мати; твое войско ми не боїмоя, землею и во-дою будуть битися ми зъ тобою. Вавилонскій ти кухарь, наведенось-

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451

кий колесникъ, іерусалимскій броварникъ, александрийскій возо-лупъ, великаго й малого Египта свинарь, армянська свиня, татарсь-кий сагайдакъ, камінецький катъ, подольскій злодіюка, самого гас-пида внукъ и всѣго свѣта и підсвѣта блазень, а нашего бога дурень, свиняча морда, кобиляча с...ка, різницька собака, некрещений лобъ, би твою чортъ паривъ! Оттакъ тобі козаки відказали, плюгавче, не вгоденъ еси матери вірнихъ христіанъ. Числа не знаємъ, бо ка-лендаря не маємъ, місяць у небі, а годъ у книжиці, а день такий и у насъ якъ у васъ, поцілуй за се въ г...о насъ! Кошовий ото-манъ Захарченко со всімъ кошомъ запорожскимъ.

Примѣчаніе. Вотъ въ какомъ видѣ извѣстенъ мнѣ отвѣтъ казаковъ сул-тану. Трудно рѣшить, дѣйствительно ли былъ данъ такой отвѣтъ, или это из-мышленіе, но во всякомъ случаѣ старое, запорожское. Отвѣтъ этотъ можетъ относиться ко времени Мухамеда IV (царствовалъ съ 1648 по 1687), завоевавшего Каменецъ (1672 г.) и Подоль; на это намекаютъ слова: «камінецький катъ, по-дольскій злодіюка». Для сопоставленія сравни приводимую въ Дневникъ Титлов-скаго (напечатано въ приложеніяхъ къ I тому лѣтописи Величка стр. 3—5) переписку между королемъ польскимъ Сигизмундомъ III и турецкимъ импе-раторомъ Османомъ.

Н. И. Костомаровъ.

Source of image: Runivers library digital archive.

Appendix C. Statistical analysis of ESS survey data (round 1–6 cumulative dataset)

```
. tab flclpla if cntry == "UA"
```

Feel close to the people in local area	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Agree strongly	671	17.41	17.41
Agree	1,636	42.45	59.86
Neither agree nor disagree	1,121	29.09	88.95
Disagree	323	8.38	97.33
Disagree strongly	103	2.67	100.00
Total	3,854	100.00	

```
. tab flclpla if cntry == "RU"
```

Feel close to the people in local area	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Agree strongly	347	7.68	7.68
Agree	1,721	38.07	45.74
Neither agree nor disagree	1,729	38.24	83.99
Disagree	636	14.07	98.05
Disagree strongly	88	1.95	100.00
Total	4,521	100.00	

Figure 1. Screenshot from StataMP. Analysis of the variable *flclpla* (feeling close to the people in local area) in Ukraine ('UA') and Russia ('RU'), ESS round 1–6 cumulative dataset.

```
. tab flclpla [aweight=pweight]
```

Feel close to the people in local area	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Agree strongly	5,309.882	11.80	11.80
Agree	20,989.456	46.65	58.46
Neither agree nor disagree	10,442.155	23.21	81.67
Disagree	6,629.5054	14.74	96.40
Disagree strongly	1,619.00198	3.60	100.00
Total	44,990	100.00	

Figure 2. Screenshot from StataMP. Analysis of the variable *flclpla* in Western Europe (a weighted average), ESS round 1–6 cumulative dataset.

```
. ttest flclpla, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,521	2.645432	.0131406	.8835553	2.61967	2.671195
UA	3,854	2.364556	.0153498	.9529277	2.334462	2.394651
combined	8,375	2.516179	.0101263	.9267125	2.496329	2.536029
diff		.2808761	.0200852		.2415041	.3202481

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 13.9842
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8373

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

Figure 3. Two-sample t-test of the variable flclpla in Ukraine ('UA') and Russia ('RU'), ESS round 1–6 cumulative dataset.

```
. ttest flclpla if cntry=="UA", by(essround)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
3	1,806	2.440753	.022273	.9465378	2.397069	2.484437
6	2,048	2.297363	.0210744	.9537179	2.256034	2.338693
combined	3,854	2.364556	.0153498	.9529277	2.334462	2.394651
diff		.1433898	.0306775		.083244	.2035355

diff = mean(3) - mean(6) t = 4.6741
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 3852

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. . ttest flclpla if cntry=="RU", by(essround)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
3	2,182	2.67736	.0184893	.8636693	2.641102	2.713619
6	2,339	2.615648	.0186273	.9008757	2.57912	2.652175
combined	4,521	2.645432	.0131406	.8835553	2.61967	2.671195
diff		.0617125	.026284		.010183	.113242

diff = mean(3) - mean(6) t = 2.3479
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 4519

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.9905 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0189 Pr(T > t) = 0.0095

Figure 4. Two-sample *t*-tests of the variable *flclpla* in Ukraine (top) and Russia (bottom) from ESS round 3 (in 2006) to ESS round 6 (in 2012).

```
. . pwcorr flclpla pplahlp if centry=="UA" [aweight=dweight], sig
```

	flclpla	pplahlp
flclpla	1.0000	
pplahlp	-0.2476 0.0000	1.0000

```
. . pwcorr flclpla pplahlp if centry=="RU" [aweight=dweight], sig
```

	flclpla	pplahlp
flclpla	1.0000	
pplahlp	-0.2627 0.0000	1.0000

Figure 5. Pearson's correlation coefficient applied to variables *pplahlp* (how helpful are people in local communities) and *flclpla* (how close one feels to people in local community) in Ukraine (top) and Russia (bottom).

```
. ttest hlpcowk, by(centry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	1,217	2.894002	.02487	.8676032	2.845209	2.942795
UA	1,363	3.107117	.0229803	.8484074	3.062036	3.152197
combined	2,580	3.006589	.0170085	.863927	2.973237	3.039941
diff		-.213115	.0338188		-.2794298	-.1468002

```
diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA)                                t = -6.3017
Ho: diff = 0                                                degrees of freedom = 2578

Ha: diff < 0                Ha: diff != 0                Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0000          Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000          Pr(T > t) = 1.0000
```

Figure 6. Two-sample *t*-test of the variable *hlpcowk* ('I can get support and help from my co-workers') in Russia ('RU') and Ukraine ('UA').


```
. drop if trstlgl > 10
(562 observations deleted)
```

```
. ttest trstlgl, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,472	3.654517	.0396094	2.648803	3.576863	3.732171
UA	3,774	2.101484	.0371879	2.284562	2.028573	2.174394
combined	8,246	2.94373	.0286991	2.606097	2.887473	2.999988
diff		1.553033	.0550107		1.445198	1.660868

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 28.2315
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8244

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. drop if trstlgl > 10
(3,536 observations deleted)
```

```
. mean trstlgl [aweight=pweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 165,184

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
trstlgl	5.224016	.0061025	5.212055	5.235976

Figure 8. Mean scores for trust in legal system in Russia and Ukraine (top) and in Western European countries (bottom), the scale from 0 ('no trust') to 10 ('complete trust').


```
. drop if trstplc > 10
(340 observations deleted)
```

```
. ttest trstplc, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,579	3.425202	.039186	2.651653	3.348378	3.502026
UA	3,889	2.241965	.0381991	2.382167	2.167072	2.316857
combined	8,468	2.88179	.0282443	2.599086	2.826425	2.937156
diff		1.183237	.0552022		1.075028	1.291447

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 21.4346
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8466

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. drop if trstplc > 10
(1,217 observations deleted)
```

```
. mean trstplc [aweight=pweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 167,503

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
trstplc	6.267968	.0056306	6.256932	6.279004

Figure 9. Mean scores for trust in police in Russia and Ukraine (top) and in Western European countries (bottom), the scale from 0 ('no trust') to 10 ('complete trust').

```
. drop if trstprl > 10
(411 observations deleted)
```

```
. ttest trstprl, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,493	3.351213	.0384589	2.577895	3.275815	3.426611
UA	3,904	2.103227	.0365121	2.281351	2.031643	2.174812
combined	8,397	2.77099	.0275263	2.522378	2.717031	2.824948
diff		1.247986	.0534847		1.143142	1.352829

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 23.3335
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8395

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. drop if trstprl > 10
(4,900 observations deleted)
```

```
. mean trstprl [aweight=pweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 163,820

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
trstprl	4.500447	.0059091	4.488866	4.512029

Figure 10. Mean scores for trust in parliament in Russia and Ukraine (top) and in Western European countries (bottom), the scale from 0 ('no trust') to 10 ('complete trust').

```
. ttest trstun, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	773	4.56533	.1038342	2.88689	4.361499	4.769161
UA	742	4.37062	.1071713	2.919311	4.160224	4.581015
combined	1,515	4.469967	.0745957	2.903488	4.323645	4.616289
diff		.1947099	.1491879		-.0979272	.487347

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 1.3051
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 1513

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.9040 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1920 Pr(T > t) = 0.0960

```
. mean trstun [aweight=dweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 155,314

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
trstun	5.515897	.0059749	5.504186	5.527607

Figure 11. Mean scores for trust in the UN in Russia and Ukraine (top) and the respective weighted mean score in Western Europe (bottom), the scale from 0 ('no trust') to 10 ('complete trust').

```
. ttest pplfair, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,540	4.948458	.0385385	2.596706	4.872904	5.024012
UA	3,913	4.637107	.039471	2.469067	4.559721	4.714493
combined	8,453	4.80433	.0276594	2.543013	4.750111	4.858549
diff		.3113511	.0553715		.2028095	.4198927

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 5.6230
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8451
Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. mean pplfair [aweight=dweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 55,998

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
pplfair	6.05498	.0088817	6.037572	6.072388

Figure 12. Comparison of mean scores in Russia and Ukraine (top) and Western European weighted average (bottom) for the variable *pplfair* (most people would try to take advantage of me [score 0], or try to be fair [score 10]) in Russia ('RU') and Ukraine ('UA') (top), and in Western Europe (bottom).

```
. drop if pplhlp >= 11
(124 observations deleted)

. ttest pplhlp, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,708	4.24384	.0393272	2.698427	4.166741	4.32094
UA	3,976	3.977867	.0405894	2.559385	3.898289	4.057445
combined	8,684	4.122064	.0283176	2.638856	4.066554	4.177573
diff		.2659731	.056769		.1546924	.3772537

```
diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA)                                t = 4.6852
Ho: diff = 0                                                degrees of freedom = 8682

Ha: diff < 0                Ha: diff != 0                Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000          Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000          Pr(T > t) = 0.0000
```

```
. mean pplhlp [aweight=dweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = **56,060**

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
pplhlp	5.311876	.0091565	5.293929	5.329822

Figure 13. Comparison of mean scores in Russia and Ukraine (top) and Western European weighted average (bottom) for the variable *pplhlp* (most of the time people try to be helpful [score 10] or are they mostly looking out for themselves [score 0]) in Russia ('RU') and Ukraine ('UA') (top), and in Western Europe (bottom).

```
. drop if sclmeet >=8
(208 observations deleted)
```

```
. ttest sclmeet, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,641	4.410256	.0257395	1.753498	4.359795	4.460718
UA	3,959	4.486234	.0262616	1.652398	4.434746	4.537722
combined	8,600	4.445233	.0184181	1.708022	4.409129	4.481336
diff		-.0759775	.0369456		-.1483997	-.0035553

```
diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA)
Ho: diff = 0
Ha: diff < 0
Ha: diff != 0
Ha: diff > 0
t = -2.0565
degrees of freedom = 8598
```

```
. drop if sclmeet >=8
(288 observations deleted)
```

```
. mean sclmeet [aweight=pweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 168,432

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
sclmeet	5.085167	.003647	5.078019	5.092315

Figure 14. Comparison of mean scores in Russia and Ukraine (top) and Western European weighted average (bottom) for the variable *sclmeet* ('How often do you meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues?' on a scale from 1 – 'never' to 7 – 'every day') in Russia and Ukraine (top) and in Western Europe (bottom).

```
. ttest imsmetn, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,465	2.095409	.0155626	1.039902	2.064898	2.125919
UA	3,766	1.785183	.0155516	.9543656	1.754693	1.815674
combined	8,231	1.953469	.0111708	1.013468	1.931571	1.975366
diff		.3102255	.0221616		.2667831	.3536679

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 13.9983
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8229

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. drop if imsmetn >=5
(4,444 observations deleted)
```

```
. mean imsmetn [aweight=pweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 164,276

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
imsmetn	2.220186	.0020498	2.216169	2.224204

Figure 15. Comparison of mean scores in Russia and Ukraine (top) and Western European weighted average (bottom) for the variable *imsmetn* (how many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority should be allowed to come and live here on a scale from 1 – ‘many’ to 4 – ‘none’).

```
. drop if imdfetn >=5
(673 observations deleted)
```

```
. ttest imdfetn, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	4,432	2.796255	.0143306	.9540348	2.768159	2.82435
UA	3,703	2.400756	.0169474	1.031288	2.367529	2.433983
combined	8,135	2.616226	.0111902	1.009292	2.594291	2.638162
diff		.3954984	.0220401		.3522941	.4387026

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 17.9445
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 8133

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. drop if imdfetn >=5
(4,518 observations deleted)
```

```
. mean imdfetn [aweight=pweight]
```

Mean estimation Number of obs = 164,202

	Mean	Std. Err.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
imdfetn	2.447103	.0021065	2.442975	2.451232

Figure 16. Comparison of mean scores in Russia and Ukraine (top) and Western European weighted average (bottom) for the variable imdfetn (how many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group as majority should be allowed to come and live here on a scale from 1 – ‘many’ to 4 – ‘none’).


```
. ttest wmcprk if gndr==2, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	2,993	2.19412	.0178341	.9756762	2.159151	2.229088
UA	3,536	2.081731	.017712	1.053234	2.047004	2.116458
combined	6,529	2.133252	.0126219	1.019875	2.108509	2.157995
diff		.1123888	.0252952		.0628019	.1619758

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 4.4431
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 6527

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

```
. ttest wmcprk if gndr==1, by(cntry)
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RU	2,008	2.104084	.0200324	.8976653	2.064797	2.14337
UA	2,085	1.910791	.0212787	.9716241	1.869062	1.952521
combined	4,093	2.005619	.0147075	.9409328	1.976785	2.034454
diff		.1932923	.0292681		.1359109	.2506737

diff = mean(RU) - mean(UA) t = 6.6042
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 4091

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

Figure 17. Comparison of mean scores from Russia and Ukraine for the variable *wmcprk* ('Women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family') for men (*gndr==1*) and women (*gndr==2*).

Appendix D. Illustration of an imperial crown added to the ruble coin between 2012 and 2016.



Source: Photo by the author taken in Saints-Petersburg in August 2017.

Appendix E. Illustration of extreme weather conditions in Kyiv in March 2013, sparkling mutual self-help coordinated through online channels

Photograph by Oleksii Furman for Delo.Ua featuring a man in deep snow, removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holders are Oleksii Furman and Delo.Ua.

Figure 1. Kyiv on March 23, 2013 [Vkhurdelylo. Kak vyhliadel Kiev 23 Marta 2013 goda]. Photo by Oleksii Furman for Delo.Ua (2013).

Photograph by Oleksii Furman for Delo.Ua, featuring men pushing a van out of deep snow, removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holders are Oleksii Furman and Delo.Ua.

Figure 2. Kyiv on March 23, 2013 [Vkhurdelylo. Kak vyhliadel Kiev 23 Marta 2013 goda]. Oleksii Furman for Delo.Ua (2013).

Removed **Юлия Фисовна** ▶ **SOS!! КИЕВ.СЛУЖБА СПАСЕНИЯ (коо...**
March 25, 2013 at 12:17 AM · Kyiv, Ukraine · 🌐

В связи с тяжелыми погодными условиями приюту «Сириус» (да и другим приютам тоже) срочно требуется помощь! Животные находятся в открытых вольерах и не могут получить должного ухода. Вы можете помочь! Авто-помощь – подвезти волонтеров... See More

👍 6

12 Comments

Removed **Виктория Красникова** ▶ **SOS!! КИЕВ.СЛУЖБА СПАСЕН...**
March 24, 2013 at 8:37 PM · Kyiv, Ukraine · 🌐

Район "Дворца Украина", Владимирский рынок, если нужна помощь с покупкой продуктов, помощь врача, обращайтесь. По всему городу нет возможности. Машина стоит в сугробе, а я с тремя детьми. Тут по месту...

👍 4

8 Comments

Removed **Alex Riabtsev** ▶ **SOS!! КИЕВ.СЛУЖБА СПАСЕНИЯ (коор...**
March 25, 2013 at 9:21 AM · 🌐

#требуется помощь Ванды василевской 12/16. С собой нет ни лопаты ни троса (нужно помочь откопать и выдернуть). Кто рядом?

👍 6

5 Comments

Removed **Alex Avdoshyn** ▶ **SOS!! КИЕВ.СЛУЖБА СПАСЕНИЯ (коо...**
March 24, 2013 at 10:15 PM · 🌐

Мне 15 лет, живу в Соломенском районе нашего прекрасного города. Готов оказать помощь застрявшим в снегу автомобилям, возьму с собой чай в термосе. С удовольствием помогу пенсионерам, которые немогут сходить в магазин, самому сходить за... See More

👍 18

11 Comments

Removed **Dmytro Malyuta** shared a link.
March 25, 2013

В Охматдете вопрос решён. Теперь !!!СРОЧНО!!! нужна помощь в Дарницком районе, станция скорой помощи на Урловской, 13: <http://helpkyiv.org/potribno-rozchistiti-stantsiyu-shvidko.../>
Надо 15 человек, с лопатами и ломami.

Removed **Alex Riabtsev** ▶ **SOS!! КИЕВ.СЛУЖБА СПАСЕНИЯ (коор...**
March 25, 2013 at 9:38 AM · 🌐

#помощь Сейчас прозываем больницы города Киева, чтобы узнать какая дежурная и где в первую очередь надо расчистить проезд к приемным отделениям. Будьте на связи те, кто собирался копать!

👍 4

Removed **Anna Rymarenko** ▶ **SOS!! КИЕВ.СЛУЖБА СПАСЕНИЯ (ко...**
March 25, 2013 at 4:33 PM · 🌐

ПЕРЕКЛИЧКА Текущие задачи: - прозвон-смс волонтеров на завтра: Октябрьская б-ца (м.Кловская, Палац спорта) - прозвон-смс волонтеров на завтра: Пимоненко 10 (м.Лукияновская) - найти инфо - периодически появляются просьбы о помощи по... See More

👍 5

17 Comments

Figure 3. Screengrabs of the Facebook group SOS!!Kiev.Sluzhba Spaseniia (koordinatsiia) [SOS Kyiv Emergency Service (coordination)]. All photographs removed.



Сергій Чумаченко is with **Viktoriia Tutychenko-Zaharova**.

March 24, 2013 · 🌐

Я благодарен Господу Богу за неожиданный метеорологический подарок. Я благодарен г-ну Попову, за бездарную организацию работы по ликвидации последствий стихии. Я благодарен г-ну Азирову за то, что он верен своему устремлению покрить жизнь украинцев путем циничной переадресации ответственности простому украинцу и лопате. Сегодня, метафорой эффективности Украинского государственного аппарата стал одинокий рядовой ЗС, обреченно пробивающий тоннель в сугробах возле КПП части ШТЫКОВОЙ лопатой. Я благодарен тому, что в сложное время, занесенным придомовым дорогам, по которым не может проехать скорая помощь, противопоставлена идеально вычищенная дорога на Конче Заспу.

Потому, что благодаря этому всему я увидел десятки людей, которые приходили на помощь друг другу. Я видел, как ни слова не говоря, выходили из машин и вытаскивали из заносов друг друга. Я видел, как джипы дежурили на дорогах, для того, чтобы вытаскивать другие машины из сугробов. Водители такси шли освобождать из снежного плена огромные субурбаны. А драйвер порше вытаскивал старый опелек вместе с пассажирами двадцать четвертой волги. Я слышал гордый голос дочери, когда она мне рассказывала о ночном рекорде в 24 вытасканные машины и девятичасовом пути от Дарницы до Оболони. Я впервые видел ДАИшников, засунувших свои ложки в... и вытаскивающих машины вместе с водилами. А мат и ругань были слышны лишь в ответ на предложенные за помощь деньги.

Город переполнен ВЗАИМНОЙ ПОМОЩЬЮ. И это не случайность – это закономерность! Вот это и есть Киев – детка! Это и есть – мы – Киевляне! Терпеливые, до поры до времени, индивидуалисты – готовые объединиться в трудные времена, уважающие себя и друг друга. Все кто руководствовался желанием помочь и правилом взаимовыручки – это и есть граждане Свободного Города! И не так уж и много времени прошло с 2004-го... Вот это Киев, Сашенька. И вот это КИЕВЛЯНЕ, Коленька!

Figure 4. Screengrab of the post by Serhii Chumachenko. Facebook, 24 March 2013

Appendix F. The post by Mustafa Nayyem, calling for Ukrainians to join him at the Maidan Nezhamozhnosti to protest

Mustafa Nayyem · 46,185 followers
November 21 at 9:55am via mobile · 🌐

Follow

Ладно, давайте серьезно. Вот кто сегодня до полуночи готов выйти на Майдан? Лайки не считаются. Только комментарии под этим постом со словами "Я готов". Как только наберется больше тысячи, будем организовываться.

532

Oleg O. Kit, Strychuk Helen, Артем Пироговский and 645 others like this.

View previous comments 49 of 946

Removed **Maxim Zabolotnyy** Готов!
November 22 at 2:48am

Removed **Vitaly Borody** буду в пятницу во второй половине - D.V.
November 22 at 2:50am

Removed **Antonina Kaplia** готов
November 22 at 2:55am

Source: Screengrab taken by the author on Facebook, 21 November 2013. All photographs of people were removed due to impossibility to obtain their consent.

Appendix G. Grassroots public service media *Hromadske* defied the visual regime of power characteristic of traditional television

Screengrab of *Hromadske*'s page on the crowdfunding platform *BIGGGGIDEA* is removed due to impossibility to obtain consent from all the journalists of *Hromadske*, whose faces are featured here.

Figure 1. Hromadske's first visual self-presentation for a crowdfunding campaign on BIGGGGIDEA. Source: <https://biggggidea.com/project/392/>.

Screengrab from *Hromadske*'s broadcast online is removed due to impossibility to obtain consent from the viewer Oksana Musyka, whose face is featured here.

Figure 2. Oksana Musyka (viewer) calling from London, Hromadske online, 13.01.2014. Screengrab made by the author at the time of the broadcast.

Screengrab from *Hromadske*'s broadcast online is removed due to impossibility to obtain consent from the expert Orysia Lutsevych, whose face is featured here.

Figure 3. Orysia Lutsevych (expert) gives a commentary via Skype, 13.01.2014. Screengrab made by the author at the time of the broadcast.

Screengrab from *Hromadske*'s broadcast online is removed due to impossibility to obtain consent from the journalist Oleksandr Shevchenko, whose face is featured here.

Screengrab from *Hromadske*'s broadcast online is removed due to impossibility to obtain consent from the unnamed member of the public, whose face is featured here.

Figure 4. The programme 'Nuni Vzhe' (24.10.2018). Journalist Oleksandr Shevchenko and a participant of the event both use headphones in a live report. The screengrab made by the author at the time of the broadcast.

Screengrab from *Hromadske*'s broadcast online is removed due to impossibility to obtain consent from the unnamed members of the public, whose faces are featured here.

Figure 5. Screengrab from hromadske.ua, 'Donbas Reality Check' on 27 September 2019.
Source: <https://hromadske.ua/posts/diti-donbasu-z-travmami-vijni-i-bez-dopomogi-derzhavi-donbas-reality-check>

Appendix H. Open analytical module of Bi.ProZorro.org enabling civic activists to monitor the allocation of public money to the state procurement auctions

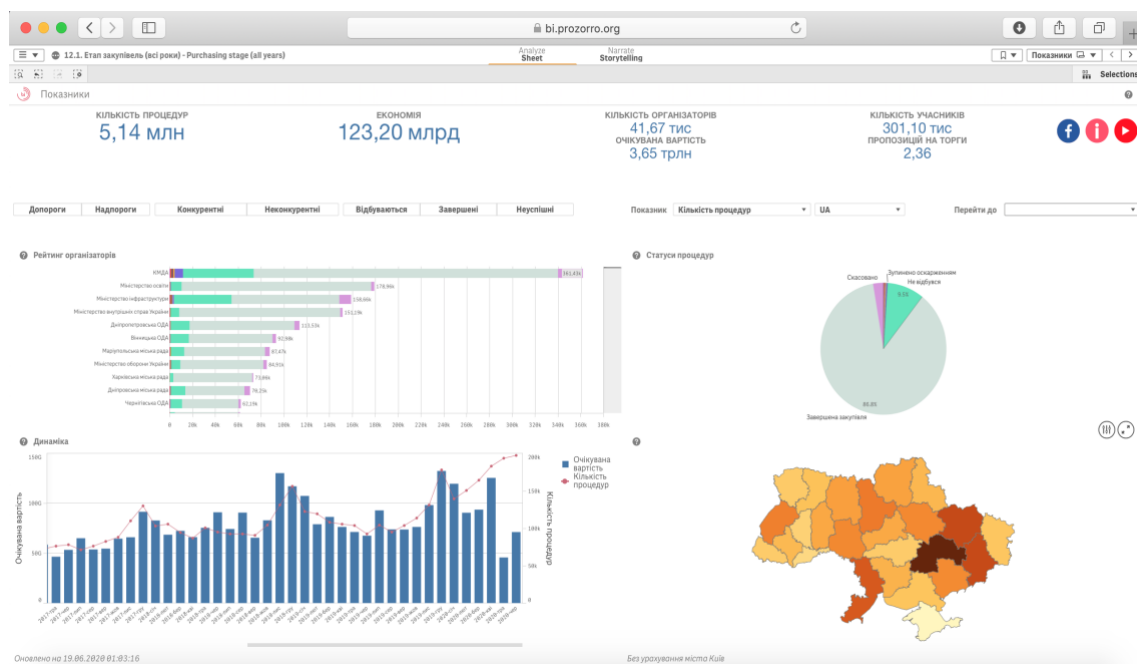


Figure 1. Screenshot from bi.prozorro.org analytical module, 19 June 2020, 18:51 BST.