



Dieter Segert (Ed.)
**Civic Education and
Democratisation in the Eastern
Partnership Countries**

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in the Eastern Partnership Countries

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Introduction

Actors, opportunities and obstacles in civic education and democratisation in the Eastern Partnership countries

Democracy and civic education belong together. Democracy requires politically mature citizens. It requires their activity and the defence of its principles. The aims of civic education are to spread and increase knowledge in civil society about how politics work and to support citizens' resolve to take matters of common concern into their own hands.¹ In post-socialist Eastern Europe, there are two additional factors that contribute to the urgency of civic education:

1. Only democratic states are willing to support non-partisan civic education rather than propaganda and "PR" designed to further the interests of the ruling elite.
2. Civil societies, still inexperienced and ill informed after the demise of authoritarian regimes, have a particular need to improve their capacity for political action.

The first section below analyses the development of democracy since 1989/1991 in Eastern Europe, which gives rise to the conditions in which civil society development and civic education take place. The paths of development taken by countries in the various regions of post-socialist Eastern Europe are quite diverse;² in the sub-region under special consideration here, made up of the six countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine),³ democracy started from a weak position. The second section of this introduction addresses the specific challenges involved in civic education in the countries of the Eastern Partnership: the intensive politics of history (*Geschichtspolitik*), the new authoritarianisms that have emerged, and the "managed civil societies" associated with them; it then turns to the opportunities and limitations associated with external funding of civil society activities. I discuss briefly the relationship between civic education and sustainable democratisation in my conclusion.

My preface introduces a collection of papers evaluating different aspects of this relationship. The first section considers specific examples that shed light on experiences with civic education in the countries of Central Eastern Europe after the start of democratisation. The experiences of those countries should allow conclusions to be drawn about the links between civic education and democratisation that apply to the entire post-socialist space. The focus in the second section then shifts to civil society and new media in the South Caucasus, i.e. in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The texts collected in the third section analyse certain aspects of Ukrainian civil society of current relevance. Then the focus shifts again to texts depicting the complex relationship between state and non-state actors in the field of civic education in Russia and the three westernmost countries of the Eastern Partnership (Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus). The fifth and final section of the publication examines certain of the external influences and aspects of transnational exchange in the context of civic education in the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

The winding paths of democracy and de-democratisation in post-socialist Eastern Europe

In 1989 it all seemed simple: freedom, prosperity and democracy were the order of the day. The state-socialist dictatorships had lost the support of their populations. Europe, it seemed, was en route to becoming something beyond merely a synonym for Western Europe: the European Communities, later the European Union, wanted to overcome Europe's East-West divide by admitting new members. A total of 11 countries in Eastern and Southeast Europe were admitted as new members in 2004, 2007 and 2013.

The enthusiasm of the "annus mirabilis" has since given way to a certain disillusionment. This has become evident in the various regions of what was formerly homogenous Eastern Europe: one hears talk of "democratic fatigue"⁴, and of "four worlds of post-socialism". The countries of East Central Europe have been part of the EU since 2004 and have – individual deficits notwithstanding – established democratic orders; the countries of South Eastern Europe (the EU members Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania above all) are, somewhat belatedly, following the same path; certain chances for democratisation still remain in four of the countries in the post-Soviet space (including Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine; the fourth is Kyrgyzstan); in the other post-Soviet countries authoritarian regimes of various types of have developed (Styckow, nd.).

Below I will concentrate on outlining the structural conditions of political development impeding democratic development in the post-Soviet countries of the two groups mentioned last above. These conditions should be taken into account in civic education activities there. Only then can civic education live up to its own potential for supporting the capacity of civil society to act.

Democracy means more than holding free elections

By the late 1990s, it was already evident to political scientists that the democracy promotion policy of the West had not achieved all of its objectives. This failure was due, in part, to ill-chosen priorities. This was a global problem, not one limited to Eastern Europe. Certain powerful players had chosen to concentrate on supporting and ensuring free and fair elections (Carothers, 2002). Democracy requires more than just free elections, however. It cannot exist in the absence of functioning states that perform their tasks in the area of supporting the social and economic development of their societies. States must also be capable of fulfilling the expectations of their citizens. Moreover, democracy requires the sustained support of a politically minded and politically competent citizenry.

Those are complex conditions that have not been met in many Eastern European societies. The result is a profound dissatisfaction and political apathy in the population that authoritarian political elites have taken advantage of. This has led Carothers, and other political scientists, to the following conclusions: democracies require specific social and cultural preconditions and a functioning state; where these necessary conditions are not met, election observation and other forms of support for free elections will be of little benefit. The latter is also related to some extent to the fact that modern autocracies are capable of making use of elections, political competition and civil society activities as tools to further the interests of the ruling strata.

Unfavourable economic and social conditions of political development in the post-Soviet space

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, a manifold transformation had to be accomplished: political transformation to democracy and economic transformation to a functional national economy that was integrated in the global economy. Moreover, new nation states developed out of multi-eth-

nic polities. Economic restructuring was associated with a considerable decline in living standards for most people – and these were people who were already unhappy with their standard of life in the late Soviet period. The privatisation of state enterprises gave rise to a thin stratum of the super-rich. The growing gap between the living standards of the majority and those of these super-rich further aggravated public discontent. There emerged a sense that the development process was unfair; moreover, it was a process that was being carried out under the banner of “democracy” and rapprochement with the West.

The establishment of new nation states was advantageous for politicians and those at the highest level of the state administration. A diffuse notion of excessive corruption among these leading strata, the “elite”, spread within the societies of these states.

The formation of nation states was also associated with an intensive search for a new identity for the community of the state. This was the sphere in which a vigorous discourse on the interpretation of history unfolded. The social strata sustaining the nation states engaged in an intensive discourse on history: an arena for disputes about the mythical roots of the particular state’s titular nation, about the appraisal of the defunct Soviet state and the values that underpinned it, and about relations with neighbouring states and their populations.

Cultural legacies of state socialism

Finally, there was a cultural heritage left by the previous order that had to be dealt with. State socialism had based its legitimacy in part on the pledge to ensure social security in daily life to all citizens equally. A great deal was expected of the state.⁵ State authorities looked askance at initiatives on the part of their citizens and kept a close watch on any such activity. These behavioural patterns continued to have an influence after the system’s demise, rendered the development of an active civil society and democratic institutions more difficult.

There is one other cultural legacy of state socialism that is relevant to civic education and civil society: the support of Communist Party rule was consolidated by means of an extensive system of propaganda promoting the values of “communism” and by the prohibition and persecution of other beliefs. The legacy of this was a widespread aversion to any form of party politics and a rejection of any deliberate attempt to spread political views, which could be misunderstood as propaganda.

Two fundamental obstacles for civic education in the region

These conditions have been the subject of extensive analyses, which can only be touched on and not presented in detail, here.⁶ Looking at the societies of the post-Soviet space and thus the conditions confronting civic education there, two phenomena emerge: a weak civil society and a low-level of political participation. Table 1 sets out some of the recent data in this area.

**Table 1: Development of election turnouts in the region
(in percentage of eligible voters)⁷**

Election date	Belarus	Moldova	Ukraine	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
1994/1995	56	79	76	54	86	68
2006–2009	77	59	62	60	40	53
2010–2014	74	56	52	63	50	60
Trend	Increasing	Falling, remaining low	Falling sharply	Increasing moderately	Falling, low	Low, fluctuating

Surveys indicate that stated beliefs and political realities do not always coincide. When asked in the Caucasus Barometer 2013⁸ survey whether they had participated in the most recent elections (held in 2012 in Armenia and Georgia, i.e. one year before the survey, and in Azerbaijan's case even earlier, in 2010), 87% of respondents in Armenia responded affirmatively, 73% in Azerbaijan and 86% in Georgia. A comparison of those figures with the actual turnout levels in the table above clearly demonstrates the advisability of taking self-assessments in surveys with a grain of salt.

Still more problematic though is the difference between respondents' assessments of their country's political system and the evaluations compiled by experts in the Nations in Transit study. I present the professionals' assessment first, then the results of the Caucasus Barometer survey.

In 2014, Nations in Transit (Freedom House, 2014) assessed the states in the region as follows:

Armenia, with a democracy score of 5.36 (on a scale of 1–7, where 1 is the best), was classed as a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime; Azerbaijan, scoring 6.68, as a consolidated authoritarian regime; and Georgia, with a score of 4.68, as a transitional government or hybrid regime.⁹

How do the surveyed populations see the political regimes of their South Caucasian states? The difference between the opinions in Azerbaijan

and the assessment of the Nations in Transit experts is particularly great:¹⁰ only 18% of respondents there think that their country is not a democracy, almost an equivalent number (17%) say that it is a full democracy, another 32% see it as a democracy with “minor problems” and the remaining 22% classify it as a democracy with major problems (but still a democracy).¹¹ Armenians take a more critical view of their country: only 3% see it as a full democracy, 14% as one “with minor problems”, 36% see Armenia as a democracy “with major problems” and 34% do not consider it a democracy (the rest were uncertain or gave no opinion).

The following data sheds light on how respondents perceive the social situation in the countries surveyed. The survey asked respondents how often they had to borrow money to buy food. Judging on that basis, Armenia’s situation is the worst: 30% of those surveyed reported having to borrow money every month. The same response was given by 18% of respondents in Georgia and 17% in Azerbaijan. The same survey results show that 30% of Armenians, 14% of Georgians and 8% of the respondents in Azerbaijan have received money from relatives living abroad. Statistical data sets allowing an assessment of the economic situation are also available of course, for instance, the World Bank’s figures for the unemployment rate in each country in 2013 (Armenia: 16.2%; Georgia: 14.3%; Azerbaijan: 5.5%; Belarus: 5.2%; Moldova: 5.1%; Ukraine: 7.9%; in Russia, unemployment was at 5.6% in 2013) (Factfish, 2015c). These numbers reflect a relatively high degree of differentiation. When looking at this data, one has to bear in mind that high rates of emigration affect unemployment rates (because those seeking employment abroad do not count towards the domestic unemployment rate; this is particularly relevant for Moldova and Armenia). Naturally, it is also important to consider what the unemployment means to the people concerned, i.e. the level of unemployment benefits paid and the length of time people have been unemployed. There are other (slightly older) data sets available for some of the countries with respect to the latter point: in Armenia over half of those currently unemployed have not had a job for over a year; in Ukraine, Russia and Moldova this is true in approximately one third of the cases (Factfish, 2015b).

Per-capita GDP based on purchasing power parity also varies greatly from country to country (Factfish, 2015a). In Armenia, GDP in 2014 was over USD 8,000, and just somewhat lower in Georgia at almost 8,000. That same year, GDP in Azerbaijan, at approx. USD 17,500, was almost twice the figure for the other two South Caucasian countries; while it reached just over USD 8,000 in the Ukraine, and just over USD 18,000 per capita in Belarus. Moldova came in far behind, with a GDP of less than

USD 5,000. Russia, incidentally, reported GDP of over USD 25,500 per capita in 2014. There is little to say about these data, other than that in the sub-region of Eastern Europe the economic situation is at its worst in the countries with what most closely approach democratic societies, far worse than those of stable authoritarian regimes.

To sum up this section: political developments in Eastern Europe proceeded very unevenly across the different sub-regions. In the region of post-Soviet Eastern Europe (and specifically the six countries of the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy), some countries have developed precarious, weak democracies (those designated as transitional governments/hybrid regimes in the Nations in Transit report) while stable authoritarian regimes have developed in others. Civic education work thus faces a situation characterised by weak civil societies and low levels of participation. One of the contributors to this book (Paturyan) discusses the post-Communist phenomenon of 'disengagement'. Public dissatisfaction with political developments arose to no small extent as a result of the fact that the process of economic transformation that began in 1989/91 has produced a great deal of social hardship and a great many "social losers"; the two Eastern Partnership societies that have stable authoritarian regimes – Azerbaijan and Belarus – (along with Russia) also have the most powerful economies in this space.

Specific challenges for civic education in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries

In the following, I outline some of the serious problems associated with civic education in the region in question. Compared to those states admitted to the EU since 2004, the states with which the EU maintains relations under the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy are beset with particularly difficult problems. This is due in part to the yet further exacerbated economic and social problems, which can often cause populations to attach greater urgency to issues other than democracy. In part, too, it has to do with the fact that in many of the region's countries the authoritarian rulers have developed an extensive set of instruments to use to weaken resistance to their power and strengthen societies' support of that power, or at any rate willingness to tolerate it. New forms of authoritarian rule have developed here, electoral autocracies that use elections themselves as well as opinion surveys and modern public relations techniques to mobilise the population in the interests of those in power.

Politics of history as a central field of the post-socialist democracy debate – an attempt at explanation

Throughout Eastern Europe, the role played by debates over the interpretation of history has indeed been central in the transformation process. A lively argument over the politics of history was a characteristic element of post-socialist development nearly everywhere. It is a debate in which the evaluation of the period of state socialism always plays a key role. In many cases, that of Bulgaria for one, the line between the two sides of this debate corresponded almost precisely to that dividing the two main political camps of the time, with the political successors of the ruling Communist Party on the one side and the “anti-communist opposition” on the other. (Meznik 2007) The politics of history were particularly pronounced in the successor states of the dissolved multi-ethnic federations, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

There are two precedents in the region for today’s intense engagement with the politics of history. One was in state socialism, an order that based its legitimacy on ideological interpretations of history. In state socialism, communist rule was legitimated ideologically, both through the interpretation of a country’s own history, as part of a world-changing movement of the working class, and through the aims it was destined to achieve (communism). The state mounted an official, elaborate defence of this interpretation of the past and the future. The official interpretation was understood as being the truth, inviolate and unassailable. In this light, the post-socialist debates over history can be viewed as the process of overthrowing this one single truth. However, some of the protagonists of anti-communist struggles of this kind bent to their work with an ideological rage that was itself reminiscent of the communist propaganda of an earlier day. One is led to suspect that more was at stake than merely the justified criticism of a former one-sidedness.

The second, much earlier, precedent lies in the nationalist movements in Eastern Europe that started in the 19th century, in which the politics of history also figured prominently. Every form of nationalism is characterised by an enthusiastic inflation of the virtues of one’s own nation, the celebration of its uniqueness and superiority over other nations. The high emotionality of the discourse is evident in the fact that adherents of nationalist movements typically view criticism of one’s own nation as “betrayal of the fatherland”. This exaggerated faith in the merits and superiority of one’s own people, one’s own nation, finds particularly good fodder in situations of military conflict. The collapse of multi-ethnic federations or empires is accompanied by a blurring of the lines between internal and external enemies, between war and civil war. Croatia between 1991 and

1995 or Bosnia Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995 offer striking examples of this. The effects of such clashes of faith, fuelled by militant passions, continue to be felt in post-war societies for a long time.

What functions do these ideologically charged attempts at historical interpretation serve? Their purpose is, first, to provide or reinforce legitimisation for rule (in various types of regimes); they justify and solidify. They can also serve to mobilise electorates in democracies. Political competition is an ideal battleground for the exchange of arguments relating to the politics of history. Portrayals of history are particularly effective at mobilising when they are designed to justify and solidify the identity of a specific social community during the course of a nationalist movement. This type of debate is therefore especially vehement at the start of a movement of national revival, when the community's identity is still unsettled and controversial. This was the case in the successor states both of Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union (if one excludes the Baltic states, where national movements had already been active for some time).

The close relationship between the politics of history and the struggle for political domination makes the debate about the former an important field of post-socialist civic education. This is also the reason that three of the contributions to this volume are devoted to this topic (Myeshkov, Portnov, Zhurzhenko). The paper by S. Musteață reports on the developments in the teaching of history in schools in Ukraine – which is also an important component of the politics of history and a potential field for history-related civic education.

New authoritarianism and managed civil society

What path must a country follow to create a vibrant democracy? The most important answer is this: development of a vibrant civil society. I have already stated that civic education requires civil society actors and has the aim of generating a civil society that is politically active in the promotion of democracy. I have no intention to qualify that here. However, this section is intended to remind the readers that the development of a *loyal* civil society has also become part of the power strategy of today's autocrats (cf. Shirinov and others). Modern authoritarian regimes, also called “new authoritarian regimes”, include in their repertoire not only the exertion of ideological influence, force and co-opting, but also the cultivation of a tamed civil society, one that helps sustain the rule of the regime by creating and reproducing a closer connection between the ruling clique and the population.

Unlike a civil society that underpins a sustainable democracy, this type of civil society is appropriately referred to as a “managed civil society”.

In Russia, the development of a civil society of this kind was already underway during President Putin’s first term in office. It has been an inherent component of “managed democracy” since 2004, in part due to the experience of the Orange Revolution and the events in Beslan. As the contributions published here (Lassila) demonstrate, financing and fostering of civil society initiatives that are loyal to the regime are routinely coupled with prohibitions and restrictions placed on independent NGOs with western partners.

Thus it is essential to determine precisely the quality of the civil society and identify its position within the framework of the political system when investigating civic education and civil society as part of a process of democratisation.

What can external support of civil society accomplish, and what are its limitations?

The short answer is that the provision of external support is ambivalent. Inherent in external funding is the danger that the western donors are primarily interested in using the initiatives they support to implement their own views of what is right and see in other societies only an opportunity to affirm their own values. Nonetheless, a transitional phase of external support is indispensable for the development of civil society in the transformation states. Continued external support remains necessary as long as the resources available within the country for the support of civil society initiatives are inadequate. In the middle term, though, there is no getting away from the necessity for civil society to be largely self-financing. Freise touches on this point in another article. In 2005, he wrote a statement that is still valid today: “In the face of dwindling resources, future funding activities should focus on an increase of philanthropy and volunteer work.”

The necessity of equipping civil society initiatives to make it on their own is rooted first in the fact that democracy (as well as civic education supporting democratisation) must always grow out of the society in question itself. In addition, it has become evident, particularly in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, that autocrats in political communities founded on nationalism will attempt to denounce internationally financed civic education as an attempt at interference by external powers, and that parts of the population will find such arguments credible (see for example Paturyan in this volume).

It is important, of course, to evaluate more precisely what effects the EU's external funding has had and what improvements need to be made. Many of the contributions in this volume, particularly those in the last section, by Vasilevich, Zichner and Yeritsyan, include thoughts and suggestions on this topic which are based on the experience of the relevant society and processes.

Tasks of civic education in the democratisation process

In conclusion, I turn once more to an overview of the opportunities for civic education to enhance democratic development. In democracies, civic education has the task of strengthening civil society's skills and capacity for action. A competent and functioning civil society is an essential condition for sustainable democracy. This task takes on even greater importance in societies in which democracy has not yet taken root as a political system and way of life because the culture of active participation is weaker in such societies and the manipulation of those who do participate by rulers is commonplace.

Yet civic education is still only one of the several preconditions for democratic development. It cannot replace the other necessary conditions: that of a functioning state governed by the rule of law, an administration not infected by systemic corruption, a judiciary independent of the people in power, independent broadcasting and a free press, or the exercise of control over those in power through elections and a functioning legislature, for instance. Without civic education too, though, a democracy will not function stably or sustainably.

Civic education is directed particularly towards active members of the population (Paturyan speaks of 'civic activists'), and it is a means of checking the arbitrary rule of those in power. It can counter manipulation through state-controlled media. It can help dismantle prejudices by deepening understanding and improving the capacity for judgement in society. It can increase interest in politics by helping to reduce the feeling of helplessness that spreads through civil societies under authoritarian regimes. It can reinvest history with its role as a realm of learning for everyone and as a subject teaching that all authoritarian power is ephemeral, so that it is no longer reduced to a quarry from which rulers can mine rationales for their own domination. Through civic education and the efforts of committed teachers, schools can be transformed from places of indoctrination intended to further state power into places where students acquire the skills and abilities that underpin democracy. In this way, schools can also become places to learn democratic participation.

Where civic education is not supported by the state, civil society, NGOs and ‘civic activists’ have a special responsibility. In recent years, the European institutions have taken many initiatives to encourage networking in the field of civic education. One such initiative is the NECE (Networking European Citizenship Education), which the German Federal Agency for Civic Education helps to support.

However, there is more than one significant external source of substantive influence in the region under consideration. Russia has its own interests in these countries and sees the region as its “near abroad”. Russia starts with a considerable advantage because of the shared Soviet past and the shared Russian language – at least in the case of the older generation by which it is still actively used. Institutions and actors in EU states that are involved in civic education should be aware of this competition over the content of education. The central point here is not so much the size of financial investment but rather credibility. Then, too, civic education must not be aimed at promulgating some kind of counter-propaganda, i.e. deliberately accentuating one’s arguments to render them more easily digestible while also replacing the artificial one-sidedness of the rival viewpoint with overstatements of one’s own. Civic education can only achieve democracy-fostering effects if it works with verifiable arguments and addresses the beliefs and prejudices relevant to everyday communication.

Translated from the German by Alison Borrowman.

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(Text references in which no year is given refer to contributions in this volume; reference details for these texts can be found there):

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Notes

- 1 On its website, under the heading “Strengthening Democracy – Fostering a Civil Society”, Germany’s Federal Agency for Civic Education (the bpb) phrases it like this: “bpb’s work focuses on fostering an awareness of what democracy is and on furthering participation in politics and social life.” (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2012).

- 2 The author uses the term post-socialist Eastern Europe to refer to the countries which, in one manner or another, were following a socialist development path up until 1989/1991. A distinction is generally drawn between East-Central Europe – the eight countries which joined the EU in 2004, South-Eastern Europe – with three EU members (accessing to the EU in 2007 and 2013) and the countries of what is called the “Western Balkans” – and the rest of Eastern Europe (the successor states of the Soviet Union, excluding the three Baltic states).
- 3 The EU’s Eastern Partnership is an initiative connected with the EU Neighbourhood Policy proposed by Poland and Sweden in 2008 and officially launched in 2009. The aims of the initiative include expanding and intensifying both economic and political cooperation between the six post-Soviet countries and the European Union. The association agreements, signed in July 2014 between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, are supposed to help accomplish this
- 4 See Rupnik & Zielonka (2013, p.3): “Today most of the new democracies are experiencing ‘democratic fatigue’ and some seem vulnerable to an authoritarian turn”.
- 5 The “Caucasus Barometer 2013” survey determined that the people who took part in the survey tended to see the role of the state as that of a caring parent and less as an employee whom the people had hired (and thus can presumably also be sacked). Georgia was the only country in which the majority (53%) of those surveyed did not believe the state’s role was that of the caring parent, though even there, 47% did think so. In Azerbaijan, as in Armenia, more than three quarters of respondents saw the state as a caring parent. All opinion survey data for the South Caucasus are from “Caucasus Barometer 2013” (CRRC, 2015).
- 6 See Holmes (1997); Howard (2003); Segert (2013); i.a.
- 7 The source of the data in the table is ‘Parties and elections in Europe’, a widely used data pool compiled by the political scientist Wolfram Nordsieck. The data in the pool are drawn from the official reports of the relevant election commissions (Nordsieck, 2015).
- 8 Caucasus Barometer is a survey on democracy in the countries of the South Caucasus regularly coordinated by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) of the Carnegie Foundation, New York, since 2003 (CRRC, 2013).
- 9 Ukraine and Moldova, with respective scores of 4.93 and 4.86, were assessed as transitional/hybrid regimes, Belarus, with 6.71, as a consolidated authoritarian regime like Azerbaijan.
- 10 Nations in Transit is an instrument for measuring democracy developed by the NGO Freedom House and widely used in political science. See the outline of the history of this instrument in the 2015 survey (Freedom House, 2015).
- 11 Only 11 percent checked the box indicating that they were not sure or had no opinion to give.

Civil society and political education in the democratisation process in the Eastern Europe after 1989

Hans-Jürgen Misselwitz

Civic education in an era of social transformation

Experiences with civic education in a *Land* in Eastern Germany

In the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the public mandate for education comprises “civic education” along with general, cultural and vocational education. Given the GDR experiences with an education system used by the ruling State party as a tool for wielding political power and ideological influence, not only the content of civic education in East Germany needed to be changed after 1990, but the practices as well. How, though, could civic education be taught or promoted at public institutions without becoming an instrument of political indoctrination on the part of the state or partisan propaganda? This was a question on the minds of many back then.

Civic education and a liberal order

In a pluralist society and a democratic state, freedom from political indoctrination can only be ensured when the state’s civic education programmes reflect the political plurality in the society and do not result in a restriction the personal rights of individuals or fundamental political rights (pursuant to article 7 of the German constitution). This imperative places constraints on state civic education programmes, both in terms of content and in terms of the world view associated with their educational goals. The fundamental prohibition against “overwhelming” students that is set out in what is known as the Beutelsbach Consensus of 1976 applies to civic education instruction in schools and civic education measures aimed at adults. The principles of the Beutelsbach Consensus prevent the state from promoting a predefined political opinion and thereby indoctrinating students by requiring that civic education always present inherently controversial aspects of a matter, point

out the various perspectives and allow students to form independent judgments. This approach is intended to acknowledge the fact that the binding nature of political content or assessments and even the acceptance thereof must remain the subject of debate in a democratic society.

In addition to freedom in the sense of “freedom from”, expressed in the above, freedom can be understood in the sense of “freedom to”: in this case, the freedom of the individual to actively participate in the democratic life of the polity. This is expressed in the definition of “free democratic”¹ civic education as “conveying democratic awareness, knowledge and the ability to actively participate in political processes” (Deutscher Bundestag, 1991, p. 3). This definition reflects an understanding of the state which demands that the state, in addition to safeguarding fundamental rights, is also responsible for providing for a functioning democracy. In other words, the state must not only ensure its citizen’s rights to participate in political life, it must also encourage such participation.

Civic education as a public function: from “teaching democracy” to democracy promotion

The shifting contents and methods of civic education in the Federal Republic of Germany also reflect the changing times. In the first two decades after the establishment of the FRG, the approaches to civic education were largely affirmative. However, a shift toward mainly critical approaches occurred in the third and fourth decades, as the German public grew more confident and self-aware in its relationship to democracy. Right from the start, the FRG’s concept of civic education encompassed a focus on non-school education aimed at adults as well as education in schools, because the influences of the Nazi era needed to be overcome in the political thinking of an entire generation. The allied occupation forces, who had seen civic education as a tool for democratic transformation, had implemented re-education programmes. The civic education concept of the newly established FRG picked up on this idea and continued it in the sphere of adult education.

A key role in supporting civic education for adults and in the definition of its objectives is played by the *Landeszentralen für politische Bildung*, the centres for civic education at the level of the federal states, or *Länder*. The *Landeszentralen* (federal-state centres) define the substantive content of their work independently of the government and without its guidance. This circumstance creates the basis for the public’s acceptance of these centres as institutions that provide information about political issues and for

political participation. The *Landeszentralen* are charged with guaranteeing the diversity and balanced nature of civic education offerings provided by independent organizations and with supplementing those offerings with their own initiatives.

Due to Germany's federal structure, civic education is the responsibility of the federal states, falling as it does under their sovereignty over cultural and educational matters (*Kulturhoheit*); civic education provided outside of schools is the remit of the *Landeszentralen*. At the national level, the Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*) supplements the primary responsibility borne by the federal states through its activities and the support of projects of national significance.

Laws and other statutory instruments lay down the principles governing public education offerings, such as the guarantee of plurality, balance and quality in civic education. As a rule, non-state institutions are [collectively] better at providing offerings that are politically plural, decentralised, and reflect the current interests and concerns of citizens. For that reason, one of the *Landeszentralen* chief responsibilities is to ensure this plurality is reflected in the selection of independent civic education organizations, with their integration within society and their specific local or regional, thematic or issue-based competencies, which it supports. Ensuring the breadth of the offerings, as well as their quality and continuing development, remains the task of the *Landeszentrale*.

The political foundations affiliated with the political parties represented in the *Bundestag*, or parliaments of the *Länder*, play a special role in the FRG. These foundations are financed from federal budget and, for *Land*-specific issues, from the *Länder* budgets. They are seen as institutions associated with significant socio-political currents, and receive public funds for that reason, but their exploitation to further the interests of political parties is prohibited. This reflects two related notions: (i) that enabling democratic participation and the formation of the political will of the people (a duty with which political parties are tasked by the German constitution) presupposes processes of transmission of subject matter and (ii) that this transmission must not have to rely solely on the financial resources of the interest groups backing the political parties.

The *political foundations* are civic education institutions whose structure, which has no parallel in another country, makes them a special feature of the democratic political culture in Germany. By continually contributing to communication among people and organizations representing different positions and interests, they contribute, directly or indirectly, toward the net experience with a culture of democratic debate and towards the cre-

ation of common understandings with respect to shared concerns, even among people who have distanced themselves from the political domain. Civic education offerings are particularly well suited for the debate about tasks for the future, because such debate offers a space set apart from controversies of the day in which people become able to discern common interests and put them into words. In this sense, civic education plays a role in defining the common good.

Centres for civic education of the East German *Länder* as midwives at the birth of democracy and supporters of the development of a democratic infrastructure

Most of the centres for civic education, or *Landeszentralen*, of the East German *Länder*, were founded in the spring of 1991, the highest administrative authorities of those *Länder* having been constituted the previous autumn. The conceptual approaches adopted in establishing these centres varied quite a lot. Differences among the individual *Länder* were a factor in this, but another factor was even more important: the model of the civic education system of the particular West German *Land* acting as a “partner state” for the “new” East German state in question. The *Land* of Brandenburg, which charged me with the task of setting up a *Landeszentrale*, maintained close ties with the *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). Thus, in our case, the NRW *Landeszentrale* served as the model that showed us what an institution of this kind could be and what rules that entailed. At the time, the *Landeszentrale* in North Rhine-Westphalia was very well funded and boasted a broad programme encompassing offerings ranging from a catalogue of books on political subjects, available at no cost, to its own conference and lecture programme, to a prize for the authors of political books, on through to the support of independent civic education organizations, which accounted for the bulk its budget outlay.

Brandenburg set up its *Landeszentrale* within the portfolio of the Minister President. This made it quite clear that the *Landeszentrale* did not fall within the remit of the ministry of culture, which had been accustomed to setting curricula. This decision sent out a signal heralding an all-encompassing political project aimed at developing the *Land* and the political culture of democracy in it. The range of tasks performed by the North Rhine-Westphalian *Landeszentrale* served as the guide in this regard and with respect to the setting of priorities.

Naturally, the work developing a broad programme for Brandenburg would have to be done only gradually and on a far smaller scale. The advantages of the concept of providing financial support to decentralised independent organizations were immediately apparent, even to a *Land* in Eastern Germany where no such independent organizations actually existed yet. So getting such organizations up and running was the main priority: the vision was that the *Landeszentrale's* work would incorporate a totally new world of decentralised offerings and societal actors, representing the novelty of a culture of democratic discussion and communication. The intention was that this would create the space for learning and reflection necessary for a democratic infrastructure. This space, it was hoped, would draw together agents in the democratic process, societal groups and individuals who could have a multiplier effect, and people affected by societal changes or political decisions. This would constitute the local offerings for political participation, contact and capacity building. The investment required to create pluralistic civic education reflecting the interests and concerns of the public – in the sense of events fostering practical learning about the political domain and direct democracy – would be of a significance for the future second to that of no other investment.

In the medium term, the decision to adopt this concept was partially responsible for the fairly rapid creation of more than 20 civic education providers, distributed throughout the *Land*, with differing thematic focuses and representing a broad base in society. In the institutional vacuum created after 1990, these organizations constituted forums for a local or regional public and contributed to the formation of a democratic political culture. However, progress in the development and consolidation of a broadly based infrastructure of independent civic education organizations had ceased by the mid-1990s. The scarcity of public grant money was endangering the operation and security of planning at the civic education organizations and resulted in a process of concentration/reduction: where once there had been plurality of organizations was now a boiled down proportional representation. In other words the *Landeszentrale* was forced to select only a few organizations who, given the shortage of funds, would have to represent a minimum standard of diversity. Nonetheless, the independent civic education organizations did form a framework supporting the emergence of democratic civil society. Maintaining the requisite level of continuity and professionalism at the civic education organizations was always a primary objective.

Civic education and “achieving inner unity”

In December 1991, Germany’s federal government underlined the significance of civic education for the creation of Germany’s “inner unity”:

“Now that the wall has been torn down and Germany has been united, civic education must play its part in ensuring that what have up to now been the two parts of Germany become one community together in spirit and society” (Deutscher Bundestag, 1991, p. 3).

Civic education was expected to play its role towards encouraging mutual understanding and the emergence of one common self-concept among German people.

In May 1998, the federal government then in power took stock of the situation and formulated a cautious, but still positive assessment:

“Naturally, not all of the expectations and hopes for the rapid rise to the prosperity associated with the system of liberal democracy could be met after the SED regime’s collapse. Nonetheless, both the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany and reunification are assessed positively by the large majority of the people. Civic education has its share ... [of responsibility for] this development” (Deutscher Bundestag, 1998, p. 2).

At the close of unified Germany’s first decade, the work towards “inner unity” was still unfinished – despite completion of institutional restructuring and partial economic alignment. Due to the still unequal sharing in societal prosperity, there were dangerous signs that the level of acceptance of democracy might be lower in Eastern Germany.

In fact, it became apparent within a few years of German unification that Eastern and Western Germany had distinct political cultures. The majority of the population of Eastern Germany tended to disassociate itself from the political system. This was reflected in the results of statistical surveys conducted in Eastern Germany in 1998. One survey, for instance, presented quite a clear picture: asked whether they felt like “real citizens of the FRG” [“richtige Bundesbürger”] or whether they would rather have the GDR back, only 17% of the population chose the first option, while 65% answered that neither was true. Rather than increasing since 1990, East Germans’ confidence in democratic institutions had actually fallen dramatically. In the 1998 survey, despite placing great emphasis on the importance of democracy (as a great majority did), only 13% of respondents were satisfied with

the state of the democracy, 41% were dissatisfied and 42% were “partially satisfied” (SFZ, 1998). Thus political attitudes in Eastern Germany could in no sense be described as automatically evolving towards growing satisfaction with conditions there – regardless of whether or not democracy or German unification in principle were accepted by the majority. In practice, the diverging trends revealed themselves in voting behaviours specific to Eastern Germany, in the distanced attitude towards political parties and in constantly high expectations regarding the social responsibility of the state.

In public debate, political attitudes of this kind were increasingly looked on as the results of a quasi genetic disorder of East Germans. What was once discussed in public in terms of a “difference in mentality”, as though the differences in questions were of the same order as those between Westphalians and East Frisians, now began to be portrayed as systemic and characteristic of a generation, i.e. something which could only be overcome in the long term.

The degree of inconsistency in political developments in East German society was matched by the degree of variation in the opinions and recommendations concerning how best to deal with them. Notwithstanding the declared general objective of accomplishing national unity by creating inner unity, that is to say, the aim of completing a process generating mutual understanding and developing a common civic identity, there was growing support for the view that these differences should no longer represent a problem for Germany, where cultural diversity is just as characteristic as regional variation in income levels (e.g. Veen, 1997).

Though the concrete differences between East and West *per se* did contribute to the emergence of political and cultural differences, a far greater role in that was played by the labelling on both sides and the dominant West German interpretation of the problems of the East in the context of those differences. The downright absence or niche casting of East German expertise and representation in the media, universities, political parties and administrative bodies had dramatically deepened the mental divide between East and West.

Though civic education programmes were in place, this was not an easy problem to solve. Civic education could, at most, tap into people's experiences, help them to better recognise the opportunities for problem solving inherent in democracy and help them to use them. In this respect the expectations regarding civic education's contribution towards creating “inner unity” should be measured not in terms of areas of East-West conformity but in terms of the increasing ability to deal with the different interests and experiences in the democratic process.

Thus civic education was able to counter a negative trend in social cohesion only to the extent that it created the arena for a democratic political culture and political participation opportunities by offering public education and discussion programmes and a pluralistic spectrum of independent organizations. The debate about the divergent historical experiences in the East and the West provided a suitable context for this, in no small part because it was in those histories that the causes and origins of differences lay, there that the mutual rejection or attributions of quasi genetic or mental defects had their roots.

Democracy building and working through the past

The elements of memory or tradition that become collective property, those aspects which ultimately become part of the common historical awareness: these are what build cohesion within a polity and a polity's understanding of itself, what shape the way it reacts to challenges in the here and now. One way to measure the attainment of German inner unity might be to measure how long it takes before West Germans and East Germans reach a common understanding about the common catalogue of historical memories, and allow those memories that cannot be shared to shift into the background.

In 1991 the need to do this seemed obvious; what is more, it seemed to be something that relatively easy to accomplish. This was related to what was then a great willingness on the part of the East German population to integrate itself, both politically and spiritually, into the context of the FRG. Describing the function of civic education, political scientist Thomas Meyer has written:

“Constructing a political culture of democracy – meaning the adoption of its rules, opportunities, impositions and basic values as part of the self-perception of the individual – requires that typical biographies first be fully addressed while thinking back on the history of the Communist system in Germany. Civic education must make a contribution, perhaps the decisive contribution towards that” (Meyer, 1991, p. 13).

However, in the late 90s Berlin-based historian Jürgen Kocka (1998) issued this sober assessment:

“After over forty years of divided history and seven years of reunification, profound divides can be discerned in the historical awareness of

East and West Germans, particularly with regard to modern history. We are very far from a common view of the divided history” (p. 104).

Despite, or perhaps in part due to, the large investment in research into contemporary history in the 90s, two *Bundestag* study commissions (*Enquete-Kommissionen*)² and considerable media interest in the process of coming to terms with the GDR past, East Germans were bound and bound together by their historical experience more than they could have wished. In the context of an asymmetrical approach of the past that was fixated on the East, revelations about collaboration with the GDR state security service and about the practices of the system of political repression and the trials of several SED decision-makers came to represent a burden more than a relief. Against a backdrop of unemployment and the loss of professional recognition and career prospects, East Germans had a growing sense that they were still being held collectively responsible for a system that they had only recently been applauded for putting behind them. After all, hadn't all that talk about “reunification” held out the hope for connecting with a history that those in the East had missed out on? That hope had been associated with a self-perception as the victim of history.

Certainly, there was no avoiding the necessity to confront the past and address the experience of injustice in the GDR. The issue affected no small number of population groups, though for the most part these groups were comprised of people whose own attitude to that injustice had been one of acquiescence, if not acceptance. By 2000, the work of dealing with the past through legal action was nearly complete: more than 200,000 investigations, resulting in about 200 convictions and prison sentences for around 20 individuals, had run their course. A state governed by the rule of law, which demands that people be judged only in terms of their concrete guilt, cannot and could not condemn a whole system. It certainly could not do justice to the past as a whole.

This dilemma was hardly a new one in the period after the demise of the GDR. The GDR's post-war approach to this problem could not possibly be taken as a model though, leaving the West German model as the obvious alternative. The credibility of the FRG model was also tainted, however, by the country's failure to confront its National Socialist past for at least two decades. To prevent a repetition of that failure, an alliance encompassing both Eastern and Western actors took shape, one advocating an approach to the past that would tie in quasi seamlessly with the work on the Nazi period. This approach is apparent in the talk of “double past” or experience of a “double dictatorship”. However, it entailed a pre-

defined focus on the apparatus of repression and its practices. This was an approach to confronting the past that could be carried out quasi administratively, either by the public prosecutors who conducted investigations or through the findings in the files of the agency charged with dealing with the records of the GDR's State Security Service. The categories of perpetrator and victim did not lend themselves to the routine of everyday life, the specific responsibilities, accomplishments and mistakes that affected the majority of the population.

As the practices of political repression came to dominate the entire picture of the GDR past to the exclusion of all else, this discourse drew further and further apart from East German society itself. In reaction to this, a wayward form of "bottom up" processing of the past took shape: an overt or subversive revival of the cultural remnants and peculiarities of the GDR. In some people this took the form of nostalgia; in others, it was expressed as a more defiant challenge of a Western-dominated view of life in the GDR.

The East German public's denial of interest in coming to terms with the past, which began to intensify in the mid-1990s, could not fail to cause concern. However, the reference to parallel developments in the post-war first decades cannot remain unqualified; there are differences between the situations in the two periods. History did not repeat itself. The freedoms won through the freely chosen decision to become part of the FRG were not the same for the East Germans as the democratic reconstruction after the lost war for the West Germans. This difference was of great importance with respect to confronting and coming to terms with history in these societies.

It would have been possible to confront the East German past and work through it successfully had the attempt been made in a climate promoting respect for differences in experiences and political contexts. The approaches developed for that purpose, particularly by independent civic education organizations, were unable to win out against the mainstream of the media's treatment of the subject. Thus an unresolved problem remains in Eastern and Western Germany: that of creating a collective image of 1945–1990 history shared by both East and West. Recognising the interdependence of certain historical circumstances and developments is not just a question of fair treatment, it is also a necessity if those circumstances and developments are to become part of the collective memory, and if appropriate become elements of collective responsibility as well. If civic education seeks to make a contribution towards German unification, it can still take up this task. The tenet that one nation continued and continues to

exist beyond the division of Germany demanded and still demands that the country integrate the experiences of the separate histories of its people. This integration can succeed if civic education on historical topics finally begins to address the aspects of the mutual relativity of the separate developments in East and West and to assess the histories of Eastern and Western Germany from that perspective.

Past as future: paradoxes of the zeitgeist

Understanding the attempt at “constructing a political culture of democracy” to mean “the adoption of its rules, opportunities, impositions and basic values” which “... requires that typical biographies first be fully addressed while thinking back on the history of the communist system”(SFZ, 1998) fitted in with the zeitgeist and with the practices covered under the umbrella of the unification processes overall. Clearly, the descriptions of the two tasks, “adoption of rules” and “working through the history”, also flagged role assignments within the societal transformation process and civic education process. This is where the crux of the problem of East German post-communist transformation lay, though: the East Germans were assigned the role of subject only in working through their own history, when it came to democracy and shaping it in society they remained in the role of object.

This situation characterises the historical paradox associated with the process: the moment that the East Germans put their dictatorship, their past, behind them, the most important capital that they brought with them from the GDR, their democratic creative drive, was rendered practically valueless. The “adoption of rules” meant the collective renunciation on the part of the GDR population of both the right to shape their own society, and responsibility for that shaping. Claus Offe (1994) wrote that people were “divested of both the chance and the challenge to make their own contribution, morally ambitious or otherwise, toward shaping their own future”(p. 261). In Offe’s eyes, the situation of the ex-GDR’s population was simultaneously taking away their political voice and demanding too little of their morality.

A consideration of the public debates in the last decades reveals that when East Germany and the East Germans figure in them they do so predominantly in the context of the past. Apparently, thinking about the future and the East at the same time did not come naturally. Speaking of the modus of the unification, Jürgen Habermas (1991) once said it was a

case of the “future was perceived in the past tense”. He noted that everything recalled the situation in the 1950s: the “pictures from back then ... monopolise ... the imagination, whose agility would be needed, however, to overcome the problems of the future”. According to Habermas, the explanation for this borrowing of images from the past to guide this great political endeavour lies in the novelty of the change of systems. The images, as though by magic, cause the “taming of the fear of unknown risks”. Drawing a parallel with the early years of aviation when people first began to speak of travelling by “air-ship”, Habermas pointed out that one could now witness the “evocative recourse to the 1948 currency reform model the campaign spots for the Volkskammer [GDR-parliamentary] elections featuring Ludwig Erhard”.³ “The past as the future” was the concept for the societal reconstruction undertaken in the East.

Supporting this was the general conviction that the intended outcome of the political transformation was known. “No experiments!” went the message from the East. In an essay titled “The End of History?” that has become famous, the American Francis Fukuyama (1989) interpreted this development as the “total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives ... the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution”, as the “victory of economic and political liberalism”. Hence, the order of the day was to put into place that which had already been tried and proven effective; “back to the future” was the motto. “Return to Europe” was the programme of the East European civil movements. Only ten years after German unification, sociologist Heinz Bude (1999) noted: “1989 symbolised not the harbinger of something new, but the completion of something familiar.”

Replication not transformation, voids not learning processes

“Catch-up modernisation” was the scientific term for the process envisaged for the post-communist transformation. Political science and social science researchers interested in the transformation therefore focussed not on transformation’s intended outcome, which was known, but on the type and means of transformation. This meant that the level of scholarly interest was restricted with respect to the longer term. Over a five year period, several additional research programmes looking at social and political change in the East were funded. Political and social scientists were interested in identifying the means by which the behaviour of the East German citizens would adapt the existing institutions and how much time this would require. What means citizens might use to adapt the institu-

tions to their own behavioural possibilities and needs was not a question in anyone's mind.

Thus when considering the modus of the East German transformation, one can rightly read the “catch-up” in catch-up modernisation in the sense of “replicative” rather than “compensatory”. The transition was characterised by the rapid importation of Western institutions, which were put in place in a “top-down” fashion for purposes understood initially only by Western individuals and organizations. This stands in stark contrast to the “bottom up” institution building in the history of the Western democracies, in which the institutions themselves represented achievements wrung from feudal states by their populations (Offe, 1998). The fact that introduction of “Western standards” proceeded in practical terms according to a “non-Western” logic is one of the paradoxes of the post-communist change of systems. Here, modernisation – i.e. the *removal of the state* from sectors of society – occurred as a task *performed by the state*. It is true that democratisation of the post-war societies in the FRG and Austria was also undertaken with external guidance, but that democratisation was successful because it was accompanied by increasing social security and economic growth. Societies currently undergoing transformation must go through their democratisation process in an era shaped by profound economic crisis with high social costs – and in a phase in which the system of democratic institutions of the Western democracies itself can hardly be said to offer a model of unquestioned quality that they can simply adopt.

Thus the “tunnel at the end of the light” (Offe, 1998) was quite an apt image for a transformation process that began with high expectations but then led to a long road passing through a long stretch of dark terrain. Starting down such a road required faith that the road did indeed lead to the intended destination and that chances would be distributed fairly, as well as the belief on the part of the majority that the destination was in fact one that could be reached. Setting these prerequisites aside, this road, passing through shadowy terrain as it did, ultimately meant that we could begin to learn about our destination only once we were already en route. In other words, we would have to examine the predefined visions and open ourselves to opportunities to learn new things.

There has been no shortage of shifting visions or prognoses for *Aufbau Ost*, the rebuilding/development of the East, as the years have passed. One thing all those visions have shared is the idea of exploiting certain location-based advantages of Eastern Germany, and taking advantage of the modernisation advances, e.g. in the area of education, the health sector or with respect to regional sustainable development. This would require assess-

ing the country's own potentials in an open process, through trial and error. The alternative to passive adoption is a searching process, the decision to pursue independent developments. Development means experimentation and learning, however. Like any learning process, it can only take place when the results of experimentation flow back into institutions, policy strategies and other activities. Societal discourses are also a medium of learning. East Germany's fundamental problem though lay in the fact that adequate learning processes did not take place in most areas. Despite the historically unprecedented economic and society restructuring and the enterprise, at great expense to the German state and its citizens, there was no scientific and institutional commitment of a level appropriate to the scale of the problems. Wherever new things were tried out and experimentation took place, only temporary "transitional solutions" that did not lead to learning processes were involved. Relevant interest and public notice were lacking. In the absence of scientific analysis, new approaches tended to get bogged down.

In 1990 the sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf predicted the following timeframe for the political, economic and societal restructuring of the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe: it would take six months, he estimated, to introduce political democracy and establish the rule of law, six years to transition to a market economy and sixty years for civil society to develop (Dahrendorf, 1990). According to this prognosis, most of the countries have stayed pretty much on schedule. Democracy and the market economy may not be perfectly well developed, but they are stable accepted by their populations in most of the countries in question and. This applies to the countries of Eastern Central Europe, which are already members of the European Union. Initially, these countries had to struggle with a period featuring sharp economic declines that lasted longer than that experienced by East Germany. By the mid-1990s though, i.e. after the six years of Dahrendorf's prediction, these countries were, for the most part, enjoying economic growth rates higher than those in Western Europe (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2000, p. 65).

East Germany was a special case, however, right from the start. Integrated politically within the Federal Republic of Germany, financially and socially secured, its situation was privileged beyond compare. The economic catch-up phase – characterised by growth rates higher than those in the West – got off to an earlier and more powerful start. However, in its sixth year it came to an end. This timeframe for East German redevelopment was adjusted as a result. On the tenth anniversary of German unification, there was talk of having reached the "half-way point". Later, peo-

ple began to speak in terms of a multi-generational task. This tied in with the thirty years (up until 2019) within which “differences caused by the division” of Germany should be equalised according to the rhetoric of “Solidarity Pact II”.⁴ In political terms, that will be the end of it, in practical terms, those gaps that still remain will have to be accepted and – as Dahrendorf predicted and estimated as requiring 60 years – coming to terms with that will become a task of civil society.

The new, realistic timeframe means that we should be thinking ahead towards the conditions of a society of the next generation, be focussing our attention on a common new goal and towards a shore that we much use a variety of means to reach. If we are willing to do this, our commitment to it must have consequences for many spheres, including civic education. In a democracy, political responses to times of structural change can be effected only with the consent and participation of the citizens.

A new agenda for civic education?

The onset of a new era, political upheaval or systemic crisis calls into question the political knowledge established in the past. All of the classic political theories were devised almost reflexively in response to experiences of era-defining crises and disorder. Only now are the full scope of the changes and the drama of the international, economic and environmental developments on display – and thus also the problems that have to be solved. The delay in the onset of awareness of this situation is connected to the fact that the systemic crisis and the change of systems of 1989/90 was of immediate significance only for the East German part of German society and the East European societies. However, the cessation of formative antagonisms, system alternatives such as “democracy vs. dictatorship”, “socialism vs. capitalism”, does affect the West as well. The disappearance of these antagonisms and of concepts of the enemy with organizing effects raised questions of legitimisation in the West as well. Initially these involved those institutions principally involved in the East-West conflict, though they also concerned anti-communism as a “cornerstone of the Western democratic ethos” (Avineri, 1993, p. 10). The xenophobic attacks which began to occur in Eastern Germany in the second half of the 90s and the civil wars in former Yugoslavia were seen as relics of the communist past, i.e. phenomena of societal transition or of the geographic periphery. That they would have repercussions for the situation throughout the country, or throughout Europe, was something not initially understood.

What does this mean for the future of the Western democracies? What antagonisms have arisen in their place to organize the political camps? What roles do the newly forming separatist and nationalist movements play? How are historical narratives, cultures of memory and politics of history changing in this situation?

Civic education that addresses these issues is addressing the questions of the common European future. Increasingly, civic education will confront questions touching on the coexistence of people from different cultures at the local and state level. That is one of Europe's themes and Europe is actually the main subject of the political restructuring of this decade.

"Germany's unification is taking place in a unified Europe." That was the vision of the generation that lived through the division of Germany and thought ahead to a time beyond it. It turned out to be a true vision, and will hopefully remain one – including with respect to the achievement of unity. For this reason, if no other, ever more ambitious learning objectives must be set, and we must start by grasping the fact that a new learning process is needed, along with the funds and organizations that entails.

The ability to integrate social and ethnic minorities is a touchstone for the democratic culture of our society. Dislike or even hatred of foreigners threatens not only the internal peace, but also the democratic order, its fundamental openness and ability to develop in a community of nations. This is a requirement for the success of the notion of a united Europe, the main subject of the political restructuring of this decade. For the next decade and well beyond it, the problems of reshaping our environmentally harmful civilisation will probably drive us to make far-reaching changes in our culture and society.

Translated from the German by Alison Borrowman.

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Notes

- 1 This refers to *freiheitlich demokratische Grundordnung* (free democratic basic order), a term specific to German constitutional law.
- 2 Study Commission (*Enquete-Kommission*) for The History and the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in Germany, 1992–1994; Study Commission for the Overcoming of the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in the Process of German Unity, 1995–1998.
- 3 Ludwig Erhard oversaw the post-war economic reforms as the FRG's Minister for Economic Affairs (1949–63); he subsequently served as Prime Minister (1963–66). He died in 1977, thirteen years before he appeared (with his dachshund) in the campaign spots.
- 4 The second of two arrangements negotiated between the federal government and the East German *Länder* under which Eastern Germany receives special funding from the federal government.

Civic education in schools in the light of Poland's integration in the European Union

The largest expansion in the history of the European Union took place on May 1, 2004, with the accession of ten new member states. For all the candidate countries, accession involved fulfilling basic requirements and standards already in force in the EU-15 states. In Poland's case, the integration process had begun considerably earlier, shortly after the country regained its independence in 1989, as the result of a peaceful process that ended with the Roundtable Talks and the surrender of control by the communist authorities after 45 years in power. The EEC-Poland (European Economic Community) agreement on trade and commercial and economic cooperation was signed in September 1989, followed, two years later, by the Europe Agreement (association agreement). The preamble of the latter clearly states that "... the final objective of Poland is to become a member of the Community and that this association, in the view of the Parties, will help to achieve this objective ...". Poland submitted an application for EU membership in April 1994, and the first talks regarding accession got underway in Brussels in May 1998. Those were not easy years, because restructuring the centralised economy into a market economy and the work building the foundations for civil society were both happening at once. This period also saw the beginning of the most difficult process, and one that is still ongoing: the process of creating a new awareness among the Polish population about what life in a democratic state entails. To use a simple analogy, the occurrences of the past 20 years could be described as one enormous construction site.

Many ruins stand on the site where the work is being done, several construction teams are involved, coordination of the various jobs is lacking at times, and the division of labour is inadequate. Sometimes only after a team has built a foundation does someone notice that no water or sewage lines were laid, there is no connection to the power supply, etc. All of this is taking place in the presence of the area's inhabitants, who suggest/urge/

plead for the dismissal of the incompetent workers. Annoyed that the process is taking so long, they point to the orderly and stable reality of other societies, societies integrated in an organized system, which have enjoyed a stable lifestyle for many years. Polish society has carried out changes on a grand scale in the last twenty years (changes which, in Western Europe, were put in place over the course of 60 years during the post-war period). We have, by and large, adapted our government, legal and economic institutions to meet the requirements of the *acquis communautaire* of the former EU-15. That which remains of the process is still underway. There remains much for us to do on our path of development. Those who look back, though, over the path already travelled in the course of Poland's integration into the EU should bear in mind that the education of civil society was underway in the same period, and that it started in 1989.

Democratisation of the educational sphere

When considering this subject, one must keep in mind that it is our teachers, second only to parents, who raise and teach our children, who shape their perceptions, attitudes and knowledge. The communist authorities were perfectly aware of this too, and took care to ensure that teachers were loyal to the system. Until 1989, the teachers' union, which was subordinate to the Communist Party, and the similarly loyal scouting organization, which was controlled by state authorities, represented the only opportunities for civic development. Therefore, after the revolution, steps were taken to remedy the situation. Thanks to the efforts of the parliament and government, legal possibilities for the democratisation of life in the educational sphere were created. The Education System Act of 1991 became the foundation of the democratisation of school life. This legislation provided for the organization of an education system comparable with those of west European countries. Its most important provisions, designed to ensure a break with the previous decades, are as follows:

- the possibility for non-public schools to be established and run by bodies other than the state;
- the definition of competences, areas of responsibility and duties of school bodies; the transfer of responsibility for self governance to the majority of the teachers employed at an educational institution (pedagogical council); the transfer of responsibility for self governance to the social bodies in the education system: the education council (at the national and *voivodship* [provincial] level), the school council (parents,

teacher and student council), and the student council (majority of pupils at a given school); the definition of competences and areas of responsibility of superintendents, school directors and teachers;

- the acceptance on school premises of social organizations (with the exception of political parties), including NGOs (non-governmental organizations), whose educational aims and activities constitute an enrichment of the social and educational offerings of the state;
- selection of candidates for the post of education superintendent (*kurator*: government officials at the *voivodship* level who oversee educational institutions) via job advertisement and selection procedure; choice of the school director via job advertisement and selection procedure (the selection panel is composed of equal numbers of representatives of the administering body, the educational inspection authority, teachers, school parents and the unions of the educational facility);
- the definition of rules governing the adoption of school-internal legislation.

The statute cited is still in force in Poland, though now with several amendments. It permits the introduction of lower-level executive orders by the Minister of National Education. On the basis of my professional activities in the various contexts of the education system over the last 23 years, I can state unequivocally that the opportunity for the creation of a civil school society provided by the legislative system is not being fully taken advantage of. I will cite only a few of the many reasons for this here:

- Teacher training:

Lack of assessment of the suitability of candidates for the teaching profession. No such assessment is carried out, either in the secondary schools (the system of career advising in Poland is still in its infancy) or at the teacher training institutions during the programme or upon completion thereof. While teachers in training do complete over a dozen hours of practical training in schools, the arrangement of these leaves much to be desired. Ultimately, no small share of those who complete their teacher training are not really well-suited by disposition to the teaching profession (e.g. activity-level, efficiency, enthusiasm, desire to develop themselves further, lifelong learning, the desire to learn new things, deriving satisfaction from supporting the development of others, etc.).

The teacher training institutions prepare future teachers only to a small extent for their role in promoting the social and emotional development of their students. Those who receive degrees are well trained or very well trained in their specific subjects – in biology, geography, mathematics, literature and linguistics. Their weaknesses lie in the lack of the

ability to turn a class into a team, to help students overcome personal or family problems, to work with other people work in the educational sphere, and, not infrequently, to cooperate with other school employees.

- Extreme attitudes on the part of parents:
The attitude of entitlement reflected in the following statement: “If my child attends school, then it should be raised and taught there and all I have to do is provide the funds to support it”. In this way, parents ‘free’ themselves of their parenting duties.
The passive attitude that limits contact with the school to obligatory parent meetings or parent-teacher talks and causes parents to omit any other form of engagement with school life. This attitude undoubtedly results from the mentality of a generation of parents whose attitudes were shaped during the communist period, in which private engagement in the school sphere was unwelcome.
- Absence of a model for and a tradition of the organization of societal life and engagement.

Despite the availability of numerous opportunities for students to gather experience and develop their abilities by participating in student councils in all types of schools, only a small number of students take advantage of such options. The student council at each school has an advisor who is a teacher from that school. Not infrequently, the low level of school council activity can be traced to a lack of motivational ability on the part of the advisor. The school council’s activities are also impeded in some cases by narrow restrictions in the mind of the advising teacher concerning their area of activities. However, a minor improvement in this area did appear in conjunction with the difficult job market situation facing school-leavers in the 1998–2004 period. Employers prefer to hire young people who are active in their schools, get involved and seek out ways to develop themselves and gain experience beyond the requirements of formal education. This tendency resulted in increasing numbers of students voluntarily becoming active in a range of social organizations. These points are confirmed in OECD studies of student engagement in school. The OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) study studied “attitudes” and “behaviours” of Polish students (OECD, 2003). “Attitudes” relate to the sense of belonging at school, while “behaviours” relate to school attendance rates. The study revealed that over forty percent of Polish students felt a low sense of belonging in their school and around thirty percent had only a very low school attendance rate. The figures for Poland are higher than those for other countries (particularly within OECD territory).

Fears about integration in the European Union of the educational sphere

The integration processes taken up and continued by successive governments (irrespective of political orientation) did not transfer to awareness of and knowledge about integration in the educational sphere. It was only the start of the talks in 1998 and their announcement in the media that resulted in a fairly widespread recognition on the part of teachers that they were not preparing their students for life in a united Europe. "Education and training" was one of the subjects at the talks. At the time of the talks, the government and its representatives carried out informational and promotional activities focussing on Poland's membership in the EU. The support took the form of calls for funding proposals – including from NGOs – to carry out projects aimed at popularising European issues in the educational sphere. We ran activities of this kind with teachers for several years and thus had the opportunity to become familiar with both their fears and hopes regarding Poland's accession to the EU (this was in the period before the referendum, whose outcome was difficult to predict). Below are some of the fears harboured by Polish teachers in the areas of society, culture and education:

- fear of the imposition of educational methods and content, particularly in the fields of history and literature;
- fear of the loss of national identity by the young generation, rollback of national culture;
- fear of society's absorption of the things 'coming' from the EU 15 states – another culture, customs, holidays that differ from the traditional Polish model; fear of the abandonment of Poland's own traditions,
- fear of an even more rapid pace of change and intoxication by mass-culture;
- fear about the lack of preparation and lack of readiness of society for the coming changes.

Other fears mentioned included fears for personal safety (increase in criminality), of the development of companies dominated by foreign capital, that foreigners would fill up executive and mid-level management positions, that Poland would be marginalised vis-à-vis the most powerful EU countries, that political relations with the East would deteriorate and that Poland would see an influx of immigrants and asylum seekers. These fears were set off against hopes and an awareness of the opportunities that Poland's accession into Community structures would create. Not infrequently, discussions on the topic were punctuated by the state-

ment equating a decision not to join with a failure to take advantage of a historic opportunity. It should be emphasised that teachers at most schools did engage in EU-themed educational activities in the period before the referendum. For the most part, these were extra-curricular activities giving students an opportunity to learn how the EU states function within the framework of the Community, and about their culture and traditions. This contributed to broadening the students' knowledge base and getting them excited about membership. These young people then communicated the EU-related content to their own families. Involvement of school parents was most frequently in the context of various types of informational and promotional projects in pre-schools and primary schools.

The teachers' work undoubtedly influenced the positive outcome of the referendum. For the greater share of Polish society, the years from 2000 to 2004 were scarred by the difficult consequences of the transformation of the societal system. The unemployment rate passed the 20% mark, reaching as high as 90% in some regions (those home to the state-run farms that went bankrupt). The consequences of growing up, child rearing and life under the communist welfare state proved particularly drastic. Confusion/helplessness, a lack of ability – to find one's way in the new situation, to resolve problems – turning to alcohol and/or drugs to escape the new reality: these led to the marginalisation of persons for whom the change was too great a challenge.

International cooperation

Lack of language skills constituted the main barrier to contact between Polish educational institutions and their equivalents in the EU-15 countries. Russian continued to be the first foreign language taught in primary schools as late as the mid-1990s. Although opportunities to learn a western European language did exist, lack of staff was a perennial problem. This shortage made it nearly impossible to guarantee a student continuity in foreign language offerings at the various stages of schooling. For instance, a student might develop basic German language skills for a year or two in primary school, only to find him- or herself learning Spanish or Italian in secondary school, because the school was able to find and hire a teacher only for those languages. Low salaries were one factor responsible for the lack of staff at schools. Someone with the choice of working in a school or in a private company chose the latter option, since earnings there were three to four times higher. The shortage of staff and lack of fund-

ing took a toll on the efficiency of teaching: class sizes were frequently as high as 30 students. Teachers who completed their training before 1989 (with the exception of teachers who taught western languages) had practically no chance of making themselves understood in EU countries. In the People's Republic of Poland, only members of a small group of high-level staff, officials from school inspectorates and individuals from teacher training institutions, took part in study visits to the EU-15 countries, learning about the education systems and the solutions developed there and starting longer-term partnerships. In the 1990s, the European Commission opened participation in programmes such Youth (now Youth for Europe) and Leonardo da Vinci to the associated states, including Poland. Due to many barriers, including linguistic barriers, these projects did not become a standard element at the level of the educational institutions, schools and student exchanges. At an estimate, no more than 5–10% of students in the local environments took part in such programmes prior to the EU expansion. Every teacher, student and parent who has ever taken part in an international project is aware of the enrichment, the opportunities for development and education, that such an experience brings with it. Those few days spent with people of the same age, doing work together, exchanging thoughts, getting to know one another and coming to decisions as a group, are more effective than an entire school year of instruction on the topic of democracy or tolerance, for example. The experience promotes the acquisition of all kinds of abilities.

Changes in the education system

The Polish population did not shine in comparison to the citizens of western states according to the results of an OECD study on adult literacy conducted in the mid 1990s (OECD, 1995). The explanation for this is undoubtedly to be found in the differences among the conditions of life in these societies in the last decades. Polish students possessed great theoretical knowledge but had difficulty applying it to solve problems. A few years after the study, the Polish government began introducing reforms to the education system. One of their basic principles is shaping of abilities and attitudes, with the explicit stipulation that limits to be placed on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. Instead, students are now supposed to learn system-based analysis and the observation of behaviour. Naturally, the people principally involved in and responsible for introducing these are the teachers. As always in such situations, the educational sphere spreads

out over a broad spectrum ranging from the enthusiastic to the sceptical. Attitudes toward the process are still divided today, although it has been underway now for ten years. The basic principle underlying the reform is that young people should be prepared for life as adults. Right from the start, the reformed Polish education system was based on the knowledge base in the field of education of the European Community. With visible results: studies have shown that Polish students are catching up with their peers in other countries. Towards the end of the 1990s, over 2,500 'educators' were trained under the 'New School' programme on an initiative from the Ministry of National Education. These 'educators' are teachers active in their profession who apply their abilities in daily practice and support the professional development of their colleagues. The development of a system to improve the qualifications of education professionals can be assessed as satisfactory. A network of public and non-public professional development facilities for teachers and also post-graduate degree courses offer anyone who is interested ample opportunity to take part in whatever form of further training they wish. The problem appears to lie on the side of the target group: some teachers consistently ignore the opportunity to engage in professional development. However, the state took action to ensure participation in continuing professional training a few years ago by introducing a hierarchical system of qualification levels. A teacher's position in this hierarchy now influences his or her professional title and income. The position itself is determined by a combination of factors, including the initial training and professional development, engagement in the work, activities in the educational sphere, achievements in the teacher's work with students, and others. Through various measures, an increase in teacher activity was attained. A substantial number of research projects are currently working with schools and collaborating with other types of educational institutions, colleges and universities and research institutes. General use of the Internet is becoming more widespread, although many teachers continue to have trouble operating PCs. A few years ago the reasons for this would have lain in the high cost of computers relative to teacher income. However, due to the bulk purchase of computers, falling prices and the continual improvement of Internet access, what difficulties remain must be explained by psychological causes – fears and an unwillingness to acquire a new skill.

The democratisation of life in Poland after 1989, new legal regulations and market mechanisms allowed the market for school textbooks and educational materials to be 'liberated' from the monopoly of the state and its agents. After a few years of development in this area, at least two to three textbooks by different authors from different publishing houses for each

subject are available on the market. These are often supplemented by exercise books, atlases and games. The teacher who is scheduled to teach a given subject after the summer holiday chooses the textbook for the students to use. In most cases, the publishing houses offer a series of textbooks for successive years of instruction in a given subject. This is conducive to continuity and permits the logical structuring of educational content. Educational projects carried out by NGOs and institutions of advanced teacher training are also developing a range of educational materials – films, brochures, books and entire education packages. These are given to the teachers and students who take part in the projects, in many cases at no cost. In addition, many private sector companies offer educational aides. Their offerings are easy to access online or in catalogues and are posted directly to the school delivered by a sales representative.

Thanks to improved language skills and to general activity levels and the desire to learn about the world, make contacts and overcome inhibitions, schools are now involved in far more international partnerships than they were a few years ago, both with partners in west European countries, and with partners in eastern Europe and even Asia. The quality of the projects carried out by these partnerships is continually improving. Community policy is partially responsible for making these projects possible. EU membership has ushered in a growing interest in the lives and problems of people on other continents, e.g. in Africa. The free movement of travellers, the appearance of immigrants in the country, travel by Polish people abroad, encounters with other realities, a broader perspective – all of this has affected the way people from other cultures or members of other religions are perceived. This too is a dimension of civic education. Moreover, the understanding of civic education in the minds of teachers and students has also changed. While at the start of the democratisation process, the few who gave it any thought at all associated civic education with the performance of public functions, now Poland's citizens understand to a far greater extent that civic education is part of the life of every citizen of a democratic state. Civic education is a tool designed to help young people prepare for their lives as adults. In Poland we need to further develop and strengthen our NGO sector, which can contribute to the further democratisation of life. Intensifying cooperation between NGOs and schools can lead to the positive development of both. The use of NGO-school partnerships as an approach for coping with local problems has taken place only on a small scale so far. One problem of recent years is corruption in the country and the tacit acceptance of this phenomenon on the part of the vast majority of society. Peer-to-peer violence is spreading among young

people, particularly in grammar schools [*gimnazja*]. We are also seeing acts of aggression aimed at teachers. Daily occurrences are dictating the subject matter. EU integration and the development of civil education still have a long way to go. We need an expansion of international cooperation among schools, teacher training institutions and organizations supporting the education system. We can find better solutions to problems we face together, we can learn together, inspire one another, and build democracy and community together.

Translated from the German by Alison Borrowman.

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From boom to consolidation: directions in the development of civil society in East Central Europe

Introduction

The perception that the post-socialist countries of East Central Europe have developed structurally weak civil societies that are still undergoing a process of transformation appears quite plausible based on the many recent studies on political culture and civil society in the region. Following an initial period of euphoria just before and after the political changes of 1989/90, civic engagement in voluntary associations of all types declined. Engagement in associations, church organizations, environmental organizations, social or political movements, political parties and trade unions is slowly declining, or stagnating at a level considerably below that of Western Europe's 'old' democracies. This applies in many countries in East Central Europe, including the eight East Central European countries that joined the European Union in May 2004: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. However, the prospect of integration with the West proved to serve as a stabilising anchor for democratisation, in the meaning used by Christiane Frantz (2000), and these countries did establish liberal-democratic systems of government, though the consolidation process is far from complete in their post-socialist societies (Ismayr, 2004). This article depicts the directions of civil society development in East Central Europe in broad brush strokes in order to then turn to a discussion of the causes of the structural characteristics specific to post-socialist civil societies.

Participation in post-socialist civil societies

The endeavour to tie the population into organizations aligned with state socialism [*Vorfeldorganisationen*] was typical for the authoritarian regimes of East Central Europe. Before the ‘Velvet Revolution’ of 1989/90, all of these countries had numerous organizations of this kind, membership of which was more or less compulsory. The memberships of these organizations comprised a large share of the socialist population; the organizations themselves ranged from youth leagues and trade unions, to cultural organizations, on to clubs for nature lovers and stamp collectors. Jan Kubik (2000, p. 184ff.) points out that formal organization density in socialist societies was considerably higher – albeit involuntarily so – than under any other type of political regime. For the same reason, Bernhard Weßels characterises post-socialist societies as “over-organized”, above all in the area of membership of trade unions and the socialist parties, i.e. in the organizations that the socialist regime used as “central institutions of top-down mobilisation” (Weßels, 2004, p. 177).

It would certainly not be accurate to call the organizations associated with authoritarian regimes ‘civil society associations’ in the liberal-democratic sense: they were dependent on the regimes, they were affiliated, ideologically at least, with socialism, and they carried out acts of repression against people who refused to become members. Nevertheless, these organizations did fulfil functions in socialist societies that are, at least in some respects, very similar to those of civil society associations in liberal democratic societies. They acted as agencies of socialisation, by bringing people together. They formed a recruitment pool for political posts, and they provided services to their members and others (Kubik, 2000, p. 185). Zdenka Mansfeldová et al. (2004, p. 101) refer to these organizations as highly organized, “pseudo” civil society organizations for this reason.

In the early 1990s, with the socialist regimes collapsing and new democratically elected governments allowing freedom of association and freedom to form unions, the state-socialist aligned organizations, with their broad membership bases, were important nexus points for the newly forming civil societies. Certainly, many new organizations were founded after 1990, but it is also true that many of the former socialist-aligned organizations gave rise to reformed successor organizations, which cut their ties to the state and continued their work as newly independent organizations. Even today, despite sustained shrinkage, as a group they account for a major share of the population’s membership affiliations (Mansfeldová et al. 2004, p. 101ff.).

Overall, figures for the voluntary sector in the new EU member countries have reflected a low organizational density since the fall of communism. A project run by the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) entitled “Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe”¹ confirms that the ties between post-socialist populations and voluntary associations have loosened considerably within the last decade. However, this loosening of ties need not necessarily be seen as leading to a demise of civil society in the countries in question: it might, in fact, be better seen as indicating a process of normalisation. A closer look at the organizational ties in civil society reveals that between 1990 and 2001, political parties and the trade unions accounted primarily for the decrease in membership affiliations. In other words, the decrease is associated with organizations that could be described as inherited from the socialist regime (Weßels, 2004, p. 177f.). As table 1 shows, if we leave trade union and political party membership out of the mix, membership density actually rose slightly in some of the countries.

Table 1: Organization density of post-socialist societies, 1990/1991 and 2000/2001 (in percent)

	Organization density, all organizations		Organization density without unions or parties		Change (1990–2000)
	1990/1991	2000/2001	1990/1991	2000/2001	All
Czech Rep.*	76.1	51.9	60.1	47.4	-24.3
Slovakia*	77.2	57.9	60.2	49.6	-19.3
Hungary	49.3	33.8	20.4	27.2	-15.5
Poland	35.4	18.5	17.6	13.7	-16.9
Lithuania	42.8	27.2	21.2	25.3	-15.7
Latvia	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
Estonia	68.4	39.3	30.4	37.6	-29.1
Slovenia	63.1	61.5	47.8	52	-1.6

Source: *Adapted from Weßels* (2004, p. 178).

Data source: PCP Surveys I and II (Cooperation project ‘The Post Communist Publics’ of the WZB and others).

* Entries for 1990/1991 show data for the Czech and Slovakian sections of the CSFR.

Nonetheless, present-day civil societies in the post-socialist states are relatively weak in structural terms. This is linked to the fact that, in most of the countries, the average number of membership affiliations per citizen dropped in parallel with the numbers of members in voluntary asso-

ciations. About one in two citizens in the new EU member states are no longer a member of any voluntary association (Howard, 2003). The number of people who are members of more than one organization has also decreased considerably.

As several surveys in the civil society sector in East Central Europe have shown, (e.g. Pickel & Jacobs, 2001; Ultram & Plasser, 2003), the association sector in this region has been undergoing a far-reaching transformation in recent years. There is no indication that this process is complete: internal restructuring of the civil society sector is likely to continue.

Civic engagement in East Central Europe

Along with organization density, engagement is an important indicator for the assessment of civil society. It stands to reason that civil societies are directly dependent on their citizens' political and social participation. A civil society that underpins a country's democracy is inconceivable in the absence of active engagement on the part of its citizens.

Engagement and participation can manifest themselves in a variety of ways: they can take private or public, institutionalised or non-institutionalised forms (Weßels, 2004, p. 189). One form of institutionalised political participation, for example, is participation by the citizenry in elections. In general, election participation is considerably lower throughout East Central Europe than it is in the West European countries (Neller & van Deth, 2006).

Participation is not expressed in election turnouts alone, however. Thus the study 'Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe' developed other indicators with which to investigate post-socialist societies. Some of these indicators relate to private forms (reading newspapers, discussing politics, trying to persuade friends to adopt one's own views); some to public (non-institutionalised) forms (working with people in the community on political issues, attending a political meeting or rally, contacting politicians, working for a political party). The picture the survey results present of the post-socialist states is a quite homogenous one: a solid 70% of respondents assessed themselves as being more or less interested in politics, meaning they take part in political discussions with people they know and keep themselves informed about political processes on a regular basis (Weßels, 2004, p. 191). Far less widespread are non-institutionalised forms of political engagement. In 2001 only a very small portion of the population reported attending political meetings or rallies. While in

1989/90 the populations of most of the socialist transformation states provided broad support to the opposition movement, public engagement there now is at a very low level. Particularly troubling in this respect is the fact that it is above all the 18–30 age group reporting fairly low levels of civic engagement. The results of the second wave of the European Social Surveys (ESS) conducted in 2004² confirm this finding: the levels of all forms of political participation in East Central Europe are distinctly lower than those in the West European countries (Neller & van Deth, 2006, p. 32ff.).

This also applies to support for the engagement of others in the form of donations or the provision of financial resources, e.g. establishing a foundation. The data available on philanthropy are not such as would permit comparisons beyond a very limited extent. In this area again, though, willingness to give is less pronounced in post-socialist populations compared to that in established democracies (Priller & Sommerfeld, 2005). This holds true whether one looks at absolute amounts of donations or at donations as a share of income. In summary, unlike in Western countries, citizen participation is at a low level in post-socialist countries, whether measured in the form of meeting attendance, volunteer work or the giving of donations. Where do the causes of this phenomenon lie?

Structural characteristics specific to post-socialist civil societies

In his study on the structural characteristics specific to post-socialist countries, Marc Howard (2003) concludes that a whole set of factors can be put forth to explain this pattern of civil society development in East Central Europe. The comparatively low level of political participation and the decreasing membership of voluntary associations can, he believes, be characterised as the result of the persistence of family and friendship networks. Networks of this kind, Howard notes, played a far more important role for the individual in socialist daily life than was the case in democratic societies, in which the sphere of associations was not restricted. Since any nascent pluralism was stamped out at the first sign of its appearance, the vast majority of the population adopted a passive, neutral position vis-à-vis the regime and withdrew into the private sphere, which was free for the most part from interference by the regime (Mansfeldová & Szabó, 2000, p. 97). There, free speech was possible; there, people were willing to engage.

The great importance of family and friendship networks for people in socialist societies also rested on their usefulness in daily economic life.

In recent years, these private structures have largely proven to be persistent. On the basis of in-depth interviews conducted in Russia and East Germany, Howard (2003) has shown that friendship networks, though they did loosen during the transformation process, continue to be a central point of reference in daily life, whereas experiencing community in free associations, with what are initially complete strangers, plays a very minor role. This also explains the low level of social trust in organizations in post-socialist societies. A large proportion of post-socialist society cannot envisage any advantage in membership of a voluntary association. That would entail bowing to statutes and the decisions of the majority, paying membership fees and cooperating with people whose company they might not even value. In brief: no advantages over social ties are ascribed to voluntary associations. It seems plausible that these findings could be projected onto the other new EU member countries.

The second explanation for the low level of participation in voluntary associations is the high degree of mistrust of any kind of formal organization, even one of a voluntary nature. This is also a legacy from the socialist past, during which most people were involved in many organizations – ranging from trade unions to youth clubs to women's groups. Membership of these organizations was often less than voluntary however. In many cases it ensured personal advantages; career opportunities were often associated with membership of state-socialist aligned organizations. As a result, many citizens saw themselves as being compelled to be members of these organizations. Only in the case of less political associations, such as hobby- or leisure-oriented clubs, was membership genuinely voluntary, but even these organizations were subject to state control (Mansfeldová et al., 2004).

It is not surprising, therefore, that leisure-oriented associations are by far the more popular choices in post-socialist societies, while political and social organizations are met with suspicion. Observers have found that even new voluntary associations are frequently equated with the communist mass organizations. Thus, overall, voluntary associations are associated with a relatively low level of legitimacy in the eyes of the post-socialist population. Moreover, the public's initial mistrust has been reinforced by a series of corruption scandals involving the representatives of voluntary associations (Salamon & Anheier, 1999, p. 32). Lack of transparency in the connections between socialist successor organizations and state 'welfare production' is another factor further reinforcing mistrust (Frič, 2001, p. 16). Only a few voluntary associations enjoy a high level of trust; others still have quite a way to go before gaining the acceptance of the population. Meanwhile, the task of integrating into powerful umbrella organizations

poses another problem for the civil society organizations themselves. In general, one can detect a resistance vis-à-vis umbrella organizations, which are frequently seen as curtailing independence and rejected for that reason.

The decreasing level of trust that post-socialist societies place in political institutions is another factor which explains the structural characteristics specific to post-socialist civil societies. This tendency is due in part to the general mistrust of the state, which in socialism was associated with largely negative experiences (Howard, 2003, p. 43). The decreasing level of trust in the state is also closely linked with disappointment in government services. Albert Hirschman (1982), in his groundbreaking study *Engagement und Enttäuschung* [Engagement and Disappointment], notes that civil society engagement is tied to economic development. Hirschman ascertained that the individual's disappointment over economic development leads to diminishing engagement for the community. Surveys on political culture in East Central Europe, including the 'Eurobarometer'³, have shown that satisfaction with policy results has fallen considerably in nearly all of the countries under discussion. In view of the economic development of these countries, this is only understandable up to a point. Unemployment has stabilised at a high level, and the countries experienced economic crisis in the second half of the 1990s. On the whole, though, the transformation of the economic system in the new European Union (EU) member states was fairly successful in comparison to other states undergoing transformation. Despite this, surveys show that the degree of disappointment in political and economic developments is high. The very high level of the expectations held in post-socialist societies may explain this. Large sections of the socialist population euphorically welcomed the notion of a liberal-democratic system of government, associating with it a guarantee of economic success. At the same time, citizens of post-socialist societies place high demands on the state, particularly in the area of welfare services (Freise & Zimmer, 2004). Since the state is not capable of satisfying these demands, it is not surprising to see a high level of disappointment in the system, and with it decreasing civil society engagement.

The low level of civil engagement relative to Western Europe can also be described as a legitimacy deficit associated with civil society organizations and activities. This legitimacy deficit is expressed in many areas – though not to the same extent in all the new EU countries – including in the relationship between the state and civil society actors (Frič, 2004). As previously stated, civil society opposition reached a peak in all of the countries in 1989/90. As soon as the new constitutions came into force, and with them the guarantee of the rights of association, the civil society sector

experienced a genuine boom in associations. At first, new political elites, who themselves were drawn to no small extent from opposition groups, viewed these developments with benevolence (Glenn, 2001). However, this early benevolence on the part of state institutions waned as the elected constitutional bodies grappled with the difficult tasks of economic and social restructuring (Frič, 2004, p.218). The euphoria associated with the organization boom of the first years lessened considerably, and many citizens began to evince an increasing indifference to public problems and retreated once again to the private sphere (Mansfeldová & Szabó, 2000, p.105). Meanwhile, the government began to take up a relatively “chilly, reserved attitude” (Frič, 2004, p.223) toward the sector and its organizations. This occurred against the backdrop of an increasing tendency to question the legitimacy of civil society organizations, whose influence, it was thought, should be curtailed due to their lack of an electoral mandate. Moreover, a distinct statism has remained in many post-socialist ministerial bureaucracies, making them slow to absorb new kinds of governance concepts. Thus the democratic institutionalisation and consolidation that started in the mid-1990s ushered in a problematic period for civil society. This was a period that contemporaries described as a “phase of uncertainty” (Frič, 2004). Be that as it may, one must acknowledge that very innovative fiscal legislation providing for sustainable financing for the civil society sector was developed in some new member states (Bullian, 2004).

Nonetheless, in principal one can identify two problem levels that can be used to describe the state vs. civil society relationship in the post-socialist transformation process. The new political elites faced a difficult challenge: to make civil society engagement possible in the first place by providing an adequate legislative framework, while at the same time not allowing a strong civil society to cast doubt on the legitimacy of democratically elected institutions. Those same political elites were faced with the task of restructuring civil society cooperation in the performance of government functions, a task which was rendered particularly urgent and important through the reform of the extensive socialist-style welfare state. The outcomes make it evident that the countries of East Central Europe took quite different approaches to transferring services to non-profit organizations (Freise & Zimmer, 2004). Quite another picture is presented with respect to the involvement of civil society organizations in policy formulation. Many governments and legislatures have a fairly negative attitude toward such involvement. This can be explained to no small degree by the lack of or inadequacy of umbrella organization structures for civil society associations in these countries, which is typical of post-authoritarian states (Frič,

2004). While joint action against the old regime took priority in the early days, once the system had successfully be changed, a fundamental dilemma of pluralism became obvious: while the coexistence of a variety of interests, views and lifestyles is constitutive for liberal democracies, a civil society must not grow too diffuse if it wants to influence policy (Lauth, 1999). In the countries of East Central Europe, this difficult balancing act has not yet been completely achieved.

Outlook

Looking back, one can confirm neither the optimistic expectations of Guillermo O'Donnell und Philippe Schmitter (1986, p. 49), who predicted explosive growth in civil society engagement by the population in the period after the collapse of the socialist systems in East Central Europe, nor the very pessimistic scenario described by Ralf Dahrendorf (1990), who saw the post-socialist societies as so damaged that it would take three generations before democracy-supporting civil society could be re-established there.

Nonetheless, the comparatively weak civil societies must be characterised as troubling with respect to the further democratic development of East Central Europe and the European Union: after all, it is voluntary associations, as the institutionalised heart of civil society, which are commonly thought to present the opportunity for citizens to practice democratic behaviour, to recruit and socialise political elites, to offer a forum for extra-parliamentary opposition and to generate social capital as Putnam (2000) defines it; it is voluntary associations that are thought to be a necessary prerequisite for vibrant democracies. Thus far, measures intended to promote civil society engagement have met with only moderate success at best (Freise, 2004). Thus, it is highly desirable that more attention be drawn to civil society's role as the key to a successful democratic consolidation. Initiatives such as the Council of Europe's Forum for the Future of Democracy⁴, set up in 2005, which collects and documents best-practice examples of national engagement policies, could make an important contribution to that end.

Translated from the German by Alison Borrowman.

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Notes

- 1 <https://www.wzb.eu/en/research/dynamics-of-political-systems/democracy-and-democratization/projects/the-consolidation-of-democracy-i>
- 2 <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>
- 3 See European Commission (2015).
- 4 www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Events/2005-democratie/

Civil society and the new media in the South Caucasus

Yevgenya Jenny Paturyan

Armenian civil society: it's not all about NGOs

Introduction

When discussing contemporary Armenian civil society, it is important to distinguish between two interconnected yet very distinct types of actors: the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the civic activists. Civic activism in Armenia is a relatively new phenomenon; it is distinct from the “NGO approach” in a number of ways. Civic activist groups maintain minimal levels of formal organization and explicitly reject foreign funding. Largely confined to Yerevan, consisting mostly of young educated people, the so-called “civic initiatives” have registered a number of successes since 2009 despite low numbers of participants. Civic activism seems to be the arena where civil society is able to overcome the post-communist syndrome of disengagement, but it remains to be seen if civic activism will gain momentum and engage more people.

This article discusses these two dimensions of Armenian civil society: the NGO sector and civic activism, describing the current situation and the main strengths and weaknesses of both. It first looks at the NGO sector in Armenia today, highlighting some of its achievements and main challenges. After that, civic activism, as the new component of the Armenian civil society, is described, focusing on how it is different from the NGO sector. In the conclusion some observations are offered as to how these two elements of Armenian civil society can (and sometimes do) complement each other.

The Armenian NGO sector

Since independence, Armenia has witnessed rapid growth of its NGO sector, but the exact numbers of truly functioning organizations have remained

elusive. As of June 2014, there were 3,981 officially registered NGOs. The most recent research estimates that most of these exist on paper only, with some 500 to 800 NGOs actually operating in the country (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014). Focusing on those NGOs that do operate, it is clear that the Armenian NGO sector has by now achieved a fairly good level of institutionalisation. Many organizations have overcome the “one-person show” problem, when their founding leaders dominate. Roughly two-thirds of actively functioning organizations have undergone leadership changes and, interestingly enough, are doing slightly better than those run by their old founding presidents in at least one aspect: they tend to attract more grants per year (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014). Most surveyed NGOs exhibit fairly well-developed organizational structures: they have staff, volunteers and basic decision-making bodies in place, as table 1 and table 2 demonstrate.

Table 1: “Does Your Organization Have ...” (yes answers)

	N	%
President	182	97
Board	146	78
General assembly	137	73
Accountant/financial manager/cashier	129	69
Working groups	114	61
Secretary	82	44
Executive director	68	36

Source: *TCPA ASCN Organizational Survey of NGOs.*

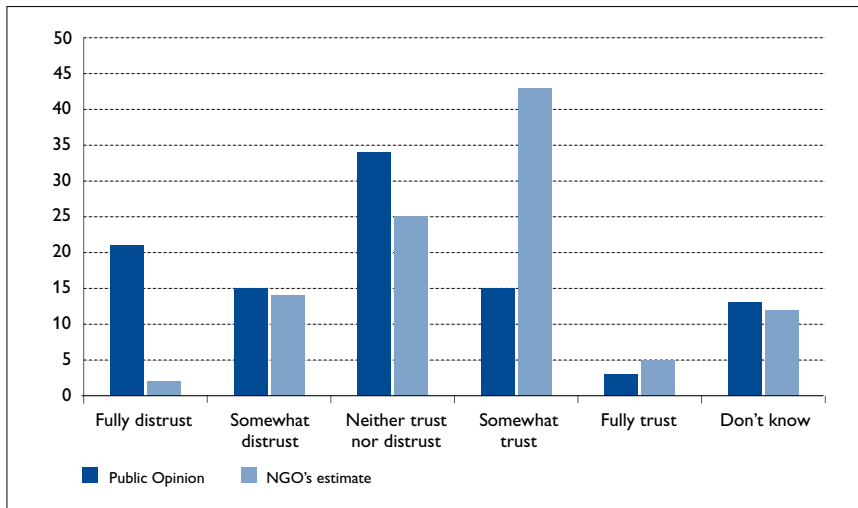
Table 2: Number of Paid Staff and Volunteers in Organizations

Number of staff/ volunteers	% of NGOs that have x staff	% of NGOs that have x volunteers
0	37	10
1-5	26	29
6-20	22	28
21-30	6	13
31 and more	9	19
Total	100	100
N	188	188
Mean	11	58
Median	3	8

Source: *TCPA ASCN Organizational Survey of NGOs.*

However, the Armenian NGO sector faces the typical problems of post-communist development.¹ These problems can be divided into two broad categories. The first category relates to individual attitudes and behaviour of citizens: disdain towards volunteering, distrust towards associations, and low membership of associations. These are mostly a legacy of communism (Howard 2003), under which people were forced to join organizations and “volunteer” on a regular basis. The second category of problems faced by NGOs in post-communist countries has to do with the rapid donor-driven development of the NGOs after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The manifold challenges of regime transitions, often accompanied with economic collapse, created demand for social action, while generous international donor support boosted supply. This process led to a mushrooming of NGOs that were heavily dependent on external donors. While this influx of funds helped to establish a vibrant NGO sector, it created a set of constraints that NGOs currently struggle with. If international developmental aid is withdrawn, most NGOs have only questionable organizational sustainability. More importantly, the legitimacy of civil society organizations to represent local voices is often disputed on the grounds that many NGOs are funded from abroad.

Figure 1: Trust Towards NGOs: NGOs’ Estimate vs. Public Opinion



NB: “Public opinion” refers to the Caucasus Barometer 2013, “NGOs’ estimate” refers to the TCPA ASCN Organizational Survey of NGOs.

The level of public trust towards NGOs is low and declining, but NGOs do not seem to be aware of it. They overestimate public trust towards them, as can be seen from Figure 1. Participants in an organizational survey were asked to estimate public trust towards NGOs, replicating a Caucasus Barometer question in a study conducted by the Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis (TCPA) within a research project funded by the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net. The comparison with public opinion data clearly shows that NGOs overestimate the amount of trust towards them. According to Caucasus Barometer 2013, one-fifth of the Armenian population fully distrusts NGOs, yet NGOs themselves are not aware of this negative attitude. NGOs also clearly exaggerate the percentage of people with moderate levels of trust: while only 15 percent of the Armenian population somewhat trusts NGOs, NGOs estimate that percentage to be around 43 percent. This is yet another example of the sector's detachment from the broader public.

Civic initiatives

An important new development in Armenia is the recent rise of a new type of activity called “civic initiatives.” These are various grassroots issue-oriented groups of individual activists united around a common, often very specific, cause (preventing construction in a public park, preserving an architecturally valuable building, protesting against a new mine, among others). Usually, civic initiatives are small in numbers and are often confined to Yerevan, or spearheaded from Yerevan, if a regional environmental issue is at stake. The core activists are young educated people; they use social media to organize and to spread information regarding their activities. These new forms of civic participation have emerged since about 2007, and have registered a number of victories since then. Examples are preserving an old open-air cinema amphitheatre (*Kino Moskva*) set to be demolished (in 2010), preventing a hydropower station from being constructed at a scenic waterfall site (Trchkan in 2011), and the most recent mass protests against a mandatory component of a pension reform in 2014.² There are also examples of failures despite mobilisation, or of inability to sustain momentum.

In their report, Ishkanian et al. (2013) list a total of 31 civic initiatives for the period 2007–2013. Of these, seven were resolved positively (i.e. the activists achieved their aim), four were resolved negatively, six were abandoned and the rest were continuing. Since then, the TCPA team has

updated the table, adding two new initiatives and checking the status of ongoing initiatives. Table 3 presents the most recent snapshot of civic initiatives in Armenia. It is worth highlighting that nine out of 33 cases, i.e. more than a quarter of issues taken up by the activists, were resolved positively. Given their small numbers, the overall apathy of the population and lack of cooperative culture on behalf of the government, this is not a small achievement on behalf of the activists.

Table 3: Outcomes of Various Civic Initiatives, 2007-2014

Outcome	Number of initiatives
Resolved positively	9
Resolved negatively	4
Abandoned	7
Continuing	13
Total	33

Source: *Current TCPA ASCN Research Project.*

Civic initiatives are distinctly different from NGOs. First and foremost, activists engaged in these initiatives explicitly refuse any foreign funding. They do not want to risk de-legitimation in the eyes of the public and government officials by accepting funding from international development organizations and thereby becoming accountable to a force that ultimately lies outside of Armenia. They believe that relying on foreign funding (in some cases on any funding except voluntary labour and personal contributions) would diminish their ability to speak on behalf of themselves and those people affected by decisions they attempt to overrun. Another difference is a strong preference for maintaining organizational structures at a minimum and avoiding hierarchies, thereby encouraging a “participatory democracy” style of self-organization that can tap into the creative energies of all people involved and create experiences of empowerment and ownership. On the negative side, such structures are hard to maintain on a large scale and over extended periods of time. Institutionalisation does not happen; groups are at a constant risk of “petering out” if participants become disillusioned, busy, interested in something else, and so on.

Several other weaknesses of civic activism can be noted here. Most civic initiatives are reactions to government decisions or events, rather than pro-active goals of changing the Armenian reality. Many activists position themselves as “outside of politics,” although some of the issues they raise are inherently political, such as the opposition to the government-proposed

pension reform. The rejection of politics also means a rejection of political players, such as the opposition political parties, who could be valuable allies in many cases.

Conclusion and discussion

Armenian civil society has undergone some development since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The NGO sector of civil society is consolidated and fairly well developed. It is, however, detached from the broader society and is largely donor-driven. In that sense, Armenian civil society still suffers from the typical post-communist “weakness” in Howard’s (2003) terms.

Focusing on NGOs when talking about civil society in a post-communist context is somewhat ironic, since the concept of civil society was popularised in the late 1980s, referring to mass mobilisation and social movements that challenged the communist regimes of the respective countries. As those lost momentum, NGOs came to replace them as the main “substance” of civil society. Empowered mostly through foreign development aid, rather than grassroots involvement, NGOs perform a wide range of tasks, from humanitarian assistance to advocacy, but fail to attract most Armenians’ trust or interest in their cause. An entirely new development is the rise of civic activism of a novel type: case-focused, largely spontaneous, mostly driven by youth, and powered by social media.

Each of these two elements of civil society has its strengths and weaknesses. They could complement each other. For example, NGOs could offer their expertise to the activist groups, while the civic initiatives could energise NGOs and provide the much needed link to the public. There is plenty of evidence of NGO members actively participating in civic initiatives as individuals. NGOs as organizations have so far remained behind the scenes, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

Spearheaded by young activists, often acting outside of the formal NGO format, Armenian civil society has recently registered several victories in overriding unfavourable governmental decisions and in voicing mounting public concerns. These examples are sources of inspiration and optimism for those engaged with Armenian civil society. The challenge for civil society actors now is to learn and multiply these positive experiences, while being more self-reflective and thoughtful in attracting citizens, in addition to attracting grants.

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Notes

- 1 This article discusses “internal” problems of civil society, rather than the “external” problems, such as the poor socio-economic conditions of the population, corruption, lack of political avenues of representation, and so on.
- 2 The reform has been delayed and re-formulated and the mandatory component was dropped (at least for the time being). The prime minister resigned from his post. Although officially, the resignation had nothing to do with the opposition to the pension reform, many believe that widespread public discontent with the proposed reform was at least partially the reason for the resignation.

Civil society in Azerbaijan: testing alternative theories

Introduction

One of the biggest challenges participants in the political and public discussions face in the course of dealing with civil society in the post-Soviet context is defining the very concept of civil society. This problem is not unique to post-communist political and social debate, but has been a universal concern to the extent that some scholars simply refused to define it.

When we refer to Post-Soviet civil society and try to define it, it is important to be aware of several important aspects of the problem. The first question that should, perhaps, be asked in this regard is: “Who is defining it?” Depending on the answer to this question, we would be able to shed more light on “which civil society” is the object of the discussion.

Firstly, there is a civil society of those people who believe that *they are* civil society. This is the (loose) group of people who are represented in various voluntary associations and institutions, but not only there. Intellectuals, academics, journalists, activists, politicians, human rights defenders and some other categories of individuals may consider themselves as representatives of civil society.

However, it is important to stress that the tendency in the post-Soviet context has been to equate civil society to the pool of NGOs (sometimes even *one man* NGOs) existing in that particular country. It seems that this has become an unexpected (or unintentional) consequence of the cooperation between the so-called international community (governments, international organizations, donors etc.) and various autonomous groups inside post-Soviet countries.

Consequently, another civil society exists – which consists of external governments and donors. External governments and donors have regarded civil society as being a concept that is a function of something else, e.g., an independent community of free associations checking the power of

the government and advancing democracy. Certainly, here we are talking mostly about western external actors, whose agenda of democratisation seemed to be central to the discourse of the civil society, and which is not equally relevant for other external actors in the region (Russia, Iran, Turkey) whose policies towards civil society have differed from those of the west.

The national state and national government are other actors, who regard civil society as an object of their policies and political action. Many newly independent states have thought of civil society not necessarily as a counterweight to state power, but as being an integral part of the state: they have regarded civil society institutions as complementing public institutions, rather than criticising and undermining them. Therefore, in more authoritarian formats the state tries to co-opt civil society into the realm of its control and governance. Domrin suggests that:

“In the Russian interpretation, civil society cannot be established at the state’s expense. The state is responsible for maintaining social justice in the country and approximately equal levels of material wealth for its citizens. With its protective foreign and defence policy, the state exercises its role as the ultimate guarantor of the existence of civil society and the Nation” (Domrin, 2003, p.201).

Therefore, an important point follows here: although external donors and national states have seemingly different goals and agendas (democracy promotion versus state-building) both of them regard the concept and realm of civil society as being a function of their end goal: of building democracy or building the state. Hence, the relevance of the Gramscian approach, which claims that civil society is an area of hegemony.

In this article, I will try to explain how these various actors and concepts interact in the public sphere in Azerbaijan, and to challenge some of the basic notions of the liberal-democratic (Tocquevillean) approach towards civil society. Before that, let us look into two various paradigms of analysing civil society. The first one is Tocquevillean, which dominated the discourse of civil society in the post-communist world. Tocquevilleanism has become basically a replacement for communism, since everybody, including former communists, advocated it initially. The second one is the Gramscian theory of civil society, which has not been systematically applied to the post-Soviet context, meaning that there have been no major studies using this framework.

The Tocquevillean and Gramscian concepts of civil society

With the demise of communism and the advance of liberal democracy in the post-Cold War period, concepts started to change (or to emerge), and new approaches to the phenomenon and concept of civil society began to gain urgency. The new vision of civil society was a Tocquevillean one, meaning the new leaders believed and promoted associational life, and thought it will be a good solution to many inherited ills. The new liberal-democratic elites conceived of civil society as being an almost independent actor to counterbalance state power. Civil society has become a generic term for active institutions different from the ruling elite/party and opposition. It also became known as the Third Sector, highlighting the range of organizations that belonged neither to the public/state sector nor to the private sector.

Historically, this understanding of civil society emerged during the course of several stages within the communist world, and is believed to be linked to three major crises of communism and related dissident movements: the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the Polish Solidarnost movement of 1980–81 (Rupnik, 1999). As an old Azerbaijani dissident scholar once said: “after Prague we all realised that there was no way back.” It is this dissident, oppositionist, anti-statist nature of the concept, as well as the corresponding reality to it, which has shaped what we have come to label as civil society, including our understanding and perception of it today. *This* civil society has a political spirit, a political ambition.

The Gramscian understanding of civil society not only differs from the perspective described above but also gives us a unique and creative analytical framework. According to Gramsci, civil society is not an area of freedom, but an area of hegemony. Political society (the state) is always in competition with various political and social groups to exert *hegemony* over civil society. Hegemony is non-coercive and non-physical: it is about the consent of the ruled to the state. In this regard, civil society, meaning all sorts of associations, including churches, schools, professional associations and, sometimes, political parties, is the target of the state and other political groups. No authority can survive without relying on those institutions, without *hegemony over civil society*.

The Gramscian perspective on Azerbaijani civil society

The struggle over civil society (in the Gramscian sense) began in the early 1990s in Azerbaijan. Mainly, it was two political forces that started the fight for control of civil society: the old Soviet nomenklatura and the new emerging liberal-democratic political forces and networks.

Using the examples of religion, education, professional unions and NGOs, I will look into how the contesting forces were fighting for these areas.

- **Religion:** Religious liberalisation during the early 1990s increased the number of religious organizations, a development which made newly established post-Soviet regimes feel vulnerable vis-à-vis such formidable popular beliefs. Thus, the second half of the 1990s through to the 2000s became a period when states used their administrative apparatus to make the lives of religious organizations difficult. Complicated (as well as unclear) registration procedures, requirements for re-registration, arbitrary de-registrations and bans became typical for almost all post-Soviet regimes (Safronov, 2013, p. 204). In Azerbaijan, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Islamic Party was banned, religious communities were dismantled, and several mosques were even demolished. The government has tightly regulated the spread of religious literature. Religiosity has started to be seen as a threat to the state. Religious leaders have been jailed and now even secular oppositionists have begun to consider them as being political prisoners, a development which was not the case before. Opposition parties also used religious rhetoric to gain support among believers. Some political party leaders even attended the Hajj pilgrimage in order to add to their reputation among Muslims. On the other hand, the government invested considerable amounts into building new mosques and restoring old ones in Baku and other places in Azerbaijan.
- **Education:** In education, for the old elites, the new academia, concentrated in and around independent universities, research centres, journals etc., and backed by foreign embassies and international organizations, was a powerful competitor in the struggle to influence society (Gapova, 2009, p. 278). It was important for the old elites to bring up the young generation within the frames of conservative, patriarchal values and make them respect the authority and live in line with the official ideology of Azerbaijanism and national moral values (*milli məni dəyərlər*). Part of the control over the students was exercised through administrative means, e.g. university deans and administrators instructed students not to attend the opposition's meetings and, in general, refrain

from oppositional activity or rhetoric. On the other hand, political and social forces outside of the ruling elite used a variety of non-formal education platforms (political parties, NGOs, youth movements) to educate youth in their own values of western principles in order to support democracy and advocate openness, transparency and greater freedom. Azad Fikir Universiteti (Free Thought University), run by a civic group called OLI, was one of the most successful non-formal education projects before being shut down in 2013.

- **Professional associations:** All types of professional association, called *profsoyuzy* (*həmkarlar ittifaqları* in Azerbaijani) during the Soviet period, remain under the strict control of the government. Most of them are public; private ones are almost non-existent. The Azerbaijani Confederation of Professional Unions is a public structure which unites all official professional unions in every civil service institution, which are in turn highly formal and pseudo-representative bodies.

Some of the privately initiated professional unions such as the Karabakh Veterans Public Union (established in 2002 and led by Etimad Asadov) and the Azerbaijani Employers' Confederation (1999) were active at the beginning, but were weakened or co-opted by the government.

- **NGOs:** NGOs emerged in the 1990s and survived mostly because of Western financial support. There have been few domestic donors for NGOs and they relied almost completely on western funding, a circumstance that made them highly vulnerable vis-à-vis the authorities. The government's policy has gradually shifted towards estranging and targeting NGOs as foreign agents which undermine the state.

Legislation was also adapted in order to obstruct easy financial flows to NGOs. Another strategy was to inundate the NGO sphere with GONGOs (government NGOs) in order to counter the ideological influence of their opponents. The irony of the situation was that Western funded NGOs would label themselves as "independent," while they were totally dependent on funds coming from other governments.

Part of the government's strategy was to finance NGOs, and in 2007 the president signed a decree to establish the State Council on Support for NGOs. The strong argument behind it was: "If western governments believe it is good to finance NGOs, we should do it ourselves."

Conclusion

More than twenty years of Azerbaijani independence and civil society development have largely been assessed from a liberal-democratic or Tocquevillean perspective. In this short paper, we attempted to take a different view.

The notion of civil society as an area of hegemony of contesting political forces offers a different vision, which is to realise that the story of an “evil state” and “benign civil society” was an oversimplification. The Gramscian approach offers the perspective of an ideological and cultural struggle of various groups that exclude each other and have very little consensus on what the state of affairs in the country should look like. Certainly, it is also the struggle between old and new. However, many of the “new forces” also originate from the old environment.

One of the features of post-Soviet politics is that it is about the struggle of two types of people, groups and networks: those who want to preserve their positions and power, and the emerging class of other contestants who claim power, position and space within the new post-Soviet realm. In this context, liberalism versus statism is just an ideological part of the struggle.

Thus, when we look at Azerbaijani civil society from a Gramscian point of view, we see something else than if we were to at it from the liberal-democratic perspective. It seems that the ruling political forces won the struggle and established their hegemony over various elements of civil society. In contrast, the opposing political and social forces seem to have lost it, and their influence over organized and associated groups in society has been dispersed. Political parties, activists, intellectuals etc. have little influence on universities, religion, and associations and other segments of civil society. The conservative, patriarchal culture promoted by the ruling elite has become more efficient and has resulted in the acceptance and consent of society, whereas the revisionist, reformist, revolutionary approach of the opposing political groups and individuals have little impact on the same society, which is also spoiled by widespread consumerism.

It seems that the old forces have won the ideological (or cultural) struggle over the new ones, bringing their culture to dominate the public and private realms. Surely this is not an isolated game, since it is also part of the defeat of the western ideological stance in most of post-Soviet space.

It remains unclear when, and whether, the emerging new groups will exert hegemony over civil society in Azerbaijan, or at least be able to restart the competition over it. So far, the tendency has been towards the conservative groups remaining in charge.

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Civic engagement via social media in Georgia

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a dramatic rise in the popularity of social media in Georgia, which is manifested in the growing number of bloggers and social network users. One of the core advantages of social media is its ability to resist the monopolistic ownership of the communication infrastructure by the political elites, and to foster a high level of citizens' engagement in socio-political processes. This strength also affects how power and visibility relate to each other. Social media serves to substantially increase the leaders' "mediated visibility," forcing political leaders to appear in front of their audiences in a manner and scale that was impossible to achieve in the past. Some scholars believe that this ability has transformed today's political communication in its entirety (Negrine & Papatthanassopoulos, 2011).

Notwithstanding the fact that politicians started to actively use this new information platform by setting up their own pages in social networks and engaging in various types of activities, such as web conferences, and that there are abundant streams of diverse political information circulating within social media, the rise of social media may not affect decision-making at all. Consideration should be given to the fact that the new media user community is still limited, and even confined to a sort of "cyber sect," which is predominantly inhabited by a small group of "digital natives" in countries like Georgia (Prensky, 2011). On the other hand, Peter Dahlgren's argument that political life on the Internet alienates individuals from political life outside social networks has been repeatedly confirmed in reality. Only a small proportion of the civic activities planned within social networks are implemented outside these networks in the real world.

What can we say about civic engagement via social media in Georgia and its influence on real-life socio-political activities? Below, I address

these questions based on both qualitative (40 in-depth interviews with media experts in Georgia, spring 2012) and quantitative (a nationwide representative survey with 1,000 Internet users in Georgia, autumn 2012) data. The survey was based on a three-stage cluster sampling and conducted in the capital (Tbilisi) and Georgia's six largest cities with the highest levels of Internet use (three in Eastern Georgia and three in Western Georgia). For the entire sample, the sampling error did not exceed 4%, with a 95% confidence interval.

Goals and frequency of using the Internet

Before discussing the Internet users' engagement in online civic activities in Georgia, we will briefly summarise their goals and how often they use the Internet. As the survey findings show, the frequency of Internet usage among the representative sample of Internet users is at least 4–5 hours per day for those under the age of 40 and at least 2–3 hours per day for users over the age of 40. No major variances were observed by sex, education and employment variables, which means that they barely have any effect on Internet usage frequency.

Even a cursory look at the respondents' answers demonstrates that the majority of Internet users, irrespective of socio-demographic variables, go online to interact with friends and acquaintances. This survey question targeted Internet usage in general rather than social networks specifically. The findings therefore lead us to conclude that for most of the Internet users in Georgia (around 70%), the Internet is associated with social networks and is predominantly limited to social interactions. The second most frequent reason for using the Internet by men is entertainment, while for women, it is checking the news. It turns out that almost twice as many men (47.2%) as women (24.1%) use the Internet for entertainment purposes.

The survey results show that Georgian users do not use the Internet to participate in civic activities, which are equally unpopular with both men and women (1.1% vs. 1.9%). This finding is one more indicator of the poorly developed level of civic culture in Georgia.

An interesting divergence occurs between the patterns of actual social media use and the way that Georgian users view its core functions. Only 32.3% of the respondents consider social interactions to be the core social media function in Georgia. 33.2% cite dissemination of alternative information and 20.3% cite improvement of the population's civic culture as its core functions. Thus, more than half of the respondents believe that

social media in Georgia contributes to democratic processes. The respondents rarely equate desirable social media functions with actual usage as the research findings illustrate that 80% of Georgian users have never taken part in online civic activities.

Social media vis-à-vis the political domain

Despite this reality, the experts we interviewed still talk about social media's rising impact on the political domain, which they mainly attribute to the growing numbers of Internet users, including social media users. The mere fact that there has been a growth in Internet use in recent years, and that Facebook is becoming more and more popular, encourages politicians to establish their presence in this space and to remind the socially networked segment of the constituency of their existence. It is most likely that state agencies and politicians create their Facebook profiles to establish their presence, gain exposure, and attract voters. However, the experts believe that such Facebook pages are almost identical to the traditional media products because they mostly display dry, "packaged" information, and are unable to create a discussion venue necessary for political communication and for raising the level of society's political culture. Apart from the Georgian Internet's inability to stimulate discussions, experts describe a lack of differing and conflicting positions there. In their words, the online conferences organized by Georgian politicians are substantially similar to such events in the traditional media, since all manner of undesirable questions are removed and it is impossible to voice differing opinions (this was also demonstrated by the 2012 report on Electronic Engagement in Georgia produced by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information). Therefore, the experts conclude that neither the politicians' Facebook pages nor their web conferences generate interest among the electorate.

Indeed, the quantitative data confirms this argument. In response to whether the respondents ever check the Georgian politicians' Facebook pages, more than 2/3 cite that they never do (68.7%). The findings illustrate that most respondents (72.3%) have never followed web conferences organized by Georgian politicians. Even among those who did observe such events, only 2.5% were actively engaged and asked questions. Furthermore, it turned out that more than half of the respondents do not read any electronic publications with political content. Hence the assumption that interest is low because the information available through social media

is often similar to that offered by traditional media outlets, especially television, may apply to all types of political information.

Participation in online civic activities

What about user-initiated online civic activities in Georgia? Which activities are characterised by the highest involvement? To begin with, the nationwide survey reveals that 43.7% of the respondents have a positive attitude towards participation in civic activities online, as opposed to 50.3% who have a negative attitude. Opinions therefore are rather polarised. The findings are quite interesting with regard to age distribution, since the respondents aged 18–22 find it more acceptable to participate in protest actions compared to other age groups. This might be explained by the recent political developments, specifically those leading up to the October 1, 2012 elections, where the youth, especially students, were most active both online and offline.

However, when asked about their personal engagement in civic activities, such as protest actions via social media, only 20% claim they have ever participated. Although social networks embolden users, and it is indeed easier to participate in civic activities online, the responses once again support our assumption that social media does not offer a platform for socio-political activities in Georgia. Civic activities via social media are at their height only during the pre-election periods or when certain socio-political issues come to the fore, resulting in the polarisation of society. This result is confirmed by the findings of the content- and discourse-analyses of the social blogs and electronic publications that we carried out semi-annually, which coincided with the pre-election and election periods. In terms of participating in civic activities, young people aged 18–22 are most actively engaged, with 34.4% taking part, while for other age groups, this figure is within the 15% range. The finding becomes even more robust when one takes into account education. 39.8% of the surveyed students claim that they have participated in online civic activities, considerably outnumbering the respondents with secondary and higher education (9.8% and 19.2% respectively).

In response to a question as to which online civic activities our respondents have participated in, it turned out that they were most active in voicing political protest (59.4%), which is quite interesting in light of the gender distribution of the results. Men tend to voice political protest more often than women, whereas both men and women are almost equally

active in participating in human rights protection and cultural activities, with women taking a slight lead. An interesting pattern is observed when examining the findings by age distribution. The respondents of both sexes below 30 are almost equally active in various online civic activities, be it voicing political protest, protecting human rights, or cultural activities. As for the respondents above 30, they predominantly voice political protest. However, keeping in mind that these conclusions are derived from that small portion (20%) of the population which has participated in civic activities online, they seem rather insignificant.

The interviewed experts note that although the scale and frequency of civic activities via social media in Georgia is rather modest, it is gradually rising along with the overall use of social media, which is increasing its influence on citizens' social and political activities. Tbilisi State University provides a good example of an activity planned in the social networks: hundreds of students gathered to rally after several students were attacked by local government representatives, and the resulting video was actively circulated in the social networks. The same thing happened after the May 26 (Independence Day) violence, when many people rallied to protest within 24 hours. The experts also recalled an incident when the Ministry of Environment announced a competition and several bloggers uploaded photos showing how Kikvidze Garden was being logged, which resonated with many people. Further well-known examples include protests planned via Facebook just before the October 2012 elections (which ultimately resulted in the change of government), the online petition signed by several thousand people after the May 17, 2013 campaign against homophobia was physically attacked, as well as the recent online campaign against razing Vake Park.

Conclusion

Despite these facts, according to many experts, most of the civic activities do not go beyond the social networks and do not really affect Georgian reality. They note that there have been frequent Facebook "outbreaks" focused on certain events, but without any tangible consequences, such as street rallies, circulating appeals or notices, etc. However, some argue that social media influences should not be measured solely by their real-life manifestations. Social media, like an electronic agora, captures society's diverse points of view and acts as a conduit for community groups, which in the long run affects society's worldview. It can therefore be inferred that

the existence of social media, notwithstanding its brief history in Georgia, plays a certain role in the formation and reappraisal of political and socio-cultural values, including the development of civic culture. The transformations might not be fully visible, but they are in progress.

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Civil society as an actor of political education in Ukraine

Susan Stewart

Civil society in Ukraine: structure, environment and developmental trends

The structure of Ukrainian civil society

In his book *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, Marc Morjé Howard (2003) defines civil society as follows: “*Civil society* refers to the realm of organizations, groups, and associations that are formally established, legally protected, autonomously run, and voluntarily joined by ordinary citizens.” Broad though this spectrum is, it does not include spontaneous or ad hoc activities undertaken by members of the public.

Over the last ten years, discussion about civil society development in Ukraine has focused largely on the evolution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There are a variety of reasons for this. First, several organizations dropped out of sight after the collapse of the USSR, while others were largely discredited in the eyes of the population due to their association with Soviet structures. Some organizations, trade unions in particular, did manage to survive but now have the reputation of having been co-opted by the ruling elite. (New trade unions have also formed, but these are not very influential as yet). Secondly, many NGOs have been created in Ukraine over the last 10 to 15 years with western support, and they are equated with civil society in the country in the minds of many, particularly outside Ukraine.

The focus of this article is also on NGOs, since the reports and other sources providing the basis for this analysis tend to focus on the NGO category. Before proceeding though, I wish to emphasise that Ukrainian civil society is a complex phenomenon, encompassing more than the NGO sphere. While NGOs have become a fixed component of civil society in Ukraine, recent developments indicate that there is increasing scope for spontaneous actions and protests arranged at short notice to bring societal pressure to bear on political circles. It appears likely that the future character of Ukrainian civil society will be determined by a mix of both ad

hoc activities and a more systematic approach pursued by NGO and other civil society groupings.

The number of civil society organizations registered in Ukraine is on the rise, as is the number of people who staff them. These figures should be treated with caution, however. The Ukrainian NGO Counterpart Creative Center estimates that only 5-7% of registered organizations in the country are genuinely active, in the sense that they regularly carry out projects. Many of the NGOs are quite small (30 members or less), and quite a few do not even officially have members. Hence, Ukraine's 'third sector' is fairly limited in size. Given that even the official data show a per capita participation in civil society organizations in Ukraine that is considerably lower than the EU average, it is safe to assume that the actual difference is substantially larger, though the EU undoubtedly also has its share of registered but inactive associations. On the other hand, Ukraine is quite active in the civil society sphere in comparison with its post-Soviet neighbours, such as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. With regard to the areas of NGO activity, almost one in two civil society organizations works on issues relating to children and/or young adults. Between 25% and 30% describe themselves as active in one of the following: civic education, human rights, or social issues.

The regional breakdown of Ukrainian NGOs reflects the centralised nature of the Ukrainian state. The vast majority of active organizations are concentrated in the capital, though a few other cities have also emerged as centres with substantial numbers of NGOs. After Kyiv, the most significant centre is Lviv, followed by Zaporizhia and Odessa, each with around 1,000 organizations. Thus civil society activity is definitely expanding geographically, although it is doing so fairly slowly. This slow pace is explained in part by the strategies of foreign donors, most of whom maintain offices only in the capital and find it more convenient to work with a small group of established NGOs, whose activities are also mainly set in Kyiv (see below for further discussion on this subject).

The political environment

Certain incidents at the start of Viktor Yanukovych's term in office sent out disturbing signals relating to the attitude of the political leadership to civil society actors. They suggested, for instance, that some Ukrainian political actors, like their Russian counterparts, were inclined to regard cooperation with the West in the civil society sector as a possible threat.

This interpretation is supported by the arrest of Nico Lange, then director of the Ukrainian office of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, at Kyiv's Boryspil Airport in June 2010, and the questioning of NGO staff who were carrying out projects financed by the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) by Ukrainian Security Service officers. The IRF was set up by George Soros, the (US) American investor, who still provides part of its funding. In addition, the political leadership under Yanukovych attempted and still attempts to repress any serious protest by various means. The treatment of some of the organizers of the protest against the new tax code in autumn of 2010 illustrated this: after meeting with protesters, Yanukovych introduced some changes to the code. When the protests then failed to die down, the police removed the tents that opponents of the legislation had set up. Some of the main organizers were arrested on flimsy charges and had to serve prison terms.

There were some developments that were favourable for Ukrainian civil society at the legislative level, however. The most important of these is certainly the enactment of the Law on Associations of Citizens in March 2012. That law, which did not take effect until the start of 2013, represents Ukraine's response to international and internal pressure. Drafted with the assistance of Ukrainian civil society experts, it improves on the previous legislation in several respects. The following changes are particularly noteworthy: the simplified registration procedure, the right of registered organizations to operate in all regions of Ukraine, and the possibility of financing non-profit-oriented activities through commercial activity. Another piece of legislation relevant for Ukrainian civil society is the law on access to public information, passed by the Ukrainian parliament in January 2011. This law is significant because, for example, it helps many organizations to monitor the government's actions in a more logical and efficient manner. However, problems necessitating (not always successful) recourse to the courts have frequently been associated with the implementation of this law.

The legal environment in which civil society operates has improved under Yanukovych in more than one respect; with regard to the state's treatment of civil society actors, the initial problems have at least not grown worse. The public councils (*hromads'ki rady*: advisory bodies made up of civil society representatives that are found at all levels of government) are still operating. However, the attitude of most of the country's leading politicians towards civil society ranges from reserved to distinctly negative. Constructive suggestions from civil society organizations are frequently not taken seriously in the political process. Moreover, it is not unusual to see reputable organizations with years of experience and notable expertise

in a specific area replaced by others that lack those qualities but are willing to support the positions favoured by the government. The reverse situation can also arise, particularly when the position of prominent and relevant NGOs is supported by foreign diplomats and international institutions.

Economic environment

Ukraine's economic situation is deteriorating. This is due both to the international economic slowdown since the financial and economic crisis and to an unwillingness on the part of Ukraine's leaders to introduce reforms. This situation has had several – in some respects contradictory – consequences for the development of Ukrainian civil society.

Clearly, in the present economic situation, many people in Ukraine are increasingly engaged with the struggle to make ends meet, leaving them little time or energy for civil society activities. Moreover, the difficult economic situation is in no way encouraging the tradition of philanthropy (giving by individuals to charitable or other organizations), which was not all that strong to begin with. However, there is another side to the coin: if the situation keeps getting worse, willingness to become actively involved in civil society initiatives may increase as ever more people see no prospects for their own future because they cannot advance within the current economic (and political) context.

Another reason that the economic climate is getting tougher is that influential politicians and businessmen (including the so-called oligarchs) are channelling money to their own particular causes. This results in an opaque situation with less money available for other actors. One way this makes itself felt within civil society is that organizations have almost no chance to submit, or succeed with, proposals to competitive procedures awarding public monies at the regional and local levels which are so important to them. Many people in the Ukrainian business world are willing to finance civil society projects that they see as useful. They are found in the publicly visible areas of social work (children, health) because their main objective is to promote the image of the company providing the funding. This means that politically-oriented organizations and projects rarely have much of a chance, particularly those that can be classed as 'oppositional'. In addition, many businesses opt to set up structures of their own rather than support existing civil society organizations. Although perhaps formally a part of civil society, these structures tend to represent the interests of a private sector company or economic group.

One result of the difficulties mentioned above which are associated with raising funds locally is that foreign donors continue to play the largest role in the funding scene. Among the most significant foreign donors are the EU (both at the Brussels level and some of the individual member states) and the USA (especially USAID, the US Agency for International Development). In each case, there are both state and private sources which are of significance. A substantial portion of these funds are granted for democracy promotion activities, i.e. this is one source of financing for projects with a political agenda in Ukraine. Foreign money has enabled NGOs to carry out many projects that would not otherwise have been possible. In a certain sense, however, it has also distorted the evolution of Ukrainian civil society. Numerous observers have noted that many NGOs with foreign funding shift their orientation over time towards their donors, disconnecting from the opinions and needs of their society. In addition, some NGOs have been set up primarily for the purpose of gaining access to western money. Ultimately, this has led to the formation of a kind of NGO elite concentrating on Kyiv that is largely disconnected from the problems in other parts of the country. This problem has been recognised both in the EU and in Ukraine, and steps have been taken to counter this tendency. However, transforming firmly established relationship patterns is not something that can be done in a year or two, but will instead require a medium- or long-term approach.

Societal environment

During the Orange Revolution, large portions of Ukrainian society had the experience of joining together to successfully bring about change in the country's political life. However, the results of this 'revolution' left many Ukrainians deeply disappointed. The visible and sudden changes were largely superficial in nature, while the political and economic structures and behaviour patterns of the elite remained essentially unaltered. As a result, many people have, at least temporarily, given up the hope that meaningful 'bottom-up' change is possible.

Nonetheless, in recent years, we have seen small groups getting involved in local issues, e.g. to save a park or protest against the building of yet another skyscraper. These are issues that affect the protesters directly and concretely. Sometimes, a civil society organization is involved in a supportive capacity right from the start, and sometimes an NGO gets involved in a later phase. However, in other cases, the people affected organize the protest spontaneously and without the support of any organizational structure.

When such protests are successful, that success may encourage participants to get actively involved in organized civil society. But ad-hoc events will probably remain the order of the day, because members of the public will continue to be angered by arbitrary decisions taken by the administrative structures. Actions of this kind can also be considered part of Ukrainian civil society, despite the fact that they do not readily fall under the definition provided by Howard as quoted above. The development of social media makes it easier to carry out such activities and points to the necessity of a broad understanding of civil society.

One inhibiting factor that has emerged under Yanukovych is fear. To some extent, fear has stunted the development of civil society. The political elite has become more willing to use violence as a means of solving problems in the last three years. One sees evidence of this in, for instance, the violent methods of the ‘raider’ who take over thriving businesses in order to pass them on to supporters of the regime, or in the International Federation of Journalists’ announcement that violence against journalists has increased under Yanukovych. The fear that speaking up against the regime will lead to unpleasant consequences tends to cause citizens to remain inactive rather than take part in a civil society project.

There is growing recognition that people can achieve objectives that matter for daily life through collective, targeted action. However, this experience is still confined to a small part of the population, and its distribution varies from region to region. Moreover, public trust in NGOs and their work is at a fairly low level. One reason for this is the high proportion of foreign funding, which causes many people to see NGOs as foreign elements. Nevertheless, the idea that NGOs play an essential role for society has become considerably more widespread in recent years. According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the proportion of the population holding that opinion climbed from 41% in 2005 to 76% six years later. Moreover, journalists now have a higher opinion of the expertise of representatives of civil society and the latter make more frequent appearances in various media. Thus there has been some progress toward fulfilling the prerequisites for increasing acceptance of the civil society sphere.

Outlook

The score assigned to Ukraine’s civil society in Freedom House’s Nations in Transit report has remained unchanged for the last 6 years, at 2.75 (on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is the best). During that period, the score for civil

society has consistently been Ukraine's highest among the scores for the eight fields assessed in Nations in Transit. The number of registered civil society organizations has risen continually, and this trend seems likely to continue under the new legislation, since it simplifies the NGO registration process. As use of the Internet and social media continues to rise in Ukraine, the significance of the quickly organized protests of recent years will probably increase, especially since the political and economic elite shows no sign of changing its behaviour and acting in the interests of the wider population. It will be interesting to see to what extent well-organized and experienced NGOs join forces with spontaneous citizens' initiatives to achieve shared political or social objectives.

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From Maidan to the parliament, from Maidan to the provinces: new paths for Ukrainian civil society

A year after the start of Euromaidan one thing is clear: Ukrainian civil society has come a long way. But the greatest challenges are still in the future – developing a democratic state and establishing a culture of democracy. That is where civil society will show its strength.

When protests broke out on Kiev's Maidan a year ago, the notion that Ukrainian civil society was weak seemed to have been discredited once and for all. And indeed, the Euromaidan protests can be seen as a masterpiece of political self-organization: initiated over social media, kept moving by activists who accumulated organizational, campaign and logistical experience in a wide variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and carried out by people from every population stratum, occupation and region of Ukraine. That all of this worked as well as it did is due in part to the continuous and intense development of civil society that had gone on since the Orange Revolution. Back then, civil society was overwhelmed by the demands incurred by its own success and was too weak to transform the democratic momentum into a democratic process. But disappointment gave rise to development, which was supported, in part, by external democracy promoters; though this promotion can be better described as diffuse and ambiguous than coherent and targeted. External supporters have pursued primarily two strategies in recent years: (i) the promotion of professionalisation of civil society and (ii) the promotion of political culture. In the first area, donors tended to fund projects designed to improve the campaign management, networking and internal structures of organizations – some donors made successful completion of accounting courses a prerequisite for funding. A considerably smaller portion of donor institutions pursued the second strategy, which concentrated on developing a democratic political culture, niche issues or local initiatives. Initially, these

funding strategies left Ukrainian civil society as a self-referential circle of well educated and dedicated people, but one whose activities failed to reach a large share of the society.

It was at the Maidan that the two strategies converged at last: committed students, initiatives and campaign professionals formed the backbone of the protests carried out by the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who were protesting against the authoritarian system of Yanukovych. Ukrainian civil society revealed its strength in those months. It is too early though to speak of a civil society success story: mobilising protest is only the start of civil-society driven democratisation. In the post-revolutionary phase, the institutionalisation and consolidation of democracy, civil society is charged with three key functions: (i) it must support the spread of a democratic political culture, (ii) it monitors the transparency of the actions of [public] institutions and, in its role as the 'school of democracy', it should give rise to new democratically oriented forces and a new generation of political decision-makers.

Results of that third function have already appeared: in 2014, about thirty activists and investigative journalists stood as candidates for the Verkhovna Rada in the October parliamentary elections. Nineteen of them succeeded in winning seats by way of the party lists of the Poroshenko Bloc, the People's Front and the Samopomich (Self-reliance) and Fatherland parties. These include people such as the journalists Mustafa Naiem and Serhiy Leshchenko, who did courageous investigative reporting on the corruption of the Yanukovych autocracy and initiated the Euro-maidan protests. They also include activists such as Svitlana Zalishchuk, an experienced NGO campaign manager, like Hanna Hopko, director of what is probably the most influential political NGO in Ukraine today, which draws up proposals for the central reform projects and submits them to parliament; or like Yegor Sobolev, who has worked unflaggingly for lustration¹ and the reappraisal of the authoritarian past. Their election raises hopes that they will bring a new culture of transparency and honesty to the Verkhovna Rada. At any rate, the lives they have led up to now suggest that their commitment to democracy is genuine; and the networking among them is quite good to boot.

However, priority now must go to developing a stable and differentiated party landscape. Even Poland, a showcase country for successful transformation, needed over a decade to consolidate its party system. Ukraine can ill afford that kind of a learning curve: the war with Russia has already done damage enough to the willingness to reform. The focus on the war is also preventing the parties from developing their substantive positions –

the most important prerequisite for policy formulation and coalition building. Today, all of the significant political parties in Ukraine are one thing above all else: patriotic. Hence the country lacks not one but two crucial dynamics: genuine political competition and – because the parties remain devoid of content – progress in the evolution of political parties from mere career vehicles to places where political will is formed. To what extent the ‘newcomers’ in the parliament will be able to help promote the development of a pluralistic party landscape is still in question. Initial conflicts, such as Sobolev’s departure from the Volya party he himself founded and a possible split in the young party, do not bode well. It is common knowledge that processes of spill-over from civil society into the political arena seldom proceed smoothly; still, the activists cannot afford too many bumps along the way. One must hope that the people upon whom civil society’s hopes are pinned put their professionalism to good use in the daily political process and in efforts to build up genuine parties. The second important function of civil society is to critically monitor the activities of the government and parliament. Having lost some of their most experienced representatives to the political arena, civil society must also keep developing its personnel capabilities and reposition itself vis-à-vis the Verkhovna Rada and the government. That will involve keeping a critical eye on its ‘own’ parliamentarians, as well as engaging in intensive lobbying and pushing for reform.

The most difficult, because long-term task, though, is the promotion of a democratic political culture. Particularly now when, faced with the war in the eastern part of Ukraine, Ukrainians have developed a feeling of community, a form of collective altruistic action that would have been inconceivable only two years ago. There are collection and donation drives for the army, people volunteer to serve in assistance interventions to provide medical assistance to those injured, and in many regions and municipalities, a civil society appears to be taking shape from the bottom up. Is this a ‘civic’ civil society though? As impressive as the current engagement of many is: a civil society created around the issues of war and assistance in an emergency runs the risk of radicalising in the short term and collapsing again in the medium term. Both prospects are problematic for democratisation. To pick up on the public spirit of today and transform it into a civil society for times of peace will require dialogue between the ‘old’ political civil society and the new engagement. The external funders could support this dialogue. Great progress has been made in professionalising the organizations, above all at the national level. Now it is time to develop new strategies and, for instance, put expertise and resources to work for the new

local initiatives, so that engagement on the ground can sustain the experience of being able to bring about change.

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Notes

- 1 Lustration: prohibition barring individuals associated with the former regime from occupying non-elected positions in public institutions. – *trans.*

Memory wars in post-Soviet Kharkiv

More than one year after the “Russian spring”, the peak of the pro-Russian unrest has passed in Kharkiv, but political polarisation and the fear of an escalation of street violence continues, especially in view of the bomb attack on a Ukrainian national unity rally killing four persons on February 22, 2015. Against this dramatic backdrop, the ongoing war on monuments seems secondary, even harmless, and yet it reflects the degree of polarisation and radicalisation and the level of violence in the city. In late September 2014, the Lenin monument on Svobody Square was toppled after a pro-Ukrainian rally with the tacit approval of the regional (oblast) administration, an action which met with opposition from the city council and outraged the local communists. In April 2015, a bomb was detonated under a national flag memorial, and not many days later, Ukrainian authorities announced the detention of a Russian citizen accused of organizing the explosion. The same month, statues of the communist leaders Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Nikolai Rudnev and Yakov Sverdlov were pulled down by pro-Ukrainian radicals, only some days after the adoption of the “decommunisation laws” by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine’s parliament).

This article looks into the cultural and ideological background of the current political conflict and demonstrates how greatly issues of historical memory matter for today’s Kharkiv, whose political, cultural and territorial status as a Ukrainian city is contested and endangered more than it has ever been since 1991. A closer look at the local conflicts around historical memory and collective identity in Kharkiv, especially those of the last decade, reveals the origins of the city’s current political polarisation and instability, which makes it an easy target for Russia’s hybrid war. Moreover, taking such a close look helps us understand that despite their local scale these conflicts reflect to a great degree both centre –periphery tensions between Kharkiv and Kyiv and the city’s geopolitical situation at the border with Russia.

In this article, I call these local conflicts on historical memory and political interpretation of the past “memory wars”. In reality, however, these

conflicts often have little to do with historical memory as such, but rather with antagonistic symbols (such as Lenin and Stalin, or Stepan Bandera and the UPA / Ukrainian Insurgent Army) which serve as “empty signifiers” that mobilise people against something that they believe threatens their identity. In this sense, there can be no winners in the “memory wars”, and effective solutions are to be found elsewhere: in re-shaping the debate, in bringing historical expertise and popular historical education into play, and in shifting the focus from heroes to victims. Ideally, Kharkiv, as well as the country in general, must get beyond its memory wars and find a path leading to dialogue and reconciliation. Finally, due to space limitations, this article focuses on memorials and monuments, leaving aside other aspects of memory politics such as city toponyms, public celebrations and memorial days.

In the first part of the article I will try to answer the question of why, at least in the last decade, Kharkiv has become a site of severe political conflicts over historical memory and why the past, and especially its controversial and dividing aspects, has been instrumentalised and manipulated in the local memory wars. In the second part of the article, I analyse the most significant conflicts involving monuments and memorials in post-Soviet Kharkiv, focusing on the past decade (from 2004 to spring 2015) with particular consideration of the developments in 2014–2015.

Contested city

What are the structural reasons, local foundations and driving forces for the memory wars in Kharkiv? In the following I will focus on three important aspects that help to explain local memory wars in the city: 1) the diverse spectrum of symbolic resources available to the local elites; 2) local sources of political pluralism and political conflicts and 3) the city’s borderland position.

1) The history of Kharkiv and the region provides diverse symbolic resources which can serve as material for very different, if not contradictory, versions of local identity. On the one hand, Kharkiv presents itself as a Ukrainian city right from the start, the capital of the historical Sloboda Ukraine, which later became a birthplace of modern Ukrainian nationalism; most importantly, the city was the cradle of the Ukrainian cultural revival of the 1920s and the place of martyrdom of the Ukrainian cultural elite murdered by the Stalinist regime. On the other, Kharkiv (in Russian: Kharkov) used to be one of the major industrial and academic centres of the

Russian empire, and later of the Soviet Union, a socialist city proud of its working class tradition, and, of course, the first capital of Soviet Ukraine, a site of the industrialisation, cultural revolution and enthusiasm of the early Soviet era. According to Volodymyr Kravchenko (2009), Kharkiv “contributed immensely to both modern Ukrainian and Soviet national culture and mythology” (p.220). In the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s, the local political elites in Kharkiv tried to integrate these diverse symbolic resources into some kind of local version of “Ukrainianness”. One ambivalent construct of this kind was *Pervaya Stolitsa* (First Capital), the city’s almost official brand, which entails an implicit claim to the legacy of Soviet cultural modernisation and industrialisation.¹ Kharkiv as the “First Capital” presented itself as part of Ukraine, but this was a specific, quasi-Soviet version of Ukrainianness that was implicitly opposed to the perceived “nationalism” of Kyiv (Kravchenko, 2009). In phases in which political polarisation proliferated in both the country and the region (for example during Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency between 2005–2010), these different symbolic resources were used in the construction of two alternative, even mutually exclusive, versions of collective memory and identity.

With the Euromaidan and the ousting of Yanukovych in February 2014, the political polarisation took on a new dimension once again. In addition, for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, its territorial integrity was being contested from within and outside of the country. Alternative versions of Kharkiv’s history and identity now have far reaching political, or even geopolitical, implications. Russia’s top politicians and media have been laying claim to Kharkiv as one of the centres of the re-invented *Novorossiya*.

Kharkiv journalist Konstantin Kevorkian, one of the creators of the “First Capital” brand, publically opposed the post-Maidan Kyiv government and eventually left for Russia. On February 5, 2015, the separatist “Donetsk People’s Republic” adopted a memorandum declaring the DPR to be the legal successor state to the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic, with the Bolshevik Artyom (Sergeev) as its founding father, and Kharkiv as its historical capital (Dergachev & Kartsev, 2015). The project of a pro-Russian “Kharkiv People’s Republic” has been publically supported by some Russian cultural figures, such as a writer Eduard Limonov, who is of Kharkiv origin.

2) The second aspect concerns the local sources of political conflicts and political polarisation which have prepared the ground for memory wars. Ideological pluralism has been an important feature of Kharkiv public life since perestroika and the emergence of Narodny Ruch, Memorial and the Kharkiv Human Rights Group, which gave rise to a liberal dem-

ocratic pro-Ukrainian milieu. Kharkiv has also, however, been a breeding ground for non-liberal forces, both Soviet-nostalgic and pro-Russian, as well as Ukrainian radical nationalist ones. The infamous pro-Russian “Oplot” and the Ukrainian far right “Patriot Ukrainy” are both Kharkiv-based organizations.

Local business groups, with their competing interests and political ambitions, provided an economic basis for political pluralism. Unlike in other regions, there was no single dominant oligarch in Kharkiv, such as Renat Akhmetov in Donetsk. Even during the Yanukovych presidency, the Party of Regions failed to establish full control over the local businesses. Both the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan demonstrated that political opposition would have been impossible in Kharkiv without this pluralism of local economic interests. Finally, in the Ukrainian political system, regional administrations provide for a strong influence of Kyiv over the regions. This reproduces political pluralism and creates the basis for political conflicts. The Kyiv leadership often tries to influence identity politics at the local level via regional administrations. Most resolute in this sense was President Yushchenko, who made the regional administrations responsible for his ambitious Holodomor commemoration project. In Kharkiv, this led to a conflict between the regional administration, supported by the local pro-Ukrainian organizations, on the one side, and the city council and regional council dominated by the Party of Regions and representing the “silent majority” of the local population on the other. This conflict was personified in the clash between Arsen Avakov, the head of the regional administration, and Mikhail Dobkin, Kharkiv’s mayor. The structure of the conflict and its main protagonists are basically the same today – the regional administration vs. the city council and the current mayor Gennady Kernes – though the level of intensity and polarisation associated with it is now much higher.

3) The third factor contributing to Kharkiv becoming a site of memory wars is its borderland location, its proximity to Russia – and Russia’s persisting interest in Kharkiv. The concept of borderland identity, which lends itself to being associated with post-modern notions such as hybridism, bilingualism and cultural ambivalence, has been re-invented and politically exploited by the local elites since the end of 1990s, when Kharkiv was proclaimed the “capital” of Ukrainian-Russian cooperation, and a Euroregion encompassing Kharkiv and the neighbouring Russian Belgorod was created. After the Orange Revolution, Kharkiv became “a place of contested national narratives, historical mythologies and political projects” (Kravchenko, 2009, p.220). Moscow supported a number

of pro-Russian organizations in Kharkiv that specialised in “anti-Yushchenko” actions, including protests against Ukrainisation and the glorification of the UPA, Stepan Bandera and Yuriy Shukhevych. Local bosses of the Party of Regions found support in Russia for their ideological opposition to the Orange coalition. For example, in November 2008, an international conference entitled “The Famine in the USSR in the 1930s: Historical and Political Interpretations” was held in Kharkiv.² It was organized by the Party of Regions, which used it to demonstrate its discontent with Yushchenko’s interpretation of the Holodomor as genocide. The “Historical Memory” Foundation and the Federal Archive Agency were co-organizers on the Russian side, and the conference was attended by Russian politicians and historians. The event took place at the peak of the political controversies around the Holodomor, on the eve of the Day of Memory for the Holodomor Victims and two days after President Yushchenko had visited Kharkiv and officially opened the new memorial. One year later, another conference in the same format was held in Kharkiv, this time devoted to the 70th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The conference promoted the Russian interpretation of the pact and concluded with the declaration of an anti-Orange “anti-fascist” front. These are only two examples of how Kharkiv has become a site of Russian ideological expansion due to its borderland location and ambivalent identity.

The spiral of memory wars

From the standpoint of local conflicts on historical memory and identity, the last decade is especially significant for understanding the present situation in Kharkiv. This decade, which started with the Orange Revolution, can be divided into three periods:

1. The so-called Orange era, Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency (2005–2010), which brought with it the politicisation of historical memory and ideological polarisation, in Kharkiv in particular, due to the president’s critical stance vis-à-vis the Soviet past.
2. The era of authoritarian backlash, which spans the period from the electoral victory of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010 to the beginning of Euro-maidan in 2013. In Kharkiv, the start of this period coincided with the appointment of Mikhail Dobkin as the head of the regional administration and Gennady Kernes becoming the mayor of Kharkiv. In these years, the legacy of Yushchenko’s memory politics was partly dismantled, partly marginalised.

3. The third period started with the Euromaidan and the fall of the Yanukovych regime. Especially during the last year, pro-Russian separatism and military conflict in Donbas rendered the issue of dealing with Soviet past highly relevant again.

The Orange era

In the 1990s, Kharkiv avoided what Polish sociologist Mariusz Czepczynski (2008) called “post-Communist landscape cleansing” (p. 109). Unlike in Lviv (Hrytsak & Susak, 2003), in Kharkiv, de-Sovietisation and Ukrainisation of the urban space was fragmentary and incomplete. “Counter-memories” appeared in the form of enclaves that were surrounded by the still-Soviet commemorative landscape. Example of such enclaves are the Youth Park (Molodizhnyi Park) and the Ukrainian-Polish Memorial to the Victims of Totalitarianism. The first one, a former Kharkiv cemetery and a site where victims of political terror and the Famine were interred in secret burials, was transformed in the 1970s into a recreation zone; starting in the late 1980s it became a local pantheon to Ukraine as a victim and, at the same time, a symbol of historical amnesia. While the development of the park was due to the initiative of local civil society groups and activists, the second site, the Ukrainian-Polish memorial, was an interstate project implemented from above. Both sites remained marginal in post-Soviet Kharkiv, however, and did not bring about any change in the city’s dominant identity.³

This situation was challenged by the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko’s revolutionary memory politics, which aimed at redefining the Ukrainian nation by re-evaluating historical memory. Yushchenko and his political allies sought to get rid of Soviet symbols and myths (understood as an artificial, imposed imperial memory) and hoped for a revival of “true” national memory. Politically, the issue of the Holodomor, now officially interpreted as genocide committed against Ukrainians, and the rehabilitation of the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and of the UPA and its leaders were highly controversial and divisive. In Kharkiv, these revolutionary intentions of the new Kyiv leadership met with resistance from the major share of Kharkiv’s local political elites.

The Orange Revolution undermined the relative political consensus in Kharkiv and led to political and ideological polarisation. Yevhen Kushnaryov, former governor of the Kharkiv region, became the leader of the “anti-Orange” political camp. The Party of Regions, initially a Donbas creation, became the strongest political force in the Kharkiv region by virtue

of its managing to unite most local opponents of the “Orange coalition”. However, from 2005 on, strategic power in the region was in the hands of the new head of the regional administration Arsen Avakov, a Kharkiv businessman and a representative of the Our Ukraine party. Avakov supported Yushchenko’s critical attitude toward the Soviet past, not only for reasons of political loyalty, but of also out of personal conviction. In 2006, the Party of Regions got their revenge at the local elections, winning a majority in both the Kharkiv regional council and the city council. The newly elected mayor, Mikhail Dobkin, a representative of the Party of Regions who was known for his harsh anti-Orange rhetoric, was an uncompromised opponent of Yushchenko and his commemorative initiatives. As a result, the ideological tensions between the two political forces, already exacerbated by the political polarisation in the wake of the Orange Revolution, made serious conflicts on historical memory in the city inevitable.

The most significant examples of memory wars during this period were the conflict that erupted around the new Holodomor memorial erected in 2008 to mark the 75th anniversary of the Famine, and the fight around the UPA memorial stone in the Youth Park. The first case I have already analysed in detail in my article “Capital of Despair” (Zhurzhenko, 2011), so I will only touch on a few aspects of it here. Most importantly, the Holodomor’s place in national memory and its integration in the urban landscape became a subject of political fight in this conflict. A special committee created by the regional administration believed that the new memorial to the victims of the Holodomor deserved a location at the heart of the city to fulfil its symbolic and educational role. In contrast, their opponents (the mayor and the city council) proposed that it be erected in the countryside since, to paraphrase them, it was the rural population that had suffered most from the famine. The initial project proposal, supported by the committee and by Avakov, the head of the regional administration, was to build the memorial in the above-mentioned Youth Park, integrating the already existing memorial cross devoted to Holodomor victims into the new composition. However, the city council did not grant official permission for the construction work, instead suggesting that the memorial be built in one of the distant industrial districts. This reluctance on the part of the municipal authorities to cooperate with the regional administration on the new memorial reflected their wish to depoliticise and marginalise the Holodomor memory. As a result of the political fights and negotiations, the regional administration decided to build the Holodomor memorial at yet another location: a site in the northern outskirts of Kharkiv, near the highway to Moscow. The monument, which represents a peasant family, a man,

a woman and two children, symbolising suffering and hope, was officially opened by President Yushchenko during his official visit to Kharkiv in November 2008. Since the city council refused to cooperate, the land for the construction was provided by the Kharkiv regional council, which was more cooperative despite being dominated by the Party of Regions. Avakov's successor, Mikhail Dobkin, appointed as the head of the regional administration in 2010, conspicuously ignored the Holodomor memorial built by his predecessor.

While the conflict played out on a local stage, its trigger was an initiative from Kyiv. The "Year of Commemoration of the Holodomor Victims" initiated by President Yushchenko was an attempt to impose one unified, mandatory narrative of the past, predominantly through administrative instruments. As the former capital of Soviet Ukraine, and one of the regions severely

hit by the famine, but even more as a stronghold of the Party of Regions, Kharkiv was symbolically and politically important for Yushchenko. The new Holodomor memorial in Kharkiv was supposed to reflect the role of the city in 20th century Ukrainian history and teach the local anti-Orange elites a lesson about who had the last word.

Unlike the conflict surrounding the Holodomor memorial, which was elite-driven and reflected obvious tensions between Kyiv and Kharkiv, the second case – the dispute over the UPA memorial stone in the Youth Park – was largely a conflict from below, pitting pro-Ukrainian activists and nationalists against Soviet veterans and Communists. The conflict was triggered by the decision of the city council to remove the UPA memorial stone. Erected in 1992 by the initiative *Narodnyi Ruch*, it remained largely unnoticed until it was turned into a powerful symbol for both local oppo-



The Holodomor memorial in Kharkiv, November 2008. © Tatiana Zhurzhenko

nents and sympathisers of the UPA against the background of fierce debate about the organization's role in Ukrainian history. In December 2006 members of the radical "Eurasian Youth Movement" operating out of Russia "kidnapped" the stone and then buried it near its site. In 2008 Mayor Mikhail Dobkin announced plans to banish the UPA memorial to Ivano-Frankivsk and suggested installing a counter monument dedicated to the (East-Ukrainian) victims of the UPA in its stead.⁴



UPA memorial in the Youth Park, Kharkiv, October 2007. (Foto: Pavlo Podobed)

These two examples demonstrate that the marginal status of alternative memories which had no place in the Soviet commemorative canon did not change much after the Orange Revolution. Moreover, most Soviet monuments and symbols were left largely intact, despite President Yushchenko's decree in 2009 ordering the "removal of memorials and memorial signs devoted to persons involved in the organiza-

tion of the Holodomors and political repressions".⁵ Probably the only Soviet symbol which was removed during this period was the Felix Dzerzhinsky memorial plaque on the Kharkiv SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) (former KGB/Committee for State Security) building. This occurred after the Polish film director Andrzej Wajda, who had visited Kharkiv with his film "Katyn", expressed his surprise at discovering Dzerzhinsky's profile in the very centre of Kharkiv.

The Yanukovych era

In 2010–2013 Viktor Yanukovych and his clan managed to gain nearly a complete monopoly of political power in Ukraine and to marginalise political opposition. In Kharkiv, the Party of Regions took full con-

trol over local politics: Arsen Avakov lost the mayoral election to Genadiy Kernes and was forced to leave the country after a criminal case was opened against him. Having consolidated its power in Kharkiv, the Party of Regions no longer had needed to take an aggressive anti-nationalist stance. Divisive issues, such as that of the UPA, were marginalised. The Party of Regions positioned itself as an ideologically neutral political force providing stability and reflecting the interests of the broad majority of the Kharkovites, as opposed to a marginal group of “Ukrainian nationalists” who, it claimed, had no popular support in the city.

In the run-up to the 2012 European football championship, the modernisation of the urban space became a new priority of the Kharkiv authorities, even if they were mainly preoccupied by the opportunities for personal enrichment this event opened. During the renovation of the city centre some Soviet monuments that did not fit in well with Kharkiv’s new “European” image were removed without much noise. For example, the monument to Maxim Gorkiy was not returned to its site after the reconstruction of the Gorkiy Park – and indeed, this post-war Soviet style monument did not fit in with the new entertainment park built according to



Constitution Square in Kharkiv before reconstruction: demonstration organized by Yevhen Kushnaryov’s short-lived party, spring 2005. © Tatiana Zhurzhenko

Western standards. Another example is the Alley of Komsomol Heroes in a small park featuring the “Glass Spring” fountain, an iconic symbol of Kharkiv. In Soviet times, the Alley of Komsomol Heroes was symbolically connected to the nearby regional Komsomol committee building. The idea of relocating the Komsomol heroes to another site was debated several times in the last decade, but the communists insisted on keeping the sculptures in place. In 2013 the busts of Komsomol heroes were removed in connection with the construction of a new Orthodox church, a controversial project which triggered protests by local residents.

One of the most significant Soviet-era monuments was the one devoted to the heroes of the October Revolution at Constitution Square (colloquially known as “The Five Carrying a Fridge”). It too was removed in 2011, despite the protests of the communists. It was supposed to be relocated to the industrial district Tractor Factory (Traktornyi Zavod). To take its place, the Kharkiv authorities commissioned a new monument to Ukrainian independence to be erected on the same site. The result, a conventional statue of a woman in historicist style created by Kharkiv sculptor Oleksandr Ridny, represents Ukraine as Nike, the goddess of victory. In line with the aesthetic taste of the local political elites, the new Kharkiv urbanism stylistically draws on Orthodox and Russian imperial symbols, historicism and populism (Mayor Kernes’ obsession of with benches became a subject of local jokes).



Constitution Square after reconstruction: memorial meeting honouring the Ukrainian soldiers fallen in Donbas, February 22, 2015.

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In fact, Ilia Kalinin’s notion of “nostalgic modernisation”, which he applied to the Medvedev era in Russia, describes the commemorative and cultural policy of Kharkiv authorities quite well. Soviet era memorial sites were either

silently expunged or renovated as a benevolent gesture towards Soviet veterans. In the de-politicised post-Soviet urban landscape, the remaining Soviet memorials simply turned into “cultural heritage”. The monumental Lenin statue on Svobody Square was left intact,⁶ although an official promotional video for Kharkiv circulating in the Internet did not feature the statue – it was erased using Photoshop.

In the eve of the 2012 European football championship, the pragmatically motivated Kharkiv authorities could even afford a gesture of demonstrative reconciliation between the “east” and the “west” of the country. Dobkin and Kernes accepted the personal request of Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi and agreed to restore the memorial plaque dedicated to the Greek Catholic bishop Yosyp Slipy, who spent several weeks in one of the Kharkiv prisons after WWII. Yosyp Slipy supported the declaration of Ukrainian independence in Nazi-occupied Lviv in 1941 and later contributed to the formation of the SS Halychyna Division. The memorial plaque, which was inaugurated after the Orange Revolution, was taken down in 2010 under pressure from communists and Soviet veterans who considered Slipy to be a Nazi collaborator. (There was speculation that the Yosyp Slipy memorial plaque was taken down in retaliation for the removal of the memorial plaque to Kharkiv historian, monarchist and Russian nationalist Andrey Viazigin which was done under pressure from pro-Ukrainian organizations).⁷ The plaque devoted to Yosyp Slipy was restored in February 2011 on the occasion of a visit to Kharkiv by Lviv mayor and the head of the Lviv regional administration. Mikhail Dobkin, contradicting his earlier “anti-fascists” rhetoric, suggested that Yosyp Slipy could be seen as a clergyman and a person who remained faithful to his personal convictions rather than a Ukrainian nationalist. This act, intended to demonstrate reconciliation between the proponents of alternative narratives of Ukrainian history, remained rather an exception, and the memory wars in Kharkiv continued.

One of the most recent episodes, a bitter dispute over Yuriy Shevelyov’s memorial plaque in 2013, shows that the political conflict which divided the Kharkiv elites and public after the Orange Revolution is not easy to resolve. It is rooted in the 20th century collective memory of Kharkiv, especially in the traumas of Stalinist terror and Nazi occupation, and in the Soviet mythology of WWII, which stigmatises any form of Ukrainian nationalism as “fascism” and reduces any anti-Soviet activity to a “collaboration with the Nazis”. Starting in late 2013, this “antifascist” discourse proved to be an especially powerful instrument of anti-Ukrainian mobilisation. In retrospect, the conflict surrounding the memorial plaque

to Yuriy Shevelyov, a Kharkiv-born linguist and philologist, and professor at Harvard and Columbia Universities, whom the Kharkiv authorities denounced in 2013 as a Nazi collaborator because he wrote for the Ukrainian newspaper “Nova Ukraina” during the occupation, can be seen as a prelude to the so called “Russian Spring” – the pro-Russian revolt against the alleged “fascist junta” in Kyiv.

The initiative to memorialise Professor Shevelyov in his home city emerged among a small group of historians, journalists and local activists after Oksana Zabuzhko presented her published correspondence with Yuriy Shevelyov in Kharkiv in February 2011.⁸ The group organized a public discussion on Kharkiv radio and TV, prepared a collection of Shevelyov’s essays for publication and requested permission from the city council to install a memorial plaque at the house where Shevelyov had lived. The city’s toponymic commission approved the project and Mayor Kernes gave his permission. The project was financed by private donations, one of the first ones being made by Oksana Zabuzhko. Serhiy Zhadan, a famous Kharkiv writer, organized a concert to raise money for the project.



Memorial plaque to Yuriy Shevelyov, September 2013. (Foto: Nadiya Li) Wikimedia Commons (cc) CC BY-SA 3.0.

The plaque was inaugurated on September 3, 2013, two days ahead of schedule, because of rumours that Kharkiv authorities had planned to reverse their decision.⁹ Mikhail Dobkin, the head of the Kharkiv regional administration, known for his fight with the “Orange plague” in his earlier capacity as mayor, expressed his radically negative opinion on the personality of Yuriy Shevelyov, calling him (and those who came to the opening) “fascist scum” on Twitter. The Kharkiv “Antifascist Committee”, whose activities were previously not very well known, called on the mayor to review his decision. On September 25, the city council decided to take down the plaque, and the same day three “unidentified individuals” appeared with hammers and axes and, in broad daylight, smashed the plaque to pieces.¹⁰ Public outrage about this act of vandalism went far beyond local politics; even the popular Ukrainian TV Show “Shuster live” addressed the issue. Prominent Ukrainian intellectuals appealed to the Kharkiv authorities in support of the Shevelyov case, and the international academic community expressed solidarity with the initiative.¹¹ On October 30, already after the first Euromaidan protests in Kyiv, the First Shevelyov Memorial Conference was held in Kharkiv¹² supported by the opposition politician Arsen Avakov who had returned from his exile in Italy after being elected to the Ukrainian Parliament.

The dispute over the memory of Yuriy Shevelyov was on the agenda of the anti-Yanukovich protests in Kharkiv, and, not by chance, it was the initiators of the Shevelyov commemoration who formed the core of the Kharkiv Euromaidan. One of the gatherings of the Kharkiv Euromaidan was specifically devoted to Yuriy Shevelyov and the conflict over his memorial plaque. Law student and activist Rostyslav Nebelskyi appealed to the courts, and one year later, in December 2014, the Kharkiv Administrative Court of Appeal ruled that the Kharkiv City Council and its Mayor Gennady Kernes did not have the right to take down the memorial plaque to Yuriy Shevelyov (Coynash, 2015). According to the court’s decision, there is no need to obtain permission from the Kharkiv authorities to re-install the plaque because the permit obtained back in 2011 is still valid. So the pro-Ukrainian activists won the legal battle, but the conflict is far from over. Meanwhile, the plaque has been restored but not yet been put back up. Given the current level of political emotions in the city it would be unlikely to last a week

Euromaidan and beyond

The third and most recent period of the memory wars I address in this article started with the Euromaidan protests at the end of November 2013. Most notably, the Lenin monument in the centre of Kyiv was toppled on December 8, 2013, triggering the so-called “Leninopad” (Toppling of Lenins) all over Ukraine. Initially symbols of communism and the Soviet regime, in the eyes of radical protesters, the Lenin statues became landmarks of Yanukovych’s rule, which was based, in their view, on neo-Soviet and pro-Russian political values. In the East, however, the Lenin monuments did not fall so easily. In Kharkiv, the war on monuments intensified with the “Russian spring”, fuelled by an unprecedented political polarisation in the city. The Euromaidan opened a new revolutionary phase, but unlike the Orange Revolution, which was largely an elite-driven protest, the Euromaidan was a mass protest movement from below. No wonder, then, that in 2014–2015, the war on communist monuments, which had previously been fought through presidential decrees and the courts, shifted onto the streets.



A pro-Russian rally in front of the Lenin monument, spring 2014.

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The initiative to take down the Lenin monument on Kharkiv's Svobody Square emerged after a mass rally against pro-Russian separatism held on February 22, 2014, and led to violent clashes between Maidan and Anti-Maidan activists.¹³ However, the majority of the Euromaidan leaders, in principle in favour of removing the monument, voted to postpone this action until the Ukrainian parliament legitimised decommunisation.¹⁴ In response to the threat of violent destruction, communists supported by pro-Russian activists organized an around the clock guard of the monument. From the perspective of pro-Russian protesters, the threat was posed by “Banderists” and “nationalists” from Kyiv and western Ukraine, who wanted to destroy “our monuments” and steal “our past”. The Lenin monument thus became the main site and symbol of pro-Russian mobilisation – an “empty signifier” that carries no ideological value (except maybe for communists) but marks local identity as being “anti-Kyiv”.

The physical confrontation between the pro-Russian defenders of the Lenin monument, who had erected a tent camp on Svobody Square, and the Euromaidan activists who had occupied the regional administration



Plinth of the toppled Lenin monument on Svobody Square with the shrine to the Ukrainian soldiers fallen in Donbas, February 2015. © Tatiana Zhurzhenko

building on the same square, culminated on March 1 with a pro-Russian mob storming the regional administration building. Euromaidan activists (among them Serhiy Zhadan) were beaten and humiliated, and the Russian tricolour appeared for a short time on the roof of the building. The Lenin monument on Svobody Square remained the main site of and the symbol for the pro-Russian mobilisation during the months that followed, and thus a target of the pro-Ukrainian radicals. As already mentioned, the Kharkiv Euromaidan was divided on the issue: fearing polarisation and further radicalisation, the moderate faction suggested that the monument be removed in a legal and civilised way, while some others pointed out that it was precisely the delay in resolving this issue that was causing polarisation and radicalisation.

The second, more successful, attempt at toppling the Lenin monument took place on September 28, 2014, after a mass pro-Ukrainian rally organized in response to a demonstration held by the communists one day earlier. After the rally, the radical part of the protest group (among them football ultras and pro-Ukrainian radicals from Hromadska Varta) went to Svobody Square and started preparations for removing the monument. Deputies from the Svoboda Party and activists from other regions (Sumy, Poltava) rushed to Kharkiv in order to support the action. Ihor Baluta, the head of the regional administration, did not support a violent demolition. He and his allies from Narodny Front were concerned about public safety in the city and the approval rating of the democratic forces before the approaching parliamentary elections. The Siloviki (police and SBU) also opposed it, as they were afraid of street violence. One argument raised by the opponents was that the massive, heavy statue might damage the underground transport system (metro) when it fell (an unjustified fear, as the statue later turned out to be hollow). However, the protesters did not wait for official permission and started sawing into the legs of the statue. According to some witnesses, the activists had studied the technical documentation of the monument in advance and acted according to a plan. They got technical assistance from Kharkiv industrial alpinists who, back in 2010, had participated in the protests against the felling of trees in Gorky Park. The idea of a swift removal was also supported by Inna Bohoslovska, a former MP from the Party of Regions, who had broken with the party at the beginning of the Euromaidan. Rumours say that she intends to challenge Gennady Kernes in the upcoming mayoral elections and has influence on some radical activists. In the end, the regional administration gave in to the pressure and refrained from interfering in the toppling of the monument. The action was post factum legitimised by referring to an old

decree issued by President Yushchenko in 2009 ordering the “removal of memorials and memorial signs devoted to persons involved in the organization of the Holodomors and political repressions”. Mayor Gennady Kernes has publically promised to restore the monument, and the city council has appealed to the court.

As well as outraging the communists and the Anti-Maidan, the demolition of the Lenin monument on Svobody Square sparked a fair amount of controversy among other social groups. Characteristically, a new civil society initiative, a platform for dialogue with the aim of reducing the political polarisation in the city that was organized by the Foundation for Local Democracy, held its first session in October 2014 on the question “What to do with Lenin?” Among the voices heard at that session were some from the groups that saw the demolition of the monument as a provocation and an act of vandalism. Some leaders of the Kharkiv Euromaidan also admitted that it had been done in the wrong way and had undermined the credibility of the new authorities. In general, the conflict around the Lenin monument intensified public discussion in the city on what should be done with Soviet and communist symbols and monuments, and showed the political limits of radical action. In its wake, several civil society initiatives have emerged which aim at working systematically with the radical and nationalist groups to prevent further unauthorised removal or vandalism of Soviet monuments.

The war on monuments has continued in Kharkiv, however. In January 2015, the monument to Soviet leader Pavel Postyshev, who chaired the Communist Party in the Kharkiv region in the early 1930s, was pulled down. The adoption of the “decommunisation laws” by the Ukrainian parliament on April 9 obviously gave these actions a new impetus: two more Lenin statues were toppled in Kharkiv some days later. That same month, three more monuments – statues of communist leaders Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Nikolai Rudnev and Yakov Sverdlov – were pulled down by the pro-Ukrainian radicals.

Conclusion

The Euromaidan finally fulfilled a central item on the agenda of Yushchenko’s government – the de-Sovietisation of the urban landscape – albeit in a radical, violent way. This radicalism was partly a response to the unlawful, violent actions of the local authorities in the era of Yanukovych, as in the case of the provocative destruction of Yuriy Shevelyov’s memo-

rial plaque. The war on memorials has been particularly violent and polarizing in the east of Ukraine, especially in Kharkiv, which remains a politically and ideologically contested city. The question, however, is how to channel radicalism into law-abiding political action. Kharkiv needs a platform, an open public space where the future of its urban identity and cultural landscape can be discussed and negotiated. The main obstacles for a new compromise are the continuing political polarisation, the persisting threat of pro-Russian separatism and a Russian intervention, and the relative weakness of the pro-Ukrainian political forces. Another question is how the planned decentralisation reform, which is supposed to empower the regions and local communities, fits in with the new decommunisation laws, which limit the authority of the local councils and give them only six months to completely remove the Soviet monuments and symbols and change geographic names and toponyms.

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Notes

- 1 The programme *Pervaia Stolitsa* [The First Capital], produced by the Kharkiv journalist Konstantin Kevorkian, was one such ambivalent attempt to reinvent the local history. His popular version of Kharkiv's history was presented as a documentary series on local television and later published as a collection of historical essays (Kevorkian, 2002). Although the title of his programme, *Pervaia Stolitsa*, refers to the years 1919-1934, when Kharkiv was the capital of Soviet Ukraine, the "golden age" of the city according to Kevorkian was the end of the 19th century, a period of rapid economic growth and cultural flourishing. Thus, his version of Kharkiv history tried to reconcile Soviet and Russian imperial narratives with local Ukrainian narratives and symbols. Kevorkian sees the path to Kharkiv's renewed prosperity and cultural revival in economic regionalisation and in turning the city into the "shadow capital of the Russian-speaking culture in Ukraine". The main obstacles to this scenario, according to him, are the "Ukrainian nationalists", who are unable to accept the cultural specificity of Kharkiv. According to Kevorkian, Kharkiv as a merchant centre and a mediator between Ukraine and Russia could become a capitalist "small tiger" – liberal, multicultural and indifferent to the issue of national identity.
- 2 More details in: Zhurzhenko (2011).
- 3 More details in: Zhurzhenko (2011).
- 4 [Kharkovites blame Oplot for the kidnapping of the UPA memorial], www.day.kiev.ua/ru/news/260413-v-pohishchenii-pamyatnika-upa-harkovchane-obvinyayut-oplot
- 5 Ukaz Prezidenta Ukrayiny No. 432/2009. Pro dodatkovy zakhody shchodo vshanuvannya pam'yati zhertv Holodomoru 1932-1933 rokiv v Ukrayini [Decree no. 432/2009 of the President of Ukraine. On additional measures regarding honouring of the memorial to the victims of the Holodomor 1932-1933 in Ukraine], <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/9448.html>
- 6 The Lenin monument on Svobody Square was toppled in September 2014. More information further on in section 2.3 of this article.
- 7 www.umoloda.kiev.ua/print/91/45/63259/
- 8 Mykhajlyn, I., & Shevel'ov, Y., et al, <http://blogs.telekritika.ua/?id=3820>
- 9 U Kharkovi popry pereshkody vidkryly doshku Yuriyu Shevel'ovu, www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/09/4/135743/
- 10 U Kharkovi sokroyu znyshhly doshku Shevel'ovu [In Kharkiv, the plaque honouring Shevel'ov is destroyed with an axe], www.istpravda.com.ua/short/2013/09/25/136684/

- 11 Oksana Khmel'ovs'ka. Protystoyannya u Kharkovi: vlada poslidovno radyanizuye misto. Intelihenciya chynyt' opir [Opposition in Kharkiv: the authorities are systematically vandalising the city], <http://tyzhden.ua/Society/90288>
- 12 U Kharkovi rozpochalys "Shevel'ovs'ki chytannya" [In Kharkiv, the "Shevel'ov readings" have begun], <http://tyzhden.ua/News/92740>
- 13 U Kharkovi tryvayut' sutycky bilya veletens'koho pam'yatnyka Leninu [In Kharkiv, clashes continue near the huge statue of Lenin], www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/25273890.html
- 14 Khar'kovskyj Evromajdan otkazalsya snosyt' pamyatnyk Lenynu [Kharkiv's Euro-aidan decides not to take down the statue of Lenin], www.segodnya.ua/regions/kharkov/harkovskiy-evromaydana-otkazalsya-snosit-pamyatnik-leninu-498532.html

The history of teaching in Ukraine: two decades of public, academic and political debates

Introduction

The collapse of the USSR created opportunities for independent countries to build a democratic society and to revitalise and rewrite national histories, a process described by K. Jenkins (2003) in “Refiguring History. New thoughts concern an old discipline”. Most of the transformations in these societies were initially influenced by national movements. In some cases, these realities provoked new conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups. Retrospectively, we can see that a large number of mistakes were made by former governments in the construction of the new democratic states. The most highly contentious decisions refer to the political discourse on the new identity crisis and statehood. The political and economic situation caused a crisis of public expenditure on education. In all countries, new educational systems based on the values of the new society, new education acts, competence-based curricula and textbooks were established. Nevertheless, in many cases, the governments tried to use textbooks, in particular history and social science textbooks, for state ideology discourses. Thus, over the last two decades, textbooks have become an important educational, socialization and political instrument (Kalmus, 2004).

The history curriculum, textbook reforms and public debates in Ukraine

In most Soviet republics, the process of changing educational systems in general, and history teaching in particular, began during the late 1980s during Gorbachev’s “glasnost” and “perestroika” (Krylač & Kul’cickii,

1999, p. 163). In 1989, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR established a programme of developing history research in Ukraine (Kul'činskij, 1995). The Academy of Sciences decided to open up access to all works of M. S. Hrushevsky and the work *History of Ukraine*, and to use it as a background for learning and teaching the history of Ukraine (Krylač & Kul'cickii, 1999).¹

The collapse of the USSR and the formation of the independent state of Ukraine signalled the beginning of democratic reforms in all spheres of life. All political, economic and social changes have direct links to education, since the Soviet ideology and mentality had to be replaced with a new one. The constitution, the legislation on education, and others formed a new legal framework for the educational system in Ukraine. The most important laws in the field of education are the law of Ukraine on education, adopted in 1991,² and the national programme "Education: Osvita. Ukraïna XXI st. (Ukraine in the 21st Century)", adopted in 1992 at the First National Congress of Teachers (Dietzsch, 2006; Volovic, 1998).³ The constitution, the Ukrainian laws and Ukrainian society are based on the principles of democracy and eliminating the practices of the authoritarian Soviet regime. Until today, education in Ukraine has remained the responsibility of the state, with the central state bodies deciding the shape of educational policies. Thus, the Ukrainian educational system still remains highly centralised today. The Ministry of Education is the main body in the decision-making process when it comes to curricula content and textbook production (Dietsch, 2006, pp. 79; 88). With regard to the nationalities living in Ukraine, the law on citizenship made all those officially resident in the country at the moment of its official approval citizens of Ukraine (October 1991), and removed the nationality line in the internal identification document. The law on national minorities (June 1992), based on the Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine (November 1991) "guarantees to all nations and national groups the right to use their mother tongue in all spheres of public life, including education, administration and the reception and dispersal of information" (Janmaat, 2000, pp. 64–65). If the laws on national rights in Ukraine appeared to very liberal, the reality is different, and we have observed a huge effort by the state in post-Soviet Ukraine to Ukrainianise public life. The new constitution of Ukraine, which was approved on June 1, 1996, confirmed the status of Ukrainian as the sole state language, but the constitution also guarantees "the free development, use and protection of Russian and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine" (Verkhovna Rada, 1996, Art. 10).⁴

At the end of 1980s, Ukraine began the process of rewriting and revising the historical period affected by Soviet ideology. During the 1990s, Ukraine was marked by a movement for sovereignty and construction of an independent state and nation. History became a powerful political instrument in the hands of politicians and intellectuals in the process of underlining the legitimacy of the state (Dietsch, 2006, pp. 8-9; 49-50). After gaining its independence, Ukraine's strategic priority became to create a national historical image. Because Ukraine had never been a nation state before 1991, the "Ukrainian Project" (the Ukrainian People's Republic, the *Ukrainska Narodnaya Respublika/UNR* 1918) (pp. 50-51) – the creation of a new ideology and national history that would legitimise the Ukrainian statehood – was paramount. As J. Dietsch correctly observed, independent Ukraine is still very much affected by the past. According to the present interpretation of Ukrainian historians, Kievan Rus represents the first attempt at Ukrainian state-building (Dietsch, 2006; Gil'kes, 2000; Giric, 2000; Gricak, 2000; Ijlge, 2000; Karmazine, 2000). Thus, nation-building in Ukraine is part of official educational policy at all levels.⁵

Rediscovering and reinterpreting Ukrainian history

Since 1991, when Ukraine became an independent country, the process of writing and rewriting history has gained more ground. This process has a direct effect on school history curricula and textbooks. One of the first Ukrainian manuals for teachers and pupils on Ukrainian history was O. Subtelny's work (1988), which was translated and published in 1991 in the Ukrainian language (Subtel'nyj, 1991). Another manual was published by F. H. Turchenko (1994). These two works also involved the Ukrainian diaspora in rediscovering national Ukrainian history. In 1991, one of the first experimental textbooks for higher-level classes of secondary school was published (Koval' et al, 1991). This was actually the first Ukrainian textbook where the authors focused exclusively on national history; it was used in schools from the 1991-1992 school year onwards. The history of Russia became part of world history. The book was published in both Ukrainian and Russian with a print run of 760,000 copies (Krylach & Kul'cickij, 1999, p. 164). In 1993-1994, another experimental textbook for high school classes in Ukrainian and Russian was published, which was based on the concept of history teaching elaborated by the Institute of History of the Academy of Science of Ukraine (Kul'čycky, Kurnosov & Koval', 1993).

500,000 copies of the book were published for Ukrainian schools, and it was later translated into Russian for minority groups (300,000 copies in 1994/1995), as well as Hungarian and Romanian (Krylach & Kul'cickij, 1999, p. 164). As an alternative for higher-level school classes, another textbook appeared in 1994–1995, published by the Geneza Publishing House (Turchenko, 2014; Turchenko, Panchenko, & Tymchenko, 2015). The books were prepared according to the new school curriculum of the History of Ukraine, and contained more maps, pictures, sources etc. than the previous textbooks. Around one million copies of these textbooks were published. The first generation of Ukrainian history textbooks differs from their Soviet counterparts; the textbooks focus primarily on the history of Ukraine as a state, power and political movement, which are linked with nation-building. The relationship between “natives” and “foreigners” is treated through terms of “occupation”, “oppression”, “exploitation”, “struggle”, etc. (Hyrych & Verbytska, 2010). The new textbooks did not meet expectations and were criticised by some political leaders.⁶

The official programme of history teaching in the Ukrainian schools approved by the Ministry of Education in 1996 stated that lesson no. 42 in the 10th grade was designed to cover “the occupation regime and the establishment of the anti-Nazi movement in Ukraine”, which was to be a “basic concept” with which all pupils should be familiar (Dietsch, 2006, p. 164; Ministerstvo osvity Ukrainy, 1996). According to the school curriculum, history is one of the most important school topics in Ukrainian education, and one of the course’s objectives is to “educate pupils in a patriotic spirit so that they cultivate a love for their nation” (Janmaat, 2006, p. 361; Ministerstvo osvity Ukrainy, 1996, p. 9). The history curriculum from 1998 includes aspects of educational and social development based on principles of humanism and democracy, “tolerance, unprejudiced perceptions and a positive attitude toward other nationalities” (Ministerstvo osvity Ukrainy, 1998, pp. 3–4). This structure of history teaching was also used during the Soviet era, when one course focused on USSR history (Istoria SSSR), another on world history and a third on the history of the Ukrainian SSR (Istoria Ukrainskoi SSR).

The history curriculum is divided equally into two compulsory courses: a History of Ukraine (Istoria Ukrainy) and World History (Vsesvitnia istoria), and one optional course dealing with regional or local history (Istoria ridnogo kraiu) (Dietsch, 2006, p. 150). Each teacher can decide on the amount of time given to a topic and add topics relevant to their region. For example, in Odessa, pupils study Bulgarian history, in Crimea the history of Tatars, etc. (Bennett, 1999), and the textbooks from the regions of

Poltava, Zaporizhzhie and Kamenets-Podilsky are focused on their own history since prehistoric times or just on 20th century events (Bilous'ko & Suprunenko, 2004; Ribak, 2004a; 2004b; Ignatusa, Tkachenko & Turchenko, 2003). The 1998 programme deals more with political history than with social, cultural and life issues (Davletov, 2000).

The history of the 20th century was and remains today a debated topic in all European countries. In Ukraine, for example, seminars and training events were also organized for teachers on this subject. In June 1997, a seminar took place in Lviv on "Initial in-service training of history teachers in European countries on democratic transition"; later, in October 1997, it was followed by other seminar in Chernivtsy on "Central and Eastern Europe as a historical region: the problem of integration in 20th century world history". The following year, in 1998, the Council of Europe and the Ukrainian authorities organized other seminar in Yalta on "The reform of 20th century world history curricula in secondary schools with special reference to controversial and sensitive subjects and the role of famous historical persons" (Pometun, 1998).

The debates regarding the content of the new history textbooks involved the Ukrainian parliament as well.⁷ In May 1997, V. Kuy'ev and E. Krasniakov, members of parliament, wrote a letter to the president of the Ukrainian parliament, A. Moroz, in which they stressed the misleading interpretation of the historical facts by the new textbooks. In this situation, the Ministry of Education had to prepare an expert report on the contents of a textbook written by F. G. Turchenko et al. The Institute of the History of Ukraine set up a commission with S. Kul'cockii, V. Versiuk, V. Danilenko and M. Koval'. In the end, the members of the commission declared that the members of parliament were right in one statement in their letter, that "the historical facts should be treated in the textbooks without emotion". The authors of the textbook demonstrated that the old Soviet-Stalinist scheme of history is false, and they gave a new interpretation of the history of the 20th century. Parliamentarians did not discover concrete mistakes in the textbook, and it is likely that their initiative was linked to the nostalgia of all the people who were born and educated in the Soviet times.

The public debates around 20th century history were provoked in 2005 by an initiative of the communist members of parliament regarding the role of the USSR in WWII. In reaction to this initiative, a group of well-known historians addressed an open letter to the President of Ukraine and the parliament, and largely criticised the communist campaign (Janmaat, 2011, p.89). The discussions around history teaching in Ukraine

have continued following the publishing of the new concept of the history of Ukraine and world history teaching in Ukraine in 2009 between teachers and politicians, including members of the Ukrainian parliament.⁸

In the current curriculum in Ukraine, history is a compulsory subject on the list of the final exams for the 11th grade. History is taught as an ordinary course in the history of Ukraine from ancient times to the present day as one lesson per week from the 5th grade onwards. According to the school programme, this course is designed to “prepare pupils for successful appropriation of historical knowledge in later classes, form in children the beginnings of an imagination of the most important pages of the history of the Ukrainian people, raise enthusiasm for Ukraine’s past and a desire to learn more about it, and implant in schoolchildren a love of history as a science of past humanity” (Ministerstvo osvity Ukrainy, 1998, p. 5). During the 6th grade, pupils proceed to learn world history from ancient times to the fall of the western part of the Roman Empire. From the 7th grade onwards, students study two parallel courses on Ukrainian and world history until the 11th grade.

In 1998, Yu. Temirov, N. Temorvskaya and I. Todorov, from Donetsk State University, tried for the first time to prepare an integrated course of the history of Ukraine for the 10th grade (1914–1945), without making a big impact and without support from their colleagues and school audience (Davletov, 2000, p. 169). In the same year, participants of the seminar on teaching history of 20th century also discussed the idea of an integrated course of world and national history, but the Ukrainian authorities and historians did not support it.⁹

J. Dietsch (2006) observes that the structure of history teaching, curricular content and textbooks echoes that of Soviet times, and that “the Ukrainian Orange Revolution (2004) was linked not just to the political situation in the country, but also to trends of what and how a Ukrainian nation should be” (p. 64). The curriculum includes the topics that have to be taught consistently around the country, and in which grade and lesson. Also, like in Soviet era, the school curriculum stipulates what is to be included in textbooks, in which chapters etc. Hence, the content of history courses might have changed in Ukraine during last decade, but structurally they have remained close to their Soviet precedents. History teachers were advised to stress national pride and patriotism, the struggle of the Ukrainian people against foreign invaders, the establishment of the Ukrainian nation, etc. (Dietsch, 2006, pp. 150–151). However, one of the most difficult periods remained the history of the 20th century (p. 152).

Table 1: Structure of history teaching in Ukraine¹⁰

No.	Educational level	Grades	Discipline	Content
1.	Primary	3 (4)	History	General course
2.	Secondary	5	Introduction to the history of Ukraine	Medieval, 19th–20th century
		6	World history	Antiquity
		7	World History	Medieval period
			History of Ukraine	Medieval period
		8	World history	First half of the 16th – end of the 18th century
			History of Ukraine	From Lublinck Union to the mid-18th century
		9	World history	Second half of the 18th – beginning of the 20th century
			History of Ukraine	19th – beginning of the 20th century
3.	High school	10	World history	First half of the 20th century
			History of Ukraine	1914–1939
		11	World history	1939 onwards
			History of Ukraine	1939 onwards

For each course of history, there is one set of textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, which is the main institution responsible for curricular content, approving and producing textbooks, etc. Each year, the Ministry of Education, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, along with publishers, run competitions for new textbooks (Dietsch, 2006, p. 89). Every year, the Ministry of Education approves and publishes a list of textbooks recommended for use in each class. Before including them in this list, the textbooks have to go through a process of review, testing, revision and then recommendation for use. In the process of reviewing the history textbooks, scholars and experts from different educational and research institutions are involved.

In 2010, the Minister of Education, D. Tabachnik, declared that the new concept of history teaching in Ukraine should be friendlier in relation to

Russia. In this context, J. Boldyrev, a member of parliament, mentioned that for two decades, the concept of history education focused on the fact that for 300 years, Ukrainians were under Russian domination, and that now they understood that this was not the case. Thus, the new concept should mention that Ukrainians together with Russians built the empire and later the USSR. However, A. German (2010) from the Ukrainian presidential office was against the Ministry of Education initiative, claiming that Ukrainian history does not have to be influenced by Soviet ideology (Shishkin, 2010, pp. 194–195). Thus, as we can see, the political debate surrounding history education in Ukraine is still very current.

Conclusions

History as a school discipline remains a part of the centralised system¹¹. All curricula and textbooks have to be approved and recommended by the Ministry of Education. However, we can see many changes in the Ukrainian history teaching process and textbooks from 1990s compared to the 2000s, “from a somewhat stronger ethno-nationalism bias to a somewhat less ethno-centric bias” (Kas’janov, 2011, p.27). A general characteristic of the Ukrainian history textbooks is the lack of mention of ethnic minorities and lack of interest in Ukrainian textbooks for neighbouring countries. For example, Romania and Moldova are presented occasionally, and often in terms of military conflicts. No references are made to the society, culture, religion, or everyday life of the region. Nothing is mentioned about Romanian communities in Ukraine, nor about Ukrainian ethnicity on the territories of contemporary Moldova and Romania. Even though more than 100 ethnic groups live in Ukraine, the history textbooks are focused more on the notion of one country, one nation, and one history. I. Hyrych and P. Verbytska have pointed out very well the purpose of Ukrainian textbooks “We shouldn’t present Ukrainian history as the history of Ukrainian ethnicity. Based on the postulate of the political nation and the thesis of the adoption of “foreign” culture’s achievements on the Ukrainian territory as “native”, we need a tolerant story about the fate of the Polish, Russian, Jewish and other national minorities in Ukraine.” (Hyrych & Verbytska, 2010, p.366).

Natalia Yakovenko (2008a) also illustrated very well the situation of “the Other’s image” in Ukrainian textbooks, which depend on Soviet historiography. Maryan Mudryi (2008) considers that the Ukrainian history is built on Soviet patterns. In this context, J. G. Janmaat (2000) considers “the fact that Ukraine had never had a period of sustained independency

‘cruelly’ interrupted by Russian/Soviet ‘occupation’ meant that no justification could be found for an exclusionary policy (i.e. there was no “historical injustice” to be resolved). This makes the choice for an inclusive approach understandable” (p. 84).

A survey of school leavers conducted by the ‘Nova Doba’ association in partnership with the Democratic Initiatives Foundation in 2008/2009 shows an interesting result. “In the students’ opinion, the uniting factors of Ukraine as a single nation are the wish to build a better life in the country – 50%, and equal rights of the citizens of Ukraine, common state language, patriotic feelings of the citizens, common history – 25.3%, while only 20.6% of students feel that they are a part of Ukrainian citizenship, which testifies to the low degree of formation of their understanding of the political nation. Many students are advocates of a strong power in Ukraine” (Verbytska, 2009, p. 227). At the same time, most of pupils of the same age consider that “Their goal to build a better future together” (Hyrych & Verbytska, 2010, p. 359).

In 2008, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory founded a monitoring commission for Ukrainian history textbooks in order to analyse how critical thinking is developed by current history curricula and textbooks. The results of this work stress “a paradoxical disparity between the challenges of today and school textbooks” (Yakovenko, 2008a). P. Verbytska describes this situation very well:

“The existing majority of history textbooks stresses the ethnocentric vision of history, leaving aside the principles of multiethnicity, multiculturalness and multireligiousness – the priorities of modern school didactics in open societies; reflects Ukrainian society’s unity as an ethnic, linguistic and religious entity; identifies monocultural community with social lower suppressed strata. These textbooks form a pessimistic understanding of Ukraine with the colonial status and the inferiority complex. Ukrainian society is represented in them with suppressed lower strata, while the motivations of various society groups are not paid attention to. As a result, the commission concluded that modern history textbooks do not correspond either to the modern state of historical science nor to the needs of society or the state standards. The modern textbooks do not present the variant of the collective identity which would satisfy the needs of the integration and consolidation of Ukrainian society and would correspond to the modern-day challenges. Thus, a paradoxical gap in time between modern-day challenges and school textbooks needs to be remedied.”¹²

The history text books stress an ethnocentric vision of history and are dominated by political and military history (Hyrych & Verbytska, 2010, p. 359), but the biggest problem is described as follows: “History textbooks give a mythologised version of the Ukrainian nation’s origin and mix up the notions of ethnicity and nation, representing the existence of the nation as a linear, teleological, continuous and uninterrupted process from the pre-historical epoch.”¹³

In recent years, the Ukrainian authorities have also supported other principles and perspectives in education. These include developing historical thinking, and furthering the education of Ukrainian patriots and European citizens. However, history also should teach pupils that they are citizens of their country, Europe and the whole world as well (Dietsch, 2006).¹⁴

In the work of I. Katchanovski from 2005, a comparative analysis was made of the Tatars and the Gagauz people, two Turkish minorities from Ukraine and Moldova, which have many historic similarities and differences:

“The education system in the Soviet Union prompted convergence of political cultures of different ethnic groups. However, in the case of Crimean Tatars this mechanism of socialisation reinforced their differences from Russians, Ukrainians and Gagauz. Soviet historical textbooks and literary texts emphasised military conflicts between Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian and Russian Cossacks, slave raids by Crimean Tatars and military help provided by the Russian government to the Gagauz, Bulgarian and other Orthodox Christian people of the Ottoman Empire. The history of World War II in Soviet textbooks presented Crimean Tatars as Nazi collaborators and ignored the ethnic cleansing of Crimean Tatars by the Soviet government. Soviet mass media and popular culture promoted similar historical images of Crimean Tatars and Gagauz.” (p. 891)

Under President V. Yanukovych, the policy of historical memory turned to the rudimentary Soviet discourse. Since 2010, education has returned to the 11-grade system from the 12-grade system, which affects the curricula and textbooks. According to the high school curriculum (2010), history is taught for one lesson per week. The history textbooks for the 11th grade have become shorter and have shifted to the “classical Soviet historiography scheme”. For example, in the new textbook, the chapter formerly entitled “Ukraine during World War II” is now called “The Great Patriotic War”. P. Verbytska characterised the situation of history teach-

ing in Ukraine thus: “Our textbooks, especially on the history of Ukraine, still contain elements of xenophobia, cultural and ethnic intolerance, and gender chauvinism.”¹⁵

Since 2011, the new approaches to teaching history have been introduced according to the basic and secondary education standards, which stress reinforcement of the role of history as the main identity-forming subject, which teaches students dignity, human rights and democracy, and develops students’ positive attitude towards common European values.¹⁶ In this situation, if there is no consensus within Ukrainian society concerning a common historical past, the history curricula and the textbooks should be rewritten by Ukrainian scholars according to actual democratic requirements and needs (Verstiuk, 2011), with more attention paid to other minorities living in Ukraine and to its neighbours. “Together in One Land. A Multicultural History of Ukraine”, a new textbook by the Nova Doba All-Ukrainian Association of Teachers of History and Social Studies is a good example of achieving such a goal.¹⁷

English language translation provided by the author.

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Notes

- 1 See the reviews on recent republication of M. Hruševskiši's works. Baidaus, E. (2009); Baidaus, E. (2010a); Baidaus, E. (2010b).
- 2 The Law of Ukraine on Education, in: Vidomosi Verkhovnoji Rady, no. 34, 1991, p. 451–452. During the last decade, several amendments have been made.
- 3 See also: Derzavna nacionalna programa "Osvita": Ukraina XXI stolitia, zatverdzeno postanovoju Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrainy vid 3 lystopada 1993 roku, Kiïv: Raiduga, 1994.
- 4 See more details about these issues in Janmaat (2000), pp. 58–84 and 111–116.
- 5 See for more details about the relationship between education and nation-building in the following work: Janmaat (2000).
- 6 See the newspaper of the Socialist Party of Ukraine: Krasnikov (1995); Samarin (1995).
- 7 See the intervention of S. Dovgan from September 1996. In *Kievskie vedomosi* (6.9.1996).
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- 10 The table has been completed according to Programi seredn'oi zagal'noosvit'oi školi z ukraïns'koju movoju navčannja. Istorija Ukraïni, 5–11 klasi. Vsesvitnja istorija, 6–11 klasi, 1998; Programi dlja škil z pogliblenim vivčennjam istorii. Istorija Ukraïni, 1996; "Perelik Program, pidručnikiv ta navčal'nych posibnikiv, rekomendovanich Ministerstvom osviti i nauki Ukraïni dlja vikoristannja v zagal'noosvit-nich navčal'nych zakladach z ukraïns'koju movoju navčannja u 200/01 navčal'nomu roci". In: Istorija v školach Ukraïni 3/2000, 4–6.
- 11 See the chapter "The implementation of central policy" in Janmaat (2000).
- 12 Verbytska, P. History teaching in Ukraine, Msc.
- 13 Statements from the summary protocol of the meeting on monitoring the school textbooks in history of Ukraine. See Yakovenko (2008b).
- 14 *Orientovne kalendarno-tematichne planuvannja dlja zahal'noosvit'ih zakladiv. Istorija Ukrainy, vsevitnja istoriia 5-11 klasy*. Lviv: Lvivskyi oblastnyi naykovo-metodychnyi instytut osvity. 1999, p. 3.
- 15 Verbytska, P. The Conflict of Historical Memory as Reflected in History Teaching, country report: case of Ukraine, Msc.
- 16 The decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on approval of the state standard for basic and full general secondary education. November 23, 2011. No. 1392, Kyiv. Available from: <http://zakon.nau.ua/doc/?uid=1053.24.0> (23.10.2015).
- 17 Komarov et al, Istorija Epochi. Očima Ljudini, Ukraïna ta Evropa U 1900–1939 Rokach, Navčal'Nij Posibnik z Istorii Ukraïni ta Vsesvitn'Oï Istorii, Rekomendovano Ministerstvom Osviti i Nauki Ukraïni.

Relations between state and civil society actors in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus

Politics of history in Ukraine since the change of government in the spring of 2014

Introduction

It is inconsistency above all else that has characterised the politics of history in Ukraine since the country gained its independence in 1991, as is true in most of the republics of the former Soviet Union. As a result of a profound crisis in the social sciences and the absence of appropriate institutions, the state gradually acquired an ever greater dominance over the cultures of memory in the country, which in turn resulted in multiple course changes in the politics of history, particularly in the 2000–2010 period: the “Orange Revolution” of 2004/05, for example, or the turnaround in 2010 after Victor Yanukovych took office. During this period, various political groupings ruthlessly exploited key issues related to the past for their own purposes, considerably exacerbating the difficulties associated with the analytical reappraisal of those issues and processes of consensus finding in society.

Though the events in Ukraine over the past year have altered the status of non-governmental organizations in discussions relating to the past, the state remains the primary actor in this arena, particularly as its recent ventures in the politics of history are buttressed by majority approval.

State holidays and observances remain an effective tool for strengthening identities and communicating images of history. These holidays and observances are proclaimed by the president or the legislature, in the form of a state calendar encompassing official state holidays, anniversaries and days of remembrance, and their celebration or observance is planned and carried out by government authorities. The small group of major state holidays, the canonical holidays as it were, provide only limited opportunities for modification or reinterpretation, integrated as they are within the country’s festival culture. They are therefore characterised by a certain enduring stability throughout the entire post-Soviet space.

For that reason, at the start of each year, the Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada) regularly supplements those canonical state holidays with a list of anniversaries and days of remembrance to be celebrated or observed at the national level. This year was no exception: with a decision dated February 11, 2015, the Verkhovna Rada approved just such a list of supplementary observances for the current year. On each of the 60 occasions on that list – days of remembrance and anniversaries scattered throughout the year – a spotlight is trained on the exemplary life achievements of a selected public figure (from the domains of the culture and the arts, science, the military, or politics) or some memorable event in the form of mass propaganda and educational activities (public lectures, exhibitions, etc, including events for younger and older students), offering the local and the national media with occasions to inform the public. A comparison of the decision adopted this February with similar parliamentary decisions from past year sheds light on the objectives of and the latest developments in the new cabinet's politics of history. In addition to the parliament's list, we will look at presidential decrees and relevant government decisions either currently under preparation or that have been released since power changed hands one year ago. We will also look, albeit only briefly, at four pieces of legislation, pertaining to the history of the totalitarian regime, the struggle for liberation in the Ukraine and World War II, that were enacted shortly before the editorial deadline for this paper.

Politics of history in the shadow of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

During an interview televised by the German public broadcaster ARD on January 7, 2015, Ukraine's Prime Minister Arsenii Yatsenyuk created considerable confusion by equating the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict with the Soviet invasion of Ukraine and Germany. As government's press service attempted to duck the flurry of follow-up questions this elicited, Volodymyr Viatrovykh, the director of the Ukrainian National Memory Institute, came under pressure to provide an explanation. Yatsenyuk, Viatrovykh clarified, had been referring to the events in January of 1918, when Bolshevik troops from the Soviet Union marched into Ukraine. Though it is still not clear how well this interpretation matches Yatsenyuk's own, Viatrovykh's explanation does at any rate clearly indicate how the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is being interpreted in the politics of history.

The fighting in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea are being framed and understood as a key battle in a centuries-old war of liberation fought against Russian colonialism and Moscow's great-power aspirations. Propo-

nents of this interpretation like to draw historical parallels with the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR: *Ukrains'ka Narodnia Respublika*), whose armies fought the 'Russian-Bolshevist' troops. In popular depictions of history highly complex societal processes that played out in Ukrainian territories between 1918 and 1921 are reduced to their military and ethnic dimensions and are portrayed as a war of independence fought by Ukrainians against Russian Bolsheviks. The image of the UNR is noticeably enhanced in these portrayals, a treatment that contrasts sharply with that of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Law "... on the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes ..." of 9 April 2015 refers to the Communist regime in Ukraine from 1917 to 1991 as criminal, and draws a connection between the reestablishment of independence in 1991 and the history of the UNR.

Thus, it is not surprising that the list of state observances defined in the parliamentary decisions of February 11, 2015 provides for the remembrance for another four commanders of the UNR army and the 95th anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw, in which the Red Army suffered defeat at the hands of Polish-Ukrainian troops. The emphasis on historical victories and their dissemination by the media fits in with the programme aimed at strengthening the Ukrainian army announced by the government.

In the wake of the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the armed conflicts in Donbas, the president took additional decisions pertaining to state holidays that were intended to underline Ukraine's break with the Soviet legacy. Two of these decisions are particularly fraught with symbolism. Firstly, alongside the 9th of May, the traditional Day of Victory in the 'Great Patriotic War' (Ukrainian: *Den' Peremohy*; Russian: *Den' Pobedy*), Poroshenko proclaimed the 8th of May as the 'Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation' per decree. Secondly, he cancelled observance of 'Day of the Defenders of the Fatherland' (originally known as the 'Day of the Soviet Army and Navy'). Under the old Soviet tradition, this day was celebrated on the 23rd of February in Ukraine, as in Russia. The same presidential decree created the new 'Day of the Defender of Ukraine' on the 14th of October. This is the date on which Orthodox and Uniate Christians celebrate Pokrova, the Feast of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin (*Pokrova Presvyatoi Bohorodytsi*). Pokrova has also coincided with observance of the 'Day of Ukrainian Cossacks' since 1999 (the Virgin Mary was particularly revered as a protectress by the Zaporozhian Cossacks). Poroshenko referred to these traditions in the address he gave after he signed the decree, but he failed to mention that the new observance also falls on the 'Day of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army' (UPA: *Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armiia*), which

is at least as familiar to many Ukrainians as the Pokrova holy day is: the UPA is not uncontentious in many regions of the country. It remains to be seen how well the Ukrainian population will take to the new ‘Day of the Defenders of Ukraine’, since 23rd of February was one of the most popular of Soviet holidays, nicely bookending International Women’s Day (8th of March) as it did. For the present, one can note that the public reaction to the president’s decisions has been quite positive in conjunction with the Russian army’s role in the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas.

The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory¹

The most important institutional context for implementation of the new politics of history was created in 2014 in conjunction with the early presidential and parliamentary elections. The political platforms of the parties of Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk, which hold a majority in the new parliament between them, include a commitment to consolidate the Ukrainian identity and the national memory. A multi-fraction group on “memory and common understanding” was set up in the parliament, and it works closely with the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, which was established in 2006 at the initiative of President Yushchenko. During Yanukovych’s presidency a Communist Party member was appointed to lead the institute and its activities were virtually suspended. Re-established after the most recent change of government, the institute has been stocked with extensive expertise and acts as the central state authority for issues related to the politics of history. Since March 2014, the institute has been led by Volodymyr Viatrovych, a Ukrainian historian and archivist whose main research interest is the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. His latest book on this subject was received with some scepticism by both Western and Russian historians.

Since Ukraine’s institute, unlike its Polish prototype (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*), has no archival holdings of its own as yet, it sees the “reestablishment the national memory and identity” as its most important duty. The institute takes an active role in the de-Sovietisation of public space (removal of monuments to Lenin, renaming of streets, etc.) and has helped draw up a raft of parliamentary and cabinet decisions. It also participated in the drafting of the legislation adopted on April 9. One piece of that legislation, “On access to archives of the repressive bodies ...” provides for the organization of special archives which will constitute part of the institute. The law sets aside the requirements for the protection of personal data in connection with the use of these files. Earlier plans of the institute’s direc-

tor to bring together (partial) holdings from local archives within the institute's archives have drawn criticism in professional circles for violating the principle that archival collections should remain intact as well as for representing a virtually insurmountable logistical challenge, an open letter from the Association of Ukrainian Archivists serves as a recent example.

History of Kievan Rus, the medieval state, still contentious

The decision of the Verkhovna Rada of February 11, 2015 to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the death of Prince Volodymyr of Kiev was confirmed two weeks later in a Decree of the President. In addition to reiterating the great role played by the medieval state and Prince Volodymyr himself in the creation of the Ukrainian nation and their significance for the 1000-year tradition of statehood, this document contains the first official use of the term *Ukrayina-Rus*, which the Ukrainian historian and politician Mykhailo Hrushevsky used in his seminal work to express the continuous historical developments on Ukrainian lands from the Middle Ages to the modern era.

These decisions were seen in Moscow as an attempt hijack Kievan Rus and drew severe criticism from many, including representatives of the anti-Maidan movement. After President Putin's remarks on the sacred significance that the Crimean peninsula, where the beatified Volodymyr is said to have been baptised, the topic is freighted with more potential for conflict than ever. One of the celebrations under the aegis of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church that had been provisionally arranged will not take place in Ukraine. One can expect the subject to generate increased attention in the Ukrainian and Russian media this summer.

New reading of a city's history

Another entry on the list of remembrance days and anniversaries reveals a great deal about the latest trends in the politics of history in Ukraine.

This September, as it does every year, the city of Odesa (Russian: Odessa) will celebrate 'City Day' marking the anniversary of its founding. This time around though that founding is not being dated to 1794, as it has in the past, but to 1415, the year the city appears in the historical record for the first time. A small settlement called Kachybei²³ (Turkish: Hacıbey, Khadzhibey) originally existed at the site, it was later built up into a fortress under Ottoman rule. The fact of the port settlement's existence long

before Russia annexed both it and the territory around it has never been contested, and it is well documented in the historical and archaeological record. Nonetheless, in the collective memory the foundation of Odesa has remained closely linked with the Russian Army's siege of Khadzhibey and the subsequent annexation of the entire territory north of the Black Sea.

The proposal to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the city of Odesa this year is not new: it was originally put forth by a municipal citizen's initiative, which counted local historians among its members. Behind the parliament's decision to support that initiative and provide for the festivities, one can discern an attempt to bolster the spirits of the city's pro-Ukrainian residents, answer the speculation about the New Russia (Novorossiya) and how it should 'return' to Russia, and challenge the 'Odessa – Russian City' myth. Odesa's history is particularly relevant here because between the 1820s and the 1870s Odesa was the centre of the Novorossyisk General Government. At that time, this political-administrative entity encompassed three governates – Ekaterinoslav, Taurida and Kherson – all lying within the territory of modern-day Ukraine by the Black and the Azov Seas. Pushing the city's founding back nearly four centuries places the start of the city's 'biography' in a completely different epoch: that of the Polish-Lithuanian state, which plays a central role in the Ukrainian national narrative as a bridge between Kievan Rus and the pre-modern Cossack state.

From a scholarly standpoint, there is seldom a solid basis for city 'jubilees', but they do enjoy enormous popularity as large-scale and much-visited popular celebrations among a wide range of city residents. Whether the organizers will succeed in convincingly presenting the new historical viewpoint remains to be seen. In view of the tension in the city in the wake of the tragic events of May 2, 2014, the possibility of the celebration plans causing additional polarisation cannot be ruled out. The fact that the city council attempted to shield itself against possible censure by seeking a court ruling could be seen as an indication that this is indeed the case: the council had a local court review the parliamentary decision before beginning to prepare for the festivities. The recent attack in the street of one of the historians who belonged to the initiative group is another disturbing piece of news.

Memory of a war becoming a war of symbols

The law "On the immortalisation of the Victory", in force since 2000, reinforced a view of World War II history that was carried over from Soviet times. It is a view based on the notion of one victorious people

(*narodpobeditel'*) who won the decisive victory in the Great Patriotic War (*Velikaja Otetschestvennaja Vojna*) (1941–1945).

The new law “On the immortalisation of the Victory over Nazism in World War II, 1939–1945” mentions neither the Great Patriotic War nor the victorious people. Upon entry of the new legislation into force, the 2000 legislation will be annulled. Under the new law, the ‘Day of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War’, celebrated on the 9th of May, becomes the ‘Day of the Victory over Nazism in the Second World War’ and is downgraded to one of many forms of the immortalisation of the victory. Henceforth, a ‘Day of Memory and Reconciliation’ will be observed on the 8th of May. While that day is intended to commemorate the war’s victims, the 9th of May – or so President Poroshenko explained in an interview – honours those veterans who are still alive. As the generation that fought in the war dies off, the significance of this holiday will dwindle.

This restructuring of the state ceremonies marking the victory of the allied forces in Europe in World War II should be seen as an attempt to depart from the Soviet tradition, one that takes its cue from the (East) European tradition of commemoration. This is important for Ukraine insofar as it enables the country’s narrative of the war to include the events in the East Polish territories in 1939–1941, but also the UPA’s struggle for liberation both during and after the German–Soviet war.

With this new law, the Ukrainian leadership is clearly distancing itself from Victory Day, which has been exploited for propaganda purposes and mythologised in recent years. In doing so, the country’s leaders are clearly disputing the claim of the Putin regime to a monopoly over interpreting the story of the war. This clash is also playing out on the visual level: for about a year, Ukraine has promoted new imagery to commemorate victims of the war, thereby setting up an alternative to the black and orange striped Ribbon of St. George that Russia has disturbed both domestically and abroad, sometimes aggressively. The symbol presented last week by Viatrovych and Ukraine’s First Lady is very similar to the British remembrance poppy, designed to commemorate soldiers who fell in the Great War. This symbol is intended to replace the Ribbon of St. George, which has been objectionable to most Ukrainians anyway since the outbreak of the war in Donbas.

Conclusion

The Russian–Ukrainian conflict is being waged to no small degree at the level of differing images of the past, making it an important factor in the

analysis of Ukraine's politics of history. The effect of the conflict is ambivalent: by fostering and strengthening identities it has a mobilizing effect yet the risk it entails for Ukrainian statehood, already unstable, is resulting in a situation in which the vision upholding the state, which has taken on a more military tenor of late, is constantly in the forefront, often at the expense of other important aspects.

The conflict has also made some political decisions quite simple though. Along with the revocation of the Day of the Soviet Army in October 2014, the restructuring and reinterpretation of 'Victory Day' was the most significant intervention in the traditional canon of Ukrainian holidays inherited from the Soviet period. It remains to be determined what influence those decisions will have on the culture of memory in Ukraine. At any rate, the changes represent the most decisive attempt to break with the (post-)Soviet calendar, and thereby diminish the level of Russia's influence, since the country gained its independence. The legislation adopted on April 9 represents a watershed in Ukraine's politics of history and will determine its course in the foreseeable future. Without a doubt, the laws will be signed by the president soon and enter into force. They will be the subject of future research.

Translated from the German by Alison Borrowman.

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Tables

Table 1: Legal instruments relating to Ukraine's politics of history after the change of government in February 2014

Date	Legal instrument	Number	Title
21.07.2014	Decree of the President	608/2014	On the 23rd anniversary of the Independence of Ukraine
14.10.2014	Decree of the President	806/2014	On the Day of the Ukrainian Defender of Ukraine
28.10.2014	Decree of the President	829/2014	On the institution of a decoration of honor – medal commemorating the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Ukraine from the fascist occupiers
29.10.2014	Decree of the President	830/2014	On measures to be taken to mark the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Holodomor and the famines
22.12.2014	Decree of the President	948/2014	On celebration of the National Unity Day of the Ukraine in 2015
11.02.2015	Decision of the Verkhovna Rada	1752	On days of remembrance and anniversaries
25.02.2015	Decree of the President	107/2015	On honoring the and remembering Prince Volodymyr the Great of Kyiv – Founder of the Medieval State of Rus-Ukraine
18.03.2015	Decree of the President	148/2015	On the Day of the National Guard*
24.03.2015	Decree of the President	169/2015	On measures for the year 2015 marking the victory over Nazism in Europe and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II
09.04.2015	Law	2538-1	On the legal status and honoring of the memory of Ukrainian independence fighters in the 20th century
09.04.2015	Law	2539	On immortalisation of the victory over Nazism in World War II, 1939-1945
09.04.2015	Law	2540	On access to archives of the repressive bodies of the communist totalitarian regime of the years 1917-1991
09.04.2015	Law	2558	On the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols

* The day will be celebrated on the 26th of March, the Day of the Troops of the Interior Ministry was revoked per this decree.

Source: *Dmytro Myeshkov*.

Table 2: Results of the vote on Ukraine's laws on politics of history on April 9, 2014

Act	Submitted by	Submission date	In favour	Of those, coalition partners*	Opposed	Abstentions	Absent
On the legal status and honoring of the memory of the fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th century	Yuri Shukhevych (Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko)	07.04.2015	271	241	0	52	99
On immortalisation of the victory over Nazism in World War II of 1939-1945	Arsenii Yatsenyuk (Prime Minister of Ukraine)	03.04.2015	261	231	0	53	108
On access to archives of the repressive bodies of the communist totalitarian regime of the years 1917-1991	Arsenii Yatsenyuk (Prime Minister of Ukraine)	03.04.2015	261	232	0	57	102
On the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols	13 MPs (7 from the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko; 3 from Samopomich; and one each from People's Front, Fatherland and Bloc Petro Poroshenko)	06.04.2015	254	229	0	53	115

* Bloc Petro Poroshenko, People's Front, Samopomich (Self-reliance) party, Fatherland party and Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko

Source: *Internet portal of the Verkhovna Rada* (<www.rada.gov.ua>). Compiled by the editorial staff of *Ukraine-Analysen*.

Notes

- 1 A.k.a. Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance – *trans*.
- 2 Multiple modern and historical variants of the settlement's name exist; Odesa's website uses this variant (Качубей) on its website (<http://omr.gov.ua/ua/announcements/74447/>). – *trans*.

How can Russian civil society be supported in turbulent times? Responses from a stakeholder survey

Introduction

In the shadow of the Ukraine crisis and legislative decisions from Moscow that are increasingly framing Russia's public interest sector in 'social versus political' terms, considerable discussion has once again erupted in the West about the role and development potential of Russian civil society. After enacting the foreign agent law in 2012, the Duma adopted new provisions just last year that were intended to clarify the distinction between social and political organizations and make it easier to identify "foreign agent activities." All of this can be interpreted as an attempt to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' civil society. In the eyes of many of those observing developments in this area it seems obvious that there is a need for the provision of support to initiatives and organizations close to the opposition movement. Other possible strategies (strategies also put forward by well-informed experts on Russian civil society) do present themselves however, when one asks representatives of organizations that are directly engaged in charitable work in Russia or helping in other ways on the ground to ease social problems how they might be helped there. These alternative strategies essentially rely on the approach of building up the professional capacities of (social) service organizations right at the interface between those organizations and political actors, in the broader sense of that term.

Civil society and the third sector in Russia

The terms 'civil society' and 'third sector' are often used synonymously, although they describe different facets of civic self-organization and two

different focuses of organizational activity: the concept of the third sector, in the sense of the provision of social services, focuses on non-governmental and non-market-oriented (non-profit) organizations that contribute to the public good through social and charitable services without being focused primarily on economic returns. The concept of civil society, on the other hand, is bound up with a more political understanding that emphasises the rights and the opportunities of citizens – both as individuals and in organized forms – to take action to benefit their communities or promote their interests and values. The boundary between ‘non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) and state hierarchies can be defined first and foremost through this type of action.

The two concepts refer to the opposite ends of a continuum of ideal types, the two poles between which a public interest organization takes shape. While ‘third sector’ refers, from a ‘system functional’ perspective, to the sector coordinates between the state, the market and the family, the concept of civil society – with a greater focus on action and interaction – relates to the aspects of self-organization, co-determination and advocacy. The two modes of interpretation are not in conflict with one another: each emphasises the model formative for it in the public discourse. Individual organizations do not normally correspond to one type only; instead they encompass, in varying combinations, elements of both concepts in their behaviours and the objectives set down in their charters. However, it is possible to categorise them under one of the two guiding principles in order to reduce the level of complexity.

We use this differentiation as a means to clear an analytical path through the great expanse and heterogeneity of Russia’s civil society and third sector. Thus we are assuming that it is possible to apply the distinction between two types of organization set out below to a large portion of the public interest organizations:

1. Organizations characterised by the fact that they *render social services*, e.g. in areas like care of the elderly, poverty relief or addiction prevention, as an alternative to services provided by state welfare institutions, market-conforming enterprises or, informally, by private persons (see Anheier, 2014).
2. Organizations that can be described as ‘political’, in the broader sense of that term, because they act in the context of public debate and/or of specific decision-making processes *either* directly to promote certain causes, interests, social groups etc. *or* indirectly to change the way a problem is perceived or interpreted by creating a public space for a community to engage in a particular lifestyle or live in accordance with personal inc-

linations, convictions or world views (i.e., in the final analysis, the conditions necessary for the creation of social and cultural capital). Organizations of this kind help justify an understanding of civil society as aiming to open up political –public interactions to the private sphere (see Offe, 2000).

Over the past two decades, a broad spectrum of organizations working on a wide variety of public interest issues has emerged in Russia. Unlike the third sector organizations pursuing primarily social and charitable activities, now supported by a state that looks on them benevolently, genuine civil society actors are having a difficult time holding their own, partly due to historical cultural patterns (particularly as a result of the Soviet period) and partly to the general political climate in today's Russia. Observers in the West are therefore wondering how Russian civil society can be supported in a way that avoids the pitfalls of ignoring the social and political conditions in the country and attempting to import a normative (western) notion of public spirit and civil society.

In view of the problems many organizations are facing, it would be short-sighted to determine that support should go *only* to politically active organizations, such as those with direct or indirect ties to the opposition movement or the trade unions. The outcome of such strategies would be uncertain, their success, if any, difficult to measure, and moreover, in all probability, they also entail risks. The alternative would be a long-term commitment to supporting the sector's infrastructure, in the sense of extensive 'capacity building'. In addition to supporting established service structures, the capacity building in question could indirectly benefit civil society in other ways (i.e. in the sense of promoting the continued development of the scope available for civic self-organization and of a specifically Russian culture of the common good). The results of our study on civil society and the third sector in Russia (Kehl et al., 2015), based on ten guided interviews conducted with recognised experts from foundations, NGOs, charities and researchers (for the most part from Moscow and/or with a correspondingly metropolitan and 'political' outlook) last year (2014), led us to this conclusion.

Weakness of civic engagement

In the eyes of 'stakeholders' in Russian civil society (i.e. actors who, as the representatives of foundations, NGOs or charities, have an interest in Russian civil society and qualified experts who can provide information about

perceptions in the field) it is an irrefutable fact that to this day the legacy of the Soviet Union continues to affect the collective self-image and the institutional requirements placed on forms of civil self-organization in the country. Political civil society culture is influenced by the powerful role of the state and a public's concept of itself, which has virtually no place for the notion of taking action outside of local and personal contexts to promote the public interest. As a result, there has been only limited scope available for societal self-organization, and where such scope is open, it has not necessarily been filled. This is confirmed by the figures showing that only about six percent of the Russian population regularly donate money to civil society (or third-sector) organizations – a strikingly low value compared to that of other countries – and that not even one in five Russians regularly engages in volunteer work (see CAF, 2013). A civil society sphere between the state, the economy and the private does not (yet) seem to have established itself culturally within the Russian self-concept. One of our interview partners had this to say on this point:

“This is a legacy of the Soviet period, the fact that society is not used to the idea that anything can be done [in an open space] between the state and private life. As a result, this ‘open space’ has been unknown up to now!”

Another participant in the study drove the point home in this way:

“I think that in our mentality – in the mentality of the Russian population – there is no concept of a ‘civil society’.”

Negative developments in the transformation years

What is more: although the years of transformation brought Russian society freedoms it had not previously known, that same period was also very unsettling for large portions of the population. The new freedom was accompanied by legal uncertainty that to many more was a source of anxiety rather than an impetus civic engagement. For that reason, the momentum for the development of the third sector in the 1990s came, to a substantial degree, from foreign foundations that did development work and brought grant money to the country. Not infrequently, support for the development of civil society structures and culture was guided by the normative model of the western funding institution; a well-meant effort, but one that often took on a missionary character. Moreover ‘fake’ organizations that pursued essentially private, commercial and sometimes even criminal objectives cast a pall of suspicion over the sector. Already low, the public's trust in the sector sank even further. Meanwhile, the involvement of foreign foundations

in Russian society had become a target of criticism in the public discourse. This issue cropped up in our interviews in statements like these:

Plus, there is very little trust among the public. This is something I have also noticed in my work: if a stranger comes from outside and says, “let’s work on this now,” people have no confidence that the intent is to do good, that it’s not about someone trying to make money, or gain some personal advantage but really is about other people, about the people who will be affected next time, about doing something good. And the same applies to organizations as well.

Nevertheless: according to Mersijanowa and Jakobson (2010, p.10), there are around 136,000 organizations in Russia that can be identified as explicitly third-sector organizations: these are primarily small organizations, many of which have trouble financing themselves. Large, financially secure actors are the exception.

Social service providers versus political advocates?

An analysis of the third sector and civil society structures with reference to the two types described at the start of this paper (as a sector of social service providers or political advocates) does lead to the identification of some organizations with an explicit focus on political topics or that make public statements criticising the system (such as human rights organizations). However the number of organizations that devote themselves as social service providers to the country’s *public welfare challenges* is far greater. In recent years, the socially-oriented (to use the government’s word) organizations have managed to continually improve their public ‘standing’ and thereby win back some of the lost trust in the sector.

The political climate vis-à-vis the third sector has changed and become more discriminating during Putin’s presidency, however. The two categories of social service provision and political advocacy also lend themselves well to depicting political approaches to civil society: ‘socially oriented’ organizations now have substantial opportunities to obtain state grant money. In contrast, organizations whose efforts are bent toward compliance with rule of law principles or which scrutinise the government’s work are subject to stringent controls and are impeded in their work.

While in the 1990s, the Yeltsin government clearly did not do much *for*, but also not much *against* Russia’s third-sector organizations, during Putin’s presidency these organizations were managed so as to greatly increase their visibility (see Henderson, 2011). Putin has referred to the importance of the

third sector in many of his speeches, his favourable assessment pertaining principally to ‘socially oriented’ organizations. In contrast, the state takes a considerably less positive view of critically-minded civil society, a point emphasised many times in our interviews. The following quotation from the interview material serves as an example:

“I think that the Russian political sphere – and this includes the state, at the highest position – has a big stake in retaining its power monopoly, and it has also learned from the experiences in which power was lost in friendly communist countries. Everywhere that losses of power have come about in Eastern Europe, they came about because the country’s leaders, the government, were unable to curb resistance against policies sufficiently to keep it from growing so large that it simply wiped the societal situation aside, as though with the stroke of a pen. And that means ...: civil society harms the [efforts of the] current government in Russia to ensure the continuation of its work.”

The role of the Russian state

This is only one side of the coin, however: a massive expansion in the state’s funding of organizations that work on social problems has been observed for several years. For some time now, the state has been offering these ‘socially oriented’ organizations the opportunity to apply for substantial project grants to carry out their projects in the social services field. Thus, the message that the focus on social issues is a model to be followed is communicated to the sector or to (civil) society by politicians and the state administration. This was described in this way in our interviews:

“What the Russian state and all of the experts are trying to emphasise quite generally is that civil society’s primary purpose is to work on social issues, that social security and helping people in need are the whole point. That is the leitmotif, so to speak, of civil society. ... At the highest levels of the state, on the part of the president, there is an emphasis that social issues are the primary focus of the work of third sector organizations. ... So if an NGO wants to follow the trend, it should pursue a ‘social orientation’.”

Putin’s government began setting up project funding structures some years ago. The funding is provided over both a presidential fund and ministerial

instruments. In line with this strategy, in 2014 new legal provisions were adopted to clarify the distinction between social and political organizations and facilitate the identification of “foreign agent activities.” Judging by our impressions from the interviews, another of its aims was to separate ‘good’ civil society from ‘bad’ civil society.

The consequences of the Ukraine crisis

At present, it is difficult to predict the future of Russia’s civil society and third sector, particularly given the developments in Ukraine, the intensification of nationalist tendencies and what the stakeholders we interviewed reported as Russia closing itself off from foreign actors. That notwithstanding, the findings from our empirical research, formulated below, do allow an assessment concerning what is currently a very uncertain field:

- First, among the organizations, the prevailing mood overall is one of uncertainty about the government’s practices, the primary characteristic of which is clearly unpredictability. Unsurprisingly, this affects the ‘politically oriented’ organizations to a far greater extent than the ‘socially oriented’ ones. Due to the Ukraine crisis and intensifying nationalistic tendencies in politics and society, organizations that feel a duty to promote societal pluralism or work on critical issues are encountering ever growing difficulties.
- Russia’s political relations with its western neighbours have deteriorated considerably in conjunction with the Ukraine crisis; this development has been largely responsible for a major loss in trust and the deterioration of what had, for some time, been a good atmosphere.
- The Russian state made it far more difficult for foreign funding sources to provide support to the politically active sector (with the introduction of the foreign agent law in 2012 if not before). One must assume that this policy will not change in the short or long term.
- In all likelihood, the state funding of ‘socially oriented’ organizations will continue, perhaps even be expanded. This provides state-funded actors with potential for further development, though it comes with the risk that the financing will be paid for with system-conformity. The continuation of this type of policy depends largely on future economic developments in the country because state revenue, from the energy sector in particular, will determine the extent to which such funding is sustainable.

Prospects for civil society and the third sector

Given these conditions, what kind of options for supporting Russian civil society and the third sector exist? Does a ‘focus on democracy’ demand that extra support now be channelled to politically active organizations?

If one believes our interview partners, this may not be the ideal course. Many observers do see partnering with the part of civil society working on advocacy issues as being desirable. However, at present it appears doubtful, at best, that partnerships with critical or oppositional actors could, by circumventing the administrative level, succeed; moreover, the attempt entails risks for everyone involved. Kremlin policy is not the only (perhaps not even the primary) reason for this; one must also consider the general mood in the country. The alternatives lie in supporting and continuing development of the sector as one of service providers. This kind of strategy rests on the notion that extensive capacity building (i.e. strengthening capacities by building up expertise and infrastructures) would indirectly enable the organizations that focus primarily on social problems to develop a collective voice that would, indirectly, have a political dimension. The intent in this respect is to increase the professionalism with which the organizations interact with the ‘big players’ – i.e. including in the competition with the state and market for resources. One final quote from our interviews addressing this point:

“There is a need for the sector’s professionalisation Because there are in fact people out there who want to work in the sector. We don’t have enough training programmes though. People entering the sector are coming from quite different sectors, not necessarily the NGO scene. And the other point is that in their search for professional staff the NGO sector are increasingly having to compete as employers not only with the business world, but also with the state – and the state is a good employer. These days, the NGO sector is trying to find its place in the labour market. Professionalisation of the sector is important for that reason as well.”

This suggests that support in the following areas would be indicated:

- **Organizational development and professionalisation:** Many organizations’ capacities in the area of personnel development/professionalisation are underdeveloped, in a situation in which they are (supposed to be) taking over key social functions and recruiting in a competitive employment market to that end. Professional development and process organization within the organizations is vital for the sector’s continuing development.

- **Structures for advanced education and partnerships:** Russia has virtually no academic programmes in non-profit management and philanthropy. Organizations can have trouble with recruitment; at the same time, knowledge transfer and the development of innovative concepts and debates are prevented within the sector. There is a need to build up academic institutions in the country, but also a need to develop international partnerships with institutions abroad.
- **Exchange programmes:** Intercultural exchange is an effective form of communication and understanding, beyond the bounds of diplomatic convention, which all parties want; in such contexts, understanding between nations is experienced at first hand and is made 'real' through encounters between actual people. Trust-building forms of this kind can be made feasible or at least encouraged through city partnerships, exchange programmes or travel grants.
- **Networking of organizations:** Many organizations in Russia (still) see one another more as rivals than partners. Yet partnerships and networking within the sector promotes knowledge transfer, results in skills acquisition, enhances the system's visibility and facilitates the development of a collective – political – voice. All of these aspects should be supported.
- **Earning trust in society:** Earning society's trust will remain one of the central tasks of Russian non-profits and NGOs. Though some progress has been made in this respect, one challenge certainly remains: communicating the roles and the values of action that is explicitly civil society in character to people in society.
- **Setting up long-term partnerships based on equality:** Finally, there is a need for setting up long term partnerships with the Russian third sector and civil society in which the Russian organization acts as a strategic cooperation partner who is expected to bring dedication and commitment to the partnership that is equal in measure to the scope for self-determination and latitude to design projects independently that they receive in exchange.

Unlike the interventions by western actors in the 1990s, briefly described towards the beginning of this paper, which in retrospect are seen to some extent as 'interference' (albeit well-meant), the strategies presented here, or so our interview partners believe, will lead to greater consideration of the country's social and political environment and transform the role of foreign organizations into a more moderating one. The experts interviewed believe that these strategies represent one possible way of supporting Russian civil society in very turbulent times. They constitute an attempt to

indicate options for strengthening civic impulses in a society in which the general environment is currently rather unfavourable in that respect.

Capacity building could make it possible for service-providing organizations to enhance their role as a powerful ‘voice’ in society. These kinds of strategies imply no disapproval of advocacy-oriented civil society nor do they legitimise the Kremlin policies. Quite the contrary: professionalisation and partnership programmes would be a means of working towards strengthening infrastructure and self-organization capacities in civil society. Ideally, this could lead to the formation of a politically effective voice. Such programmes need not necessarily focus only on the organizations recognised as ‘socially-oriented’, but could instead encompass the entire spectrum of public-interest oriented activities in the social services. However: organizations in the sector increase their influence by cooperating with state institutions and making themselves irreplaceable through their work. The more professional the organizations become, and the more the sector builds up its own identity and puts forward a collective agenda, the greater are the chances that the organizations will be able to influence political processes. Thus, in a sense, the idea is to strengthen civil society development ‘through the back door’ by strengthening the third sector in its role as a strong service provider.

Translated from the German by Alison Borrowman.

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Pitfalls of the Kremlin's vox populi: the Russian People's Front

The Russian People's Front (ONF) reacts to social problems

In the middle of September 2013, a group of mothers of disabled children from Volgograd and the surrounding area launched a hunger strike against the Volgograd authorities, who appeared incapable of responding to the mothers' anger and despair. Approximately two weeks later, a group of mothers from families with many children joined the protest, expanding the group to 39 mothers. The extreme methods used by the group to draw public attention to their problems coalesced into a demand for the resignation of Volgograd's governor, Sergei Bozhenov of the Kremlin's United Russia (UR) party. About a week after the expansion of the hunger strike, a report from Russia's Channel 5, with the lead 'Social Hunger', announced that a halt to the strike in Volgograd had been successfully arranged, although, the report noted, "further decisions would be required to settle the situation completely". There was extensive reporting about the mothers' cause, with some reports stating that the hunger strikers had the support of several thousand families with multiple children in the region. The finger of blame was clearly pointed at the local authorities, who had failed to comply with federal legislation. The Russian People's Front (referred to below by its Russian initials, ONF) was identified as the institution that had played the primary role in bringing about the preliminary resolution of the situation, having "already called for a federal rehabilitation system for disabled children back at the Front's meeting in March".

The events in Volgograd and the way in which they were reported to the broader public are a tangible example of hybrid governance. While all of the world's polities are hybrid to some extent with respect to the spectrum between authoritarianism and democracy, Russia under Putin

represents a paradigmatic example of this kind of hybridism. In Putin's system of rule, the attempt to establish authoritarian legitimacy is channelled principally through the use of democratically framed institutions and covert forms of coercion rather than open repression. This approach entails the dilemma that democratic institutions (e.g., elections, semi-free media and civil rights, e.g. a selective right to demonstrate) bring with them both a potential to increase legitimacy and a continual "democratic risk" to an authoritarian regime. The massive protests which followed the parliamentary election in December 2011 are a vivid example of this risk. Moreover, in Russia's case, the structuring of the political process with which the Kremlin seeks to resolve this dilemma is a crucial aspect. According to Nikolay Petrov, Maria Lipman and Henry Hale (2014), the Kremlin's main method for this involves "a tendency to eviscerate formal institutions, the proliferation of ... 'substitutions', and the centralization and personalization of ever more control – even over decisions of seemingly minor importance – in the hands of the top leader".¹ At the same time, this process should not be too repressive because that might trigger discontent in the population. In this light, the blatant and intensive anti-western propaganda associated with the Ukrainian crisis since early 2014 is an example of a more or less 'classic trick', in which an authoritarian leader facing growing domestic problems and diminishing levels of support attempts to shift the public's attention to external threats. The rapid recovery of Putin's support over the course of the year 2014 confirms that the manoeuvre was successful in this case. Nonetheless, Putin's Russia, its repressive authoritarian trends notwithstanding, does not exercise discursive hegemony over society, as the following short overview of the ONF's position as a contrived independent popular movement shows.

Putin's vision of the Popular Front

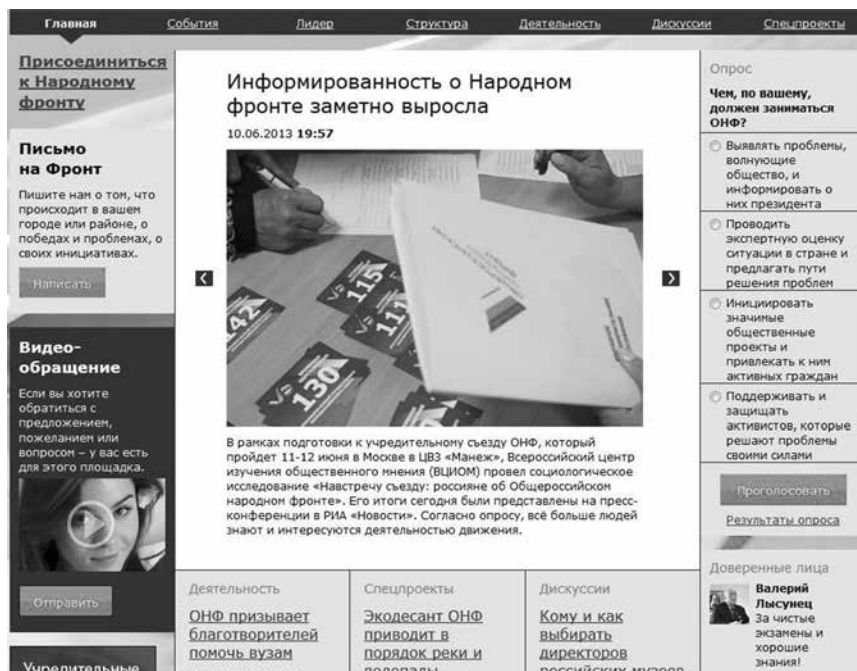
On May 6, 2011, Vladimir Putin, the prime minister of Russia and the leader, though not a member, of United Russia, announced the idea of founding a popular front in the wider context of the party. The announcement was made in Volgograd, where UR was holding an inter-regional conference; in Volgograd, Putin (2011) asked: "How can we win without Stalingrad?" Freighted with the patriotic symbolism of the venue, the idea of a popular front was explicitly linked to the upcoming Duma elections, to be held on December 2011. From the Kremlin's viewpoint there had

been a worrisome development in the existing pseudo-parliamentary system when the approval rating of UR fell by 10 percentage points within a single month, from 45% in December 2010 to 35% in January 2011. Putin's goal was, in this respect, to guarantee an unambiguous victory for the party in the forthcoming election by creating a popular front. According to Putin (2011), the party's candidates should include "non-affiliated United Russia supporters, trade union members, members of women's and youth organizations, public associations, citizens who take the initiative, who are actively engaged". As a political vision, Putin's views echoed the ideas presented by the Kremlin in 2005 in connection with the establishment of pro-government civil society initiatives such as the Civic Chamber and the Nashi youth movement, intended to mobilise seemingly progressive citizens in line with the state. All in all, Putin's vision of the popular front within the ruling party provides a good illustration of a general concern held by the rulers in hybrid regimes: the constant need to maximise popular support for the regime in order to guarantee their hegemonic position in power without being forced to abandon the façade of political competition, that is, of democracy.

With the crisis of legitimacy for the UR in the wake of the December 2011 election, the ONF's public image was terrible as well. Its first anniversary rally in May 2012 proved a fiasco, with a few hundred people attending instead of the tens of thousands expected. The next year did not bring a notable change, although Putin was enthusiastically named the leader of the Front at the ONF congress held in June 2013. According to a poll conducted by the Levada Centre in July 2013, only 26% of Russians regarded ONF's ideas as 'fresh' (33% held the opposite view, and 38% were unwilling or unable to say).

On May 6, 2013, the ONF announced that it was launching a new website (<http://onf.ru/>) as a forum for "discussing with citizens". According to Andrei Bocharov, an ONF member, "with the new website the front is becoming an open and direct channel between the president and the people" (RIA Novosti). A prominent appeal for new members was posted on the website in June 2013 along with a call to the public to write "about issues in your area" in "a letter to the front" (*pis'mo na front*), in a sort of inverted allusion to the famous war-time phenomenon (Figure 1). At the time, the website also provided a platform for video greetings to the Front, a call for suggestions for discussion topics, and a survey in which readers were urged to share their views as to what would be the ideal areas for the ONF to focus on. These elements of more or less direct interaction were present on the site at least as late as May 2014, but had been removed by October 2014.

Figure 1: Screenshot of the ONF's website on June 13, 2013



Upper left: “Join the People’s Front | Letter to the Front | Write and tell us what is happening in your city or your district, about heroic deeds or problems, about your initiatives.”

Middle left: “Video Message | If you’d like to contact us with a suggestion, a wish or a question – here is a platform for doing so.”

It appears that by the latter half of 2014, the ONF had pulled back from an attempt to promote open interaction with citizens, replacing it with a mixed approach wherein it is implied that the societal control exercised by the ONF demonstrates, in a manner of speaking, “the true will of the people with the president”. This shift offers concrete support for the thesis of Petrov, Lipman and Hale (2014) that there is a political tendency for “the centralization and personalization of ever more control in the hands of the top leader” (Figure 2). Whereas Putin is absent in the screenshot in Figure 1, his presence in Figure 2 is overwhelming.

However, the project on which the ONF is most active, the anti-corruption project *For fair purchases* (there is a report on the project in the middle

Figure 2: Screenshot of the ONF's website on December 19, 2014

Новости фронта

- 9.12 ОНФ: Число тендеров на новогодние корпоративы за госсчет уменьшилось в четыре раза
- 9.12 ОНФ в Курганской области провел для граждан День финансовой грамотности
- 9.12 ОНФ: Крым может стать национальным центром реабилитации инвалидов
- 8.12 ОНФ будет добиваться прозрачности расходования бюджетных средств при ремонте усадьбы Домопаново
- 8.12 Батченко: Проблемы реформы здравоохранения в Москве будут обсуждаться на медицинском форуме ОНФ

[Все ленты](#)

Новости дня

- 9.12 В Москве 20 декабря откроется 144 влочных базара
- 9.12 Хокеисты сборной России победили финнов со счетом 2:0 на Кубке Первого канала
- 9.12 Ракета-носитель со спутником Космос-Экспресс стартовала с Байконура
- 9.12 Россиянин Даниил Квят признан лучшим новичком года по версии F1Racing

[Все ленты](#)

Бесплатное приложение для Android и iOS

Google play

Available on the App Store

ЛИДЕР ОНФ

[Путин провел встречу с Романо Проди](#)

[Путин поздравил еврейскую общину России с праздником Ханука](#)

[Путин примет участие в сессии Совета коллективной безопасности и заседании Высшего евразийского экономического совета 23 декабря](#)

[Путин выразил соболезнования народу Пакистана в связи с терактом в школе в Пешаваре](#)

[Путин в телефонном разговоре с Меркель, Олландом и Порошенко обсудил кризисную ситуацию на Украине](#)

[Путин провел встречу с главой Торгово-промышленной палаты Сергеем Катыриным](#)

[Путин поздравил президента Казахстана Назарбаева по случаю Дня независимости](#)

[Все ленты](#)

Подкасты [Лента подкастов](#)

ОНФ будет добиваться перевода Троицкой области на электричество дально «Губуев» для людей реабилитации инвалидов

[Подписаться на подкасты](#)

ОНФ: Число тендеров на новогодние корпоративы за госсчет уменьшилось в четыре раза

19 декабря 2014 13:44

Эксперты проекта ОНФ «За честные закупки» проанализировали тендеры на проведение новогодних мероприятий и выявили позитивную тенденцию. Число елающих встретить Новый год за госсчет по сравнению с прошлым годом сократилось в четыре раза. Однако некоторые компании всё же сочили возможным потратить на развлечение каждого участника корпоративного празднования от 11 до 20 тыс. рублей.

[Лента главных новостей](#)

послание президента федеральному собранию

4 декабря 2014

Right column: "...| Putin met with Romano Prodi | Putin congratulates the Jewish community on Hanukkah | Putin to attend meeting of Collective Security Council the meeting Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on December 23 | Putin expresses condolences to the Pakistan people occasioned by the terrorist attack on a Peshawar school | Putin discusses the crisis situation in Ukraine with Merkel, Hollande and Poroshenko ..."

Bottom: "President's speech before the Federal Assembly" | December 4, 2014.

of the screenshot in Figure 2) reveals an astonishing conformity with the opposition's discourse on corruption. It is worth noting that rather than denying the reality of corruption among the state corporations, the ONF actually admits its existence in a manner that conforms to the discourse presented by the opposition. Likewise, the ONF paradoxically contributes to keeping alive what is perhaps the most acute and difficult political risk for the regime, that is, corruption of the elite, in the public eye.

Given this reactive stance vis-à-vis political discourse that is independent from the regime, the ONF faces considerable difficulties that it must overcome in order to create a political initiative which could challenge those discourses that are beyond its control. For example, in December 2014, the semi-independent *Gazeta.ru* released a report saying that recent legislation intended to increase transparency in state purchasing had proven ineffective. As a result, *Gazeta.ru* reported, the state's losses in connection with suspicious purchases over the course of 2014 had grown to 278 billion roubles. That same day, a few hours before *Gazeta.ru* released its story – suggesting that the ONF was aware of its existence – the ONF published a report on its website saying that “with respect to improving the transparency of the state purchases, it is unacceptable that purchases favour ‘their own’ suppliers”. Hence, the ONF openly concurred with *Gazeta.ru*'s criticism, instead of offering any counter-criticism or defence against it. Moreover, Alexander Brechalov, an ONF representative, had voiced criticism of the laws in question in March 2014, predicting their obvious ineffectiveness. Although Brechalov's prognosis had now been shown to be correct, the ONF made no mention of his earlier statements, but instead merely conformed with *Gazeta.ru*'s critique. In all probability, the explanation for this omission lies in the fact that the ONF's leader, the president, is the one who signs pieces of legislation into law, including this one.

Conclusion

At a time of diminishing prospects for civil society and democratic freedoms in Russia, the ONF as a popular organization with ties to the Kremlin does not represent any form of explicit authoritarian alternative in line with the ongoing trend. Rather, one could argue that the ONF is evidence that addressing oppositional subjects or themes that are ultimately risky for the regime is seen less costly than a systematic shift to authoritarian repression, given that the Kremlin is upholding a democratic façade as

a source of legitimacy for its rule. At the same time, the very existence of a structure like the ONF shows that the regime still believes that it is worth investing in structures that focus on the struggle over political discourse. The ONF can be seen as an ad hoc format associated with the effort to sustain the regime's initiative on modernisation processes in the country. With respect to the acute issue of corruption, denying that it exists is out of question if the ONF is to gain political legitimacy. It follows that the ONF's only remaining option is to figure as a quick responder to criticism from external citizens and oppositional figures. That is hardly what its initiators had in mind. If there is any prospect for further democratisation in Russia under the current circumstances, it can be found in the dilemma that the regime's democratic façade has created for itself.

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Notes

- 1 Petrov and his coauthors explain their use of the term substitutions as follows: “Russian authorities have compensated by devising an elaborate system of substitutions. For seemingly every major institution of democracy that Russian authorities have weakened in recent years, they have maintained one or more substitutions intended to serve at least some of that institution’s lost state-capacity-augmenting functions or to regulate or provide some kind of check on the other substitutions or any remaining democratic institutions.” (Ed. of *Russland Analyse*, orig. publ.)

Belarus country report

An extract from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2014

Political participation

Elections are regularly held in Belarus, but they are not designed to be a truly democratic exercise. They are instruments used by the regime to legitimate itself symbolically, and all elections held under Aljaksandr Lukashenka's rule have been judged by OSCE/ODIHR (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) observers to be nondemocratic to varying degrees. This includes the most recent parliamentary elections in September 2012. The government presents a façade of public choice and competition, but results are a foregone conclusion in favour of the authorities. The 2012 elections did not see the same brutal crackdown that followed the 2010 presidential poll, but nor were there large public protests. This can be explained by the fact that due to the high centralisation of power and the absence of local self-government, presidential elections are seen as more important by the public. Political crises between government and opposition after presidential elections have become more and more severe with each election.

There were some minor improvements to the electoral code in the run-up to the 2012 elections, which nominally increased access to state media during campaigning; allowed candidates to legally use their own funding for campaigning, in addition to financing from the state budget; and made it easier for candidates from political parties to register. The number of opposition candidates who successfully registered almost doubled compared to 2008. Nevertheless, registration procedures, the conduct of the campaign, and vote counting are still open to abuse by the authorities and are not guaranteed to be free, fair or transparent.

A major issue remains the formation of electoral commissions, which are responsible for vote counting and tabulation. Opposition representatives are almost totally excluded from their composition. International election observers were highly critical of the procedures for counting ballots and the transparency of the process for the 2012 poll. State media emphasised the smooth running of the election process, rather than providing a forum for candidates or campaign issues. Local authorities encourage or enforce early voting by state workers and students during the five days polling stations are open before election day. This period maximises the potential for manipulation and falsification. There is also no efficient mechanism through which to make complaints during the election campaign, and no way to appeal the results to the Supreme Court.

Political opposition in Belarus is significantly marginalised and has been effectively excluded from the political process for a long time. It also lacks ideas and approaches to strengthen its links with the electorate against the background of an extremely unfavourable political environment.

Since the amendments to the constitution in 1996, political power and decision making have been consolidated in the hands of the presidential administration, dominated by President Lukashenka. Senior representatives of the presidential administration appear as politicians in public, even though they are unelected. All political bodies are dependent on the presidential executive, including the national parliament. These bodies lack pluralism, independence and transparency, and have little influence on central decisions. In the fifth convocation of the National Assembly, from 2008 to 2012, members of parliament initiated and passed only one piece of legislation themselves. Lukashenka has described the executive, legislature and judiciary as branches on the tree of the presidency, which can be trimmed as he sees fit.

The state media, especially TV stations, provide an effective means of manipulating, regulating and controlling the process of shaping public opinion and legitimating the executive's decisions. The opposition is totally excluded from all political bodies and has been effectively blocked and isolated from the sphere of shaping political opinion and making decisions. It exists in a 'parallel world' within Belarusian society, relying on a handful of small independent media outlets and the Internet.

Freedom of assembly is theoretically assured by the constitution, but is tolerated only insofar as it does not interfere with the goals of the Lukashenka regime. Granting the right to assemble is liable to arbitrariness and manipulation by governing bodies. Unregistered groups and parties that (depending on the political climate) are tolerated by the authorities

nonetheless face severe penalties. Violations of the regulations governing the freedom of assembly are used by the regime to control political space and opinion. In the spring of 2011, a wave of ‘silent protests’ by opponents of the regime, which eschewed political banners and simply saw protesters stroll around silently or burst into applause at an agreed place and time, were violently dispersed by the authorities. In response, restrictions on freedom of assembly were tightened later in the year through amendments to legislation that required official permission for any kind of public gathering. In June 2012, the Belarusian parliament also adopted a new law to strengthen the power of the secret police, which included expanding the right of the KGB (Committee for State Security) to use force against political and civic activists.

Freedom of association is significantly limited by regulations constraining the appropriate environment. No non-governmental organization is allowed to operate without registration, or in effect, without permission from the authorities. Article 193.1 of the Criminal Code criminalises activities on behalf of unregistered initiatives. Several civic and political activists have been imprisoned on the grounds of this article.

Rules include the obligatory registration of any external funding, and restricted access for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to schools, universities and other institutions. The regime does not encourage free political participation or self-organization beyond loyal government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs). Groups that are perceived as being in opposition to the regime are exposed to harsh repressions and restrictions. In the months following the crackdown against demonstrators in December 2010, there were a number of raids and arrests targeting NGOs. Most prominently, the Chair of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, Ales Bialiatski, was arrested and imprisoned in 2011, and the NGO was evicted from its Minsk offices in 2012.

The authorities widely use GONGOs to both influence the domestic population and to impress organizations and governments abroad. GONGOs simulate the role of civil society and deliver pro-government messages to the international community on behalf of ‘Belarusian civil society’.

At the same time, many NGOs in Belarus that are not directly connected with policy or politics do have room for their activities, and make important contributions in the field of charity work, social development and other areas. At the local level (small towns and villages), independent civil society organizations hardly exist, due to a very unfavourable environment, a lack of tradition and internal support, and high levels of pressure. Many civil society initiatives experiencing significant difficulties in

reaching people offline have to concentrate their activities in online formats, which have their own strengths and weaknesses.

The state does not encourage dissenting thought or discourse. Public debate does exist, but is controlled and vulnerable to distortion and manipulation by state intervention. Television, radio and the print media are dominated by the state. Independent media and journalists are regularly harassed by the authorities. After the 2010 elections, the offices of independent media outlets were searched by law enforcement officers, computers were confiscated, Internet sites were blocked, and journalists were detained.

In the summer of 2011, the journalist Andrzej Poczobut received a three-year suspended prison sentence for insulting the president in articles that he had written for a Polish newspaper. The authorities threatened to close the independent newspapers *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volia* in 2011, ultimately choosing instead to levy heavy fines for alleged violations of media laws. At the end of 2012, the regime launched a campaign of harassment against the monthly journal *Arche*, threatening it with closure. Today, the Internet provides the greatest opportunity for freedom of expression, though this sphere, too, is coming under increasing pressure. The authorities are paying more attention to social media, and in August 2012, moderators from popular Internet forums were detained and charged with hooliganism as the parliamentary elections drew near.

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Non-formal education in Belarus: unleashing the potential of civil society

Over the past couple of years, informal education has witnessed remarkable growth in Belarus. It offers Belarusians possibilities that they have been missing at the nation's over-regulated state-run universities.

New grassroots initiatives such as the European College of Liberal Arts and the Flying University are organizing innovative and inspiring courses in Minsk. Although functioning within a certain limitations peculiar to Belarus, they still manage to appeal to the nation's youth.

The Belarus Digest interviewed representatives of the Flying University and the European College of Liberal Arts about what it is like to organize non-formal education in Belarus.

Education in Belarus: a sensitive area?

Many people in the West often have a distorted view of the educational system in Belarus, thinking that nothing is possible in Belarus living under a non-democratic regime. Despite its relatively strong standing in international rankings for education, academic freedom in Belarusian universities remains rather limited.

Belarus is the only country in Europe to remain outside the common European educational space, also known as the Bologna system. The educational system, largely unchanged from Soviet times, is reacting very slowly to the demands of the market. The stagnant system fails to promote Belarusian civil society and often remains out of touch with the new realities of Belarus.

However, the emergence of projects such as the European College of Liberal Arts in Belarus, the Flying University, the Belarusian Collegium and a number of Belarusian language courses reflect a real demand for new modern forms of education. They also demonstrate that education is no longer exclusively the domain of the state.

The first serious non-formal education initiative, the Belarusian Collegium, dates back to 1997. Its founders gathered a few Belarusian intellectuals and started running evening courses for adults. Despite financial difficulties it continues to function. Aliaksei Lastouski from the Belarusian Collegium told the Belarus Digest that they currently have around 125 students who are studying topics such as history, philosophy and journalism. During the 2000s, several new institutions emerged.

The Flying University: responding to the need for a national Belarusian university

The Flying University (*Liatuŭy Universytet*) was established in 2010 by Uladzimir Mackievich, a civil society leader. However, according to Tatarsiana Vadalazhskaja, a project coordinator, the idea of establishing an university emerged back in the 1990s. At that time, many argued for a proper national Belarusian university with a clear mission of raising future generations of the Belarusian intelligentsia and future leaders, as well as strengthening Belarusian civic identity. “Then it was absolutely clear that without a [truly national] university neither a nation nor a country could exist”, she pointed out.

Much has been changed in education in Belarus since the 1990s. “We can observe the process of squeezing out critically thinking people from academia and education”, Vadalazhskaja told the Belarus Digest. Belarus’ traditional universities teach, educate, and issue diplomas, but they do little to encourage students to contribute to civil society with their own ideas.

The name of the university relates to the underground “Flying University” (*Latający Uniwersytet*) which organized courses to promote the self-education of people in communist Poland. The Flying University offers its courses for free. It does not issue any diplomas, and Vadalazhskaja emphasises that the education that the university provides remains largely non-formal.

This year, around 300 young Belarusians applied for its courses, and on average, around 15 students are attending each course. The university offers 20 different courses and seminars. The most popular courses include the study of the Bible, the “European choice” of Belarus, methodology and design.

34-year-old Alexey Konstantinov has already been attending courses and seminars at the Flying University for three years now. Originally from Ukraine, he has been living in Minsk for over 20 years. He told the

Belarus Digest that he was attracted by the unique learning environment at the university, but also by its strong principles of encouraging critical thinking.

The liberal arts: Belarus today

Another initiative, the European College of Liberal Arts in Belarus (ECLAB), launched its courses only this past October. Currently, more than 40 Belarusian students are attending various courses at the European College. The most popular courses are in popular culture and the media, but also social problems and collective values.

Aleksandr Adamianc, a project director, explains that the liberal arts remain an underdeveloped area of education in Belarus. The idea to establish the college came about as a result of an existing niche in the education market. “Our programme of liberal arts is the first in Belarus”, he proudly notes.

Adamianc believes that Belarusians should have the opportunity to obtain a modern European education inside the country, saying that “many young people neither have the possibility of studying abroad, nor do they want to”. He points to “the conservatism of state education organizations” as the main factor impeding the development of liberal arts education in Belarus.

Their courses are predominantly attended by young people, with ages varying between 19 and 35. The vast majority of them have already received degrees from higher education institutions, with a third currently enrolled in other university programmes.

Presently, the ECLAB offers a free programme of education and issues certificates for its students. Aleksandr Adamianc told the Belarus Digest that they plan to introduce tuition fees at some point.

Non-formal versus formal education

Achieving success with new non-formal education initiatives can be challenging in Belarus. The biggest challenge for the Flying University was to find rooms for classes. “First, we rented some space, but in a month we were asked to leave. From there we went on ‘flying’ from one place to another”, Tatsiana Vadalazhskaja explains, suggesting that not everyone welcomes their work.

Aleksandr Adamianc from the European College of Liberal Arts told the Belarus Digest that they had no difficulties in finding space in Minsk.

The informal nature of these initiatives appeals to many Belarusians, particularly to young people. Tatsiana Vadalazhskaja from the Flying University notes that the project has managed to attract a number of prominent Belarusian public figures, intellectuals and social activists, such as Aleś Smalianchuk, Ihar Babkou and Iryna Dubianieckaja. Another important aspect is maintaining the right atmosphere, or as Aliaksandr Adamianc puts it: “an atmosphere of free, non-hierarchical communication”.

Both the Flying University and the European College run attractive and informative websites and have a strong presence on social media networks, an item that is crucial nowadays. The European College also has ambitious plans to expand and start to co-operate with other European universities, so that Belarusian students could obtain dual degrees that would be recognised in Europe.

The enormous potential of non-formal education

Both the Belarusian and Russian languages are used for instruction at the Flying University and the European College. Their representatives have emphasised that the language of instruction depends entirely upon the instructors themselves.

“For example, the course on ‘Mathematics as the Language of Thinking’ is taught in Belarusian on purpose, because the instructor, Mr Liavonau, wanted to develop this topic in the Belarusian language”, Tatsiana Vadalazhskaja told the Belarus Digest.

The European College and the Flying University prove that these types of education project have great prospects in Belarus, and are helping to unleash Belarusian civil society’s own potential. They also suggest that new education initiatives inside Belarus are possible, despite the grim political situation.

With very limited resources, especially when compared to state-funded universities, the organizers of informal courses have already managed to make education attractive outside the bounds of state-run institutions. With the organizers’ mix of idealism, pragmatism and professionalism, their student numbers and the geographical prominence of their activities is likely to grow further.

Paula Borowska

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The “Great Patriotic War” in the politics of memory in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

In the late 1960s, the “Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the German-Fascist invaders” virtually replaced the “Great October Socialist Revolution” as the founding myth of the Soviet Union. Since 1965, Victory Day – May 9 – has been an official public holiday. Also during that period, the Hero City honorary title was established, the memorial medal was issued, and large museum complexes dedicated to the war began to spring up across the USSR. In particular, the Brest Fortress, which in the summer of 1941 was defended by the Red Army against the Wehrmacht, became an iconic site in Belarus; in Soviet Ukraine, the Hero City title was awarded to Kyiv, Odessa and Sevastopol. Numerous literary works and films (many of them masterpieces) created an exemplary picture of the war with appropriate highlights and omissions. The sacralisation of the victory, inextricably linked to the pride of the country, also served to legitimise the Soviet regime and the ruling Communist Party.

At the same time, the official memory of the war not only pushed into the background, but in fact suppressed local memories. The official memory had no place for the Holocaust and the Porajmos of the Sinti and Roma (who, as a matter of principle, were lumped together with other ‘peaceful victims’ of the Third Reich and its allies), let alone the deportation of dozens of ethnic groups carried out by the Soviet authorities in 1944. The other themes for which this memory’s repertoire had no place included a discussion of “the price of victory”, i.e. the Soviet military commanders’ treatment of ordinary soldiers’ lives, and the Red Army’s misdeeds in liberated Europe, the numerous aspects of the life under occupation, or the persecutions in the formerly occupied territories after the Soviets’ return.

At the same time, the role and influence of the Second World War on the development of post-Soviet nations have not been limited solely to the powerful Soviet ideological dogma. Modern Europe, including its eastern part, is to a large degree a geopolitical, cultural and economic product of

the Second World War. In particular, the territories of present-day Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine were completely occupied by the Nazis. The post-war redrawing of the borders and “population transfers” (the latter euphemism is undoubtedly a gloss for the practices that can be best described as “ethnic cleansing”), the experience of restoring Soviet rule, as well as the acts of persecution carried out by the Soviet authorities, exercise a palpable influence on these nations’ development until today.

The breakup of the Soviet Union, which was caused both by the fast-paced disintegration processes in the centre and the emancipatory drive in the republics, presented a series of difficult challenges to each of the post-Soviet nations. One of these challenges was the necessity of creating a new ideology of the state, a new blueprint of history suitable for legitimising the post-Soviet political order. The different nations responded to these challenges differently, depending on the domestic and geopolitical situation, the sizes of ethnic and religious groups, as well as the degree of willingness and sense of responsibility among specific political forces and actors. One of the puzzles which was hardest to tackle in the area of what began to be called “the politics of memory” at the turn of the 21st century was the myth of the Great Patriotic War, inherited from the USSR.

Belarus

The military history of Belarus has an important characteristic: the republic had practically no nationalist underground groups which resisted the Soviets. On the contrary, the guerrilla warfare, which was conducted on a fairly large scale in the wake of the Battle of Stalingrad, was mythologised after the war as being “nationwide” and reflected in the metaphor of “Partisan Belarus” (*Belarus partizanskaia*)¹. In the post-Soviet period, the absence of social groups with a full-blown memory of the war which differed from the Soviet narrative translated into poorly fertilised soil for a pluralistic historical narrative. Nevertheless, a specific local memory of the war could be noticed, especially in the Polish-speaking communities in western Belarus².

However, the first textbooks of Belarusian history published in early 1992 were a product of serious efforts to re-conceptualise the Soviet imagery of the war. In particular, the textbooks referenced the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact concluded in 1939, pioneered the term “World War II” (which was used more often than the “Great Patriotic War”) while not using even once such phrases as “Soviet people”, gave some consideration to the Soviet leadership’s missteps and faults, no longer mentioned the Communist Par-

ty’s “leading role” in organizing the resistance movement, replaced the term “nationwide struggle” with the term “mass struggle”, and also mentioned for the first time incidents of looting and violence against civilians committed by the Soviet guerrilla fighters (Tykhomirov, 2004).³

Almost immediately after Alexander Lukashenko came to power in 1994 (since which time he has been doing nothing more than legitimising his self-appointment to the presidential post through formal elections, while suppressing the opposition⁴), the Soviet symbols were put back into use as the Republic of Belarus’s official symbols, and a decision was made to remove the new Belarusian history textbooks from high schools, replacing them with the Soviet ones. However, since by that time the Soviet textbooks simply could not be found in sufficient quantities, the replacement was not carried out before 1996–1997.

The textbook published in 2000 basically recycled the Soviet mythologems about the “reunification” of Belarus in 1939 (which in effect meant the consequences of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the invasion of Poland by the German and Soviet armies in September 1939) and widely used the terms “Great Patriotic War” and “nationwide struggle”. At the same time, unlike its Soviet cousin, the new textbook referred to the “Great Patriotic War” as a part of “World War II”, thus signalling the adaptation of the discourse to post-Soviet realities.

The steps undertaken by the government in the run-up to the 60th anniversary of the victory (which ranged from pardons to the creation of new “places of memory”) included the decision to introduce a course called “The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people (within the context of the Second World War)” at all Belarusian educational establishments (from schools to universities). This is a mandatory course in every academic programme at institutions of higher learning, whereas at secondary schools it is taught as a separate discipline, incorporated into the course on the history of Belarus (since 2008, when the history of Belarus was abolished as a separate academic course, it has been incorporated into the general history course)⁵.

President Lukashenko made the most of the 60th anniversary of the victory in order to legitimise his regime, and unequivocally placed the Second World War at the centre of the state’s ideology. He called the war “the conceptual landmark of our history”, which “brought into the sharpest relief the Belarusian nation’s noble spirit, freedom-loving nature and historical wisdom”⁶. Playing up the Belarusians’ huge contribution to the victory over Nazism (and emphatically calling to mind in this context the three million Belarusian victims of the war), Lukashenko called Belarusians “the most internationalised nation” and remarked that at the core

“of our present achievements” was “the spirit of an unvanquished nation which, together with other nations of the Soviet Union, made the critical contribution to the cause of defending humanity against the brown plague”. The last quote is taken from the President’s welcoming address on the Independence Day, which since 1997 has been celebrated on July 4 – the day when Minsk was liberated by the Soviet Army.

The often repeated pronouncements regarding three million Belarussian victims of the war do not always correctly reflect the victims of the Shoah in Belarus. Yet it was in Minsk, and as early as 1946, that the Soviet Union’s first memorial dedicated to the mass murders of Jews was erected – on the site called “A Pit” (*Yama*), where 5,000 prisoners of the Minsk ghetto were killed in March 1942. In 2000, the memorial was renovated, and in 2008 President Lukashenko participated in a remembrance ceremony on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the killings. However, in general, in post-Soviet Belarus the history of the Holocaust remains (as it was in its predecessor, the Soviet republic) insufficiently incorporated into the war’s general narrative.

The most noticeable and controversial commemorative event on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the “Soviet people’s victory in the Great Patriotic War” was the opening of “The Stalin Line” open-air memorial near Minsk. The memorial features several fortifications, built in 1928–1929, which did not play any significant role during World War II. The latter circumstance, as well as the fact that The Stalin Line was an unofficial name and the memorial’s creators could have easily avoided using it, led many observers to conclude that the key to the concept was precisely the figure of “the father of the people”. Officially, the initiative to create the memorial was launched by a charitable foundation, “The Memory of Afghanistan” (an organization uniting veterans of the Soviet–Afghan war in the 1980s), but the support provided by President Lukashenko was not only not concealed but instead emphasised in every possible way. The Stalin Line was opened with great ceremony on June 30, 2005. The laconic explanations on the memorial’s official site (<http://www.stalin-line.by>) are peppered with slightly modernised stock phrases from 1970s periodicals which purported “to bring up the young in the spirit of patriotism”. In particular, the site informs the reader that “the creation of the memorial was a people’s project” while “the main burden of the project was shouldered by the engineering units of the Republic of Belarus’s army”.

The Stalin Line’s administration categorise it as a museum, “a place for family leisure” and, *also*, a venue for corporate parties. The list of proposed *entertainments* (it is difficult to find another word in this context) includes

a boat trip on a lake, “a soldier’s hearty porridge” in a café called At the Halt, rides in armoured vehicles, and the opportunity “to test real weapons used in the Great Patriotic War”. Interestingly, this approach (even if its practitioners are not aware of it) is noticeably at variance with the emphatic Soviet style of sacralisation of memory and is more redolent of the omnipotence of mass culture.

As a result of the energetic efforts to publicise the “Belarusian Disneyland” (the unofficial name for The Stalin Line) through the media, this memorial essentially eclipsed other similar sites created in the Brezhnev era – the Khatyn memorial⁷ and the Mound of Glory – just as the National Library, built several years previously, eclipsed all other buildings in Minsk. The most essential element here is the fact that the new creations are a product of the “Lukashenko era”⁸.

The history of the creation of the Marshal Zhukov monument in Minsk was somewhat more messy. The initial design featured a 4.5-meter long equestrian statue (the first equestrian monument in Minsk), to be mounted in front of the Officers’ Club, not far from the site where the first Soviet tank to enter into the city in 1944 stands. A certain amount of funds had been collected for the equestrian statue before the authorities, all of a sudden, claimed that the site that had been earmarked for it was a poor choice of location. While the search for a different locality was on, inflation ate up a considerable portion of the funds, and the idea of an equestrian statue died a natural death. The new design featured the marshal’s seven-meter high bust – having shrunk later to just one meter (although this one-meter high bust was mounted on a Soviet-style four-meter high base). It was unveiled with much ceremony on Zheleznodorozhnaya Street in 2007.

In 2006, schools in Belarus received the first print of a Belarus history textbook written in Russian. It was authored by Vladimir Sidortsov, who also created the 1993 textbook mentioned earlier (Smalianchuk, 2008, pp.378–381). This time around, the textbook writer, sensitive to the authorities’ changed demands, wrote up the “reunification” of 1939 as being an entirely positive event, and reinstated in the text references to the “nationwide struggle” and the Communist Party’s “leading role”. Yet the textbook, which was issued in 2006, used the terms “Holocaust” and “Ostarbeiter” for the first time, and even tried “to cautiously invoke a national discourse while maintaining the predominance of the Soviet approach” (Smalianchuk, 2008, p.381). I agree with this characteristic by Ales’ Smalianchuk, and feel it is necessary to draw attention once again to the mere fact of the *inevitable* (albeit quite fragmentary) re-formulation of the Soviet narrative in post-Soviet circumstances.

Lukashenko's logic when addressing the myth of the "Great Patriotic War" can be described as an understandable desire to use a ready-made symbolical resource, especially considering the expectations of most of his voters. What presented a much more serious challenge to his regime was the necessity of introducing conservative but meaningful changes to that myth. The new social context of the usage of the Soviet myths became the main driver for this. To give you an example of such changes, I wish to point to the discreet departure from the concept of the "Soviet people's victory" (in the President's decrees on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of the war) to the victory of the Belarusian people, who "together with other nations of the Soviet Union made a critical contribution ...". This is a very subtle change, which is all the more important considering the ongoing efforts to form a Belarusian political nation.

On the whole, President Lukashenko is trying to find a "middle way" in his politics of history between the national narrative (associated with the political opposition he hates) and the post-Soviet Russian narrative (in which, Lukashenko fears, Belarus may disappear).

Moldova

The main characteristic of the politics of memory in post-Soviet Moldova is the conflict between the "Romanian" and "Moldovan" interpretations of the identity of the people living in Moldova. In other words, the question of whether the Moldovans are a separate nation (as was claimed by Soviet propaganda) or a part of the Romanian nation⁹ inevitably acquired a hard political edge after the breakup of the USSR.

As in the other former Soviet republics, from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, an emancipatory discourse with nationalist overtones prevailed in Moldova. The parliament of what was then the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic condemned the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences, starting off the re-interpretation of history adapted to the Romanian national narrative. The important landmark events signalling these changes included the restoration of the monument to Stephen III ('Stephen the Great') in Chisinau and the removal of a large number of Lenin statues, as well as the invocation of the formula "two states – one nation". This formula was the backbone of "History of Romanians", a discipline introduced into the high school curriculum in 1990.

Incidentally, the relative ease and speed of change of the predominant paradigm can be explained by the "latent Romanisation of the Molda-

vian intelligentsia” (Kusko & Taki, 2003, p. 489), which had been in progress since the mid-1960s, and which included the gradual adaptation of the Moldavian language to Romanian literary standards by cleansing it of neologisms introduced by the communist authorities in the interwar period.

Like the politics of Stanislav Shushkevich in Belarus or Leonid Kravchuk in Ukraine, the politics of Mircea Snegur, who was president from 1991–1996 (in Moldova, unlike in Belarus or Ukraine, the nation’s presidents are elected in the parliament, not by popular vote), ought to be considered as a series of situation-specific reactions to a volatile domestic and international political context rather than as a consistent politics of a “nationalising state”. The post-Soviet nomenclatura flexibly used the national idea in its ethno-cultural (Romanian) form as an ideological justification for holding on to the power in the new social realities. However, a deteriorating economic situation and geopolitical uncertainty pushed the politicians in a backward direction. Already on February 5, 1994, speaking at a meeting of “Our Home Is the Republic of Moldova”, Snegur brought up the concept of the “Moldovan nation”, and in the country’s new constitution, the principle of “two states – two nations” (Cojocari, 2007, p. 91) was clearly spelled out. 1995 saw an attempt to replace “History of Romanians” with “History of Moldova” as a school subject at high schools, which caused street protests, compelling the President to issue a decree prohibiting criticism of teaching a history of Romanians.

President Petru Lucinschi (1996–2001) continued to move in the direction of “Moldovanism” and attempted to trace the origin of post-Soviet Moldova down to the state ruled by Stephen III. Following the Communist Party’s victory at the parliamentary election in 2001 projects were begun throughout the country to renovate the monuments to the “Soviet Soldiers-Liberators”, the Independence Day became the Day of the Republic, and the concept of the “multi-ethnic Moldavian nation” was promoted concurrently with the marginalisation of the symbols associated with Romanian identity. In December 2001, the government decided to replace “History of Romanians” with “History of Moldova” in schools, causing three-month-long protests in Chisinau.

2001 saw post-Soviet Moldova’s first major celebration of Victory Day. The statue of Stephen III was incorporated into the primarily Soviet ritual in order to highlight “the historical continuity” of Moldova’s statehood (Cojocari, 2007, p. 101). In other words, in this case, too, the Soviet narrative of “sunny Moldavia” became adjusted to suit the new circumstances: some storylines were added, while others were re-interpreted.

At the level of local communities and local memories, the Soviet monuments were often “domesticated” by amending their ideological formulae. For instance, in the countryside, the red stars over Soviet soldiers’ graves were replaced (or supplemented) with Christian symbols (Cojocari, 2007, pp. 109–110)¹⁰.

In the opinion of Vladimir Solonari (2002), given the socio-cultural situation in post-Soviet Moldova, neither the communist nor the national narrative can offer a meaningful and non-antagonistic vision of Moldova’s history which would further the formation of a modern identity. The communist narrative actively plies the traditionalist and primordialist categories for self-legitimation (a good example here is the postulation of continuity between the medieval Moldovan state, Bessarabia within the Russian Empire, the Moldavian Autonomous Republic within pre-war Soviet Ukraine, and the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, created in 1940¹²). Somewhat paradoxical though it is, in Moldova, the idea of the statehood’s continuity became the blueprint of a historical alternative to the idea of the Romanian nation.

In 2010, after a protracted political crisis, the majority of seats in Moldova’s parliament was won by forces supporting European integration. Soon afterwards, the Moldovan wine exporters (and winemaking is perhaps the country’s main export-oriented industry) began to have problems with Russia’s public health authorities. And on July 24, 2010, the acting president Mihai Ghimpu signed a decree establishing the Day of Soviet Occupation on June 28 – on that day mourning ceremonies were to be held and the state flags lowered across Moldova. Such a radical symbolic break with the Soviet war narrative (it was on June 28, 1940 that the Soviet troops invaded Moldova, after an ultimatum to Romania) was designed to signal Chisinau’s exit from Russia’s sphere of geopolitical influence. However, just a few days later, on July 12, Moldova’s constitutional court deemed the decree establishing the Day of Soviet Occupation unconstitutional, arguing that historical events should not be described in legal terms.

The conflict between the Moldovan and Romanian versions of history and Moldova’s identity continues, and the politics of memory with regard to the war directly depend upon it.

Ukraine

In the Ukrainian national narrative (which has been most consistently laid out in the school textbooks since the 1990s), communism, as well as the

Russian Empire, are portrayed as *external* forces that coerced Ukraine into their orbit. Given this perspective, Ukraine, which indeed suffered a great deal from the Soviet totalitarian regime, denies its contribution to its creation and portrays itself as a victim of external aggression¹².

However, completely purging the Soviet element from the legitimate image of the past proved to be an unsustainable endeavour, if we take into account the mindsets of a large section of the population (for whom ‘Soviet’ is a synonym for relative well-being, social guarantees and stability) and external pressures coming from Russia. The “Great Patriotic War” was a historical narrative that had to be incorporated, albeit partially, into the grand official narrative. The strategies chosen for such integration consisted in humanising the war’s image, refocusing attention to personal histories, heroic feats and the suffering of “ordinary people” and, at the same time, highlighting the Soviet political and military leaders’ mistakes and brutality.

Unlike in Belarus, in western Ukraine – in Galicia and Volhynia – strong anti-Soviet nationalist guerrilla groups were active until the early 1950s. The textbook authors resolved the problem of incorporating the activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) into the new version of the war by highlighting their struggle against the Nazis and a “democratic” evolution of the nationalist movement which presumably emerged after 1943. Meanwhile, the massacre of Poles by the UPA in Volhynia in the summer of 1943 was ignored, in which at least 60,000 Polish civilians were killed¹³, as was the participation of Ukrainian nationalists in the murder of Jews by the Nazis¹⁴. The new textbook claimed that the goal of ordinary Ukrainians battling on both sides of the front was independent statehood for Ukraine, and after 1991 this was intended to create conditions for reconciliation between the Soviet and UPA veterans. However, all attempts to award official war veteran status to the nationalist guerrilla fighters and to officially rehabilitate the UPA failed¹⁵.

In the early 1990s, Galicia and Volhynia experienced a wave of monument creation. The historical figure now featured on the pedestals in most cities was Stepan Bandera, the leader of the OUN’s radical wing. The name of Stepan Bandera, who was assassinated by a KGB agent in Munich in 1959, became a generic name used for Ukrainian nationalists or even all residents of western Ukraine (“banderites”, “banderas”). The post-Soviet canonisation of Bandera, geographically restricted to Galicia and Volhynia, is one of the glaring examples of an external break with the Soviet ideological dogma (which presented Bandera as being an arch-villain).

At first, the notion of the “Great Patriotic War” disappeared from school textbooks, but in 1995, after intervention by the legislators (initiated by the Communist Party of Ukraine), it was reinstated. However, the historical narrative in the textbooks did not change or revert to the Soviet dogma. Instead, this fairly monological textbook found itself in a pluralist public space where the main alternatives to the national dogma were individual elements of Soviet mythology, as well as populism and nostalgia.

The key to understanding the Ukrainian state’s policies after 1992 lies in the awareness of its multitude of vectors and situational variability. The search for ways to legitimise Ukraine and its post-Soviet elites without causing national, linguistic or religious conflicts was carried out literally by touch. One can say that this approach was “conceptualised” in President Leonid Kuchma’s “multi-vector” policies (1994–2004). In particular, in 2000 he officially reinstated Soviet Army Day on February 23.

In his public speeches on Victory Day on May 9, Kuchma took care not to bring up the subject of the UPA and, accordingly, the broader subject of the internal Ukrainian conflict. At the same time, the authorities tried to use the subject of the UPA’s rehabilitation in ongoing political struggles. However, on May 28, 1997, the government set up a commission to study the history of the OUN and the UPA. A task force of historians created under its aegis was headed by Stanislav Kulchytsky (2005). The preliminary conclusions of the task force were published in 2000, and the final report was issued in 2005, when Kuchma was no longer president¹⁶. The historians acknowledged the radically nationalist nature of the OUN’s ideology but argued that the UPA did not collaborate with the Nazis after 1943. Making a call for “the restoration of historical justice”, the task force of historians recommended that the Second World War veteran title be awarded to UPA combatants¹⁷.

As the presidential election of 2004 drew nearer, the politics of symbols experienced a U-turn, acquiring a strong pro-Russian flavour, which was signalled in the Brezhnev-style parade on October 28, 2004, to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Ukraine – a ceremony attended by the Russian president Vladimir Putin. The subsequent developments, historically known as the Orange Revolution of 2004, showed that these transformations caused the opposite reaction to the one that was expected.

The new president, Viktor Yushchenko, paid special attention to history. The rhetoric of his public speeches about the Second World War was dominated by a mood of reconciliation and unity of the nation. He linked the victory over fascism to statehood (“Our victory is a celebration of Ukrainian statehood”). He invoked the unity of the nation during

the war not as a means of the struggle but as a goal, claiming that millions of Ukrainians “were defending Ukraine and dying for Ukraine” (Yushchenko, 2006)¹⁸. Meanwhile, Yushchenko often paired together seemingly incompatible symbols. For instance, addressing the UPA combatants, he used the Soviet construct “Great Patriotic War” or (in order to bolster the same argument about the “unity of the Ukrainian people in the war”) mentioned the general Nikolai Vatutin, killed by the UPA, and the UPA commander Roman Shukhevych, killed in battle by the Soviets, in the same breath. After the first round of the presidential election in 2010 (when he received only 5.45% of the votes), Yushchenko signed the scandalous decree awarding the Hero of Ukraine title to Stepan Bandera. This decree was soon annulled in the court of law, since the recipient of the title was not a citizen of Ukraine.

We should point to a feature of Yushchenko’s public addresses which was novel compared to Kuchma’s: Yushchenko mentioned the Holocaust and the deportation of Crimean Tatars by the Soviets in 1944. In his public address to mark the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Baby Yar murders, the winner of the 2010 presidential race, Viktor Yanukovych (2011), even managed to avoid not only the words “Holocaust” and “Shoah” but even the word “Jews”, mentioning only “mass murders of civilians” and the “painful death of thousands of people of different ethnic backgrounds” in Baby Yar.

Today, Baby Yar – the site of the mass murders in Kiev – demonstrates particularly clearly that the state lacks a well thought-out policy in relation to the memorialisation of the Holocaust. In 1989, memorial plaques in Hebrew and Russian were mounted at the memorial opened during the Soviet period, in 1976. During the independence years, many monuments to different groups of victims were mounted in Baby Yar (including a monument to several OUN members shot there). Presently, the “Baby Yar national reserve” features 29 different monuments, as well as playgrounds for children, vendor kiosks and other installations providing leisure facilities for Kyiv residents.

On the whole, the memorialisation of the Holocaust in Ukraine, special publications, summer schools and seminars devoted to the subject are the result of non-governmental initiatives, primarily projects run by international and local Jewish organizations. In particular, in Dnipropetrovsk, a big industrial centre in the south-east of the country, which is sometimes metaphorically called “Ukraine’s Jewish capital”, the construction of Europe’s largest Jewish community centre, known as ‘Menorah’, was completed in 2012. The centre consists of skyscrapers in the form of a menorah, housing a synagogue, kosher restaurants and hotels, a hospital, and a

Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust – the largest institution of this kind in the former USSR.

At the official level, the policies of President Yanukovych (2010–2014) included straightforward attempts to reinstate many elements of the Brezhnev-era image of the “Great Patriotic War”. In particular, he openly spoke of the need to “synchronise” the May 9th celebration with Russia and Belarus. In 2010, on Victory Day, military parades were held in Kyiv and all the Hero Cities, while the “inconvenient episodes” of the war (the nationalist underground, the fates of the Soviet prisoners of war, the deportation of the Crimean Tatars) were not mentioned at the official level. On the eve of the holiday, following an initiative of Ukraine’s Communist Party, which was a part of the ruling coalition, Stalin’s portraits were displayed in Luhansk, Soviet flags were raised in Kherson and Crimea, and a monument to the Soviet victims of the OUN and UPA was unveiled in Luhansk, as was a Stalin monument in Zaporizhia, near the Communist Party’s local office.

It is important to stress the fact that in Ukraine, where the socio-economic programmes of the various political forces are actually identical and have an undisguised populist touch, the issues of history and language have often been ideal *markers of political distinction*. The political elites, meanwhile, have regarded history as a relatively safe area where verbal and symbolic antipathy was unlikely to be translated into direct physical violence. However, the Maidan protests from the autumn of 2013 to the spring of 2014 and the war in Donbas that followed showed that it was precisely the issues of history, language and identity that formed the main ideological underpinning of the political movements and violent actions of the masses.

The political and economic situation in Ukraine before the Maidan unrest can be described as a deep crisis of sovereignty and statehood as such. On the one hand, public opinion developed an understanding of the lack of prospects for living inside an entirely corrupt economy ruled by clans and oligarchs, while on the other, it bought into the myths of Europe as a space of freedom of speech and movement, economic development and the rule of law. For many participants of the Maidan protests, “Europe” became a symbolic antithesis both to the Yanukovych regime and the “Soviet past”. As for the former, Yanukovych completely lost his legitimacy as he demonstrated his impotence in guaranteeing the protesters’ rights and avoiding violence. At the same time, in the minds of many people, all things Soviet, especially within the context of the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas, became associated with Putin’s Russia and its aggressive policies¹⁹.

The “Great Patriotic War” and the Ukrainian crisis of 2013-2015

On February 21, 2014, the popular Russian newspaper “Komsomolskaya Pravda” ran an unsettling headline on the front page: “After seizing Ukraine, banderites will take aim at Russia”. Six days later, plans for a referendum were announced, and on March 16, the referendum “for the reunification of Crimea and Russia” was held. In addition to the “right to self-determination” and “Crimea has always been a part of Russia”, the arguments used to politically prop up this “reunification” included the need to protect the peninsula against a “punishing operation” which, it was claimed, was already planned by “the banderites’ loyal followers” in the Kyiv government.

The Kremlin propaganda covering the events in Ukraine was already using the language of the “Great Patriotic War” and portraying the Maidan not only as an “American conspiracy”, but also as a reincarnation of the very same fascism the victory over which had been officially celebrated on May 9 since 1965. In the official Russian media, the Ukrainian volunteer units were obsessively represented as “punishers” committing atrocities against civilians. Within this logic of agitprop, present-day Russia was identified with the Red Army, which won over the Nazis, and the politics of interference with the Ukrainian crisis was explained by the need to protect the world against the new/old “fascism” from the Maidan.

The historical-emotional bridge from 1941-1945 to 2014-2015 played a key role in the justification for the war on the part of self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. The ideological constructs of these entities existing under Russia’s military and economic wardship combine the elements of late Soviet mythology, anti-oligarchic sentiment, Christian Orthodox discourse and Hollywood mass culture. In many public pronouncements by the LNR and DNR leaders, their declared “anti-fascism” goes hand in hand with anti-Semitic statements (Mitrokhin, 2015).

One could have expected Ukraine to respond to this tide of propaganda with an upsurge of radical nationalist sentiment. Such a development would have appeared all the more logical considering the fact that the Maidan protesters legitimised the nationalist slogan “Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!” and often waved the OUN’s black and red flag. Yet even the rhetoric that leaders of the right-wing volunteer unit Azov and the right-wing party Right Sector use to describe the current war is dominated by symbolic allusions not to the UPA’s tradition but to the Soviet narrative! In particular, in September 2014, the Right Sector’s leader wrote about “our Great Patriotic War” (Yarosh, 2015), while the Azov battalion called

Donetsk airport, which the Ukrainian forces had been controlling for 242 days, “our Pavlov’s House” (Kuznetsova, Sabinova, Sokolovskaia, 2015).²⁰

Using the symbols of the “Great Patriotic War” when describing the heroic deeds of the Ukrainian fighters became commonplace in the official rhetoric coming from Kyiv. Yet on August 24, 2014, in his speech on the occasion of Ukraine’s Independence Day, President Petro Poroshenko (2014) said that Ukraine was waging a “Patriotic War” in Donbas. Many Ukrainian politicians compared the struggle for Donetsk airport to the defence of the Brest Fortress, and on February 14 2015, an advisor to the Home Affairs Minister, Zorian Shkiriak (2015), said that the enemy was “deliberately turning Debaltsevo into Stalingrad”, meaning the intensity of fire and the scale of destruction of this key railway junction. The most eloquent pronouncement was a comment made by the Kyiv-appointed Luhansk Region’s governor Hennadii Moskal (2014) regarding an assault by LNR combatants on a Ukrainian checkpoint near Bakhmutka in October 2014: “these are General Vlasov’s true heirs, who villainously breach all agreements”²¹.

The frequency of usage of these similes can be explained first of all by the strong inertia of late Soviet education and mass culture, and by family memories of the war. References to the Brest Fortress, Pavlov’s House or even “treacherous soldiers from Vlasov’s army” prove to be more recognisable than fragments of the history of the UPA or other Ukrainian anti-Soviet underground movements.

This brings us to the difficult question of whether post-Maidan Ukraine will seriously compete with today’s Russia for the “Great Victory”, whether it will dispute the statement that Russia would have won the war “even without Ukraine”, which Putin still made in 2010 (Kolbasian, 2011), or his other statement, made in 2015, to the effect that “it was most of all Russian people who sacrificed their lives for the sake of victory” (Putin, 2015).

In the context of an open conflict (often called a hybrid war) with Russia, the Ukrainian government and President Petro Poroshenko are looking for ways to symbolically distance themselves from the Soviet past and the modern Russian historical narrative. In particular, Defender of the Fatherland Day was transferred from February 23 to October 14 – the date which the UPA chose as the official date of its establishment. On April 9, 2015, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine’s parliament) passed laws recognising members of different Ukrainian political organizations acting throughout the 20th century (including the nationalist underground during World War II) as “fighters for Ukraine’s independence”, and establishing May 8 as the Day of Memory and Reconciliation. Yet May 9 retains its status of an official holiday – Victory Day. The privileges granted to the Red Army’s

veterans are also not questioned, and the Hero of Ukraine medal, shaped as a five-pointed star (as it was designed during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, who introduced it), remains the highest honour awarded, among others, to Ukrainian soldiers fighting in Donbas.

Thus, the politics of memory pursued by the official channels in Kyiv retains a certain ambivalence and still contains many elements of Soviet symbols which chimerically intertwine with elements of the nationalist narrative.

Different (and similar) images of the war

In all three countries sketched out here, the subject of the Second World War remains a central one for the politics of memory and oblivion. Unlike Belarus or Moldova, there is regional diversity in Ukraine when it comes to models of memory, as well as continuity (since 1991) in the historical narratives laid out in its textbooks. The most radical textbook changes have been made in Belarus. In Moldova, the struggle over the history curriculum in high schools (or, rather, the very name of the discipline) has demonstrated the greatest potential for social mobilisation. And the main common denominator in the evolution of the three countries is the fact that the Soviet myth of the “Great Patriotic War”, once whole, has been nationalised (albeit by emphatically Communist or “anti-nationalist” authorities) and adapted to local expectations and needs. It is these variations and modifications that contain highly interesting information about society and government in the three neighbouring countries. The trajectory of development of all three countries can be described in most general terms (of course keeping in mind the significant differences) as a movement from the more straightforward national formulae through a re-Sovietisation of varying intensity to a search for models of a political nation and civic identity.

English language version provided by the author.

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Notes

- 1 For more information on the "Partisan Belarus" symbols see Goujon (2010).
- 2 For more information on the memories of war in post-Soviet Belarusian society, see Smalianchuk (2007); Shatalava (2008) and others.
- 3 More details can be found in Smalianchuk (2008).
- 4 In relation to the nature of President Lukashenko's regime, Belarus was often metaphorically described as "the last dictatorship in Europe" (Wilson, 2011). See also Marples (1999); Balmaceda, Clem, & Tarlow (2002); Feichtinger & Malek (2008); Osteuropa (2010).
- 5 See: Kovalenia & Sthkevich (2004). This textbook describes the 're-unification' of 1939 according to the late Soviet scheme, but mentions "mistakes and extremes"

- which are limited to the closing of the churches. The book also mentions the Holocaust and devotes a separate chapter to the Belarusian collaborators with the Nazis.
- 6 All quotes from Lukashenko speeches are taken from the official webpage of the President of the Republic of Belarus: <http://president.gov.by>
 - 7 The memorial complex on the site of Khatyn village, which was burned down in March 1943, was opened near Minsk in 1969. For more information on its symbolisation, see Oushakine (2011); Rudling (2012).
 - 8 I owe this observation to conversations with my Belarusian colleague, Andrei Tykhomirov.
 - 9 For more details, see Ihrig (2008).
 - 10 The same strategies of “domestication” of the memorials to Soviet soldiers could be found in Ukraine. See for example the story of such a memorial in the East Galician town of Slavs’ke in Portnov (2008).
 - 11 The point regarding the continuity of the Moldovan statehood is to a large degree a product of Soviet historiography. During the brief existence of the Moldavian Democratic Republic (January 24 – March 27, 1918), there were no attempts to trace the history of statehood to the medieval Moldavian principality (Kusko & Taki, 2003, p. 490).
 - 12 For more details on the politics of memory in post-Soviet Ukraine, see Wanner (1998); Rodgers. (2008); Portnov (2010) and others.
 - 13 On the history of the Volhynian ethnic cleansing see Motyka (2011); Snyder (2003).
 - 14 For more information, see Rudling (2011). Among the numerous publications on the Holocaust in Ukraine see Brandon & Lower (2008).
 - 15 For more information on the various groups of veterans and their role in Ukrainian politics, see Portnov & Portnova (2010).
 - 16 Kul’chytskyi, S. (Ed.) (2005). OUN i UPA. Fakhovyi vysnovok robochoi hrupy istorikov pry uriadovii komisii z vyvchennia diial’nosti OUN i UPA. The analysis of this document could be found in Jilge (2006).
 - 17 A special research of the memories of the UPA: Yurchuk (2014). On the question of collaboration with the Nazis and its relevance for the memory politics in post-Soviet Ukraine see Khromeychuk (2013).
 - 18 President of Ukraine Speech on Victory Day. May 9, 2006.
 - 19 Among the publications on the Maidan and the ‘Ukraine Crisis’ see Stepanenko & Bylinskyi (2014); Marples & Millis (2015); Raabe & Sapper (2015); and others. Important interpretative insights can be found in Gerasimov. (2014); Zhurzenko (2014).
 - 20 ‘Pavlov’s House’ – an apartment house in Stalingrad defended during the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943 by the group of Soviet soldiers commanded by sergeant Yakov Pavlov. ‘Pavlov’s House’ became one of the most recognisable Soviet symbols of the ‘Great Patriotic War’.
 - 21 Moskal’ spoke of the Soviet general Andrei Vlasov who in 1942 was taken prisoner together with his soldiers by German troops. In 1943, Vlasov became the commander of the anti-Soviet Russian Liberation Army (ROA). In 1945, Vlasov was captured by the Soviets and executed in 1946 as ‘the betrayer of the Motherland’.

External influences on political
education and transnational
exchange

The Eastern Partnership Initiative: 5-year results and future perspectives

Eastern Partnership background and framework

The emergence and implementation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is linked with the Polish-Swedish proposal within the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in order to sustain and increase cooperation between the EU and its six eastern neighbours – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In many ways, the ENP has been a subject of heavy criticism due to its framework which brought together a huge range of various countries from Northern Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. That is why it was thought that a specification of EU policies towards its eastern neighbours would become a qualitative upgrade of the ENP (Emerson, 2008, p. 15). The declared goal of the EaP was to bring the six participating countries to the creation of a free trade area between them and the EU. Further aims referred to the advancement of cooperation in the field of energy, followed by abolishing barriers in trade between the participants of the initiative. Finally, the EaP was constructed as a club “that would be loyal to the EU, depend on that community and share the European values” (Polkhov, 2008).

The aforementioned loyalty and dependence have been embodied in the formal framework of the EaP. It has been designed by the EU and based on the formula “more-for-more.” It means that the countries which show the best performance in conducting democratic reforms are provided with more opportunities and incentives from the EU. At the same time, the bilateral relations of all six countries with the EU have been formalised through the EaP initiative and based on the same formula centred on the Association Agreements (AA) which in each case should also contain parts on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) and replace previous Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA). In other words,

such a framework implied approximation between each EaP country and the EU when the former were to accept “commitment[s] to ‘endeavour to ensure that [their] legislation be gradually made compatible with that of the Community’ under the so-called ‘approximation clause’” (Petrov, 2014, p. 137). This legislative rapprochement is to be based on the three-pillar structure and include spheres of economy, justice and home affairs, as well as foreign and security policy (Emerson, 2008, p. 15). Of crucial importance for the completion of this framework was the EaP countries’ membership in the WTO, which was set by the EU as a precondition for negotiation of the DCFTA parts of the bilateral Association Agreements (European Commission, 2014, p. 2).

Within this format, a particular role was played by Ukraine. On the one hand, it is the biggest EaP country that constitutes approximately 60% of both the EaP region’s territory and population (SME, 2012, p. 52). On the other, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was thought to become a template for other EaP countries, though taking into account their peculiarities and characteristics (Emerson, 2008, p. 15). Consequently, this framework implies more or less a standard procedural approach of the EU towards six different countries of the EaP region, which in the case of their intentions for enhanced relations with the EU thus had to comply with this EU-designed format for coordination of their bilateral relations.

This outcome has a number of implications. The conditionality-based “more-for-more” formula is applied by the EU to countries with different geopolitical priorities and alliance choices. Thus, already at the beginning of EaP initiative, these six countries had different levels of rapprochement with the EU and different visions of how bilateral relations could develop. Moreover, after the 2014 Russian annexation of the Ukrainian Crimean peninsula, Belarus remains the only EaP country which is free from any territorial and/or ethnic conflicts, compared to the others, which all include the Russia factor. However, through its design, the EaP does not take into account the growing role of Russia in the region embodied by a number of Russian-led regional alliances. Finally, the EaP format does not offer any clear-cut EU membership perspective to any of its six participants, although it does not rule it out in general. However, it does stipulate that the approximation of the EaP countries with the EU should be achieved through a special EaP mechanism within the ENP. At the same time, as the contents of the consequent EU Presidency Programmes after the launch of the EaP illustrate, there is still no common assessment with regard to the intensity and role of EaP among the EU’s foreign policy priorities.

European perspective for the region before and after Vilnius

Any analysis of the emergence and development of the EaP framework requires a close focus on the time factor. As Johns (2013, p. 158) underlines, while the EU argues on its own webpage that this partnership is fundamentally about trade, it mentions the Russia–Georgia war as a rationale for exerting more influence in the region. This not only brings the Russian factor into the equation but also makes it necessary to address the state of bilateral relations of the EaP countries with the EU at the moment when the initiative was about to be launched. The Czech EU Presidency Programme (2009, p. 24) which inaugurated the EaP provides a brief but comprehensive overview of the bilateral relations with individual EaP countries. Thus, it was expected to continue negotiations on a new Ukraine–EU bilateral agreement and to launch similar negotiations with Moldova. With regard to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, it was thought to work “on the conclusion of new, enhanced agreements, deepening relations and cooperation within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership.” As for Belarus, initially its participation in the initiative was linked to the policies of the Belarusian government. Nevertheless, the readiness of the EU for the gradual development of bilateral relations and constructive dialogue with Belarus was declared.

Consequently, already at its initial stage, the EaP resembled a three-tier league measured through the countries’ progress in preparing or negotiating prospective bilateral agreements with the Union. The “top league” consisted of Ukraine and Moldova, which at that time had already started negotiations or were about to do so. The “second league” included three countries in the Southern Caucasus, which were less advanced in the development of their relations with the EU compared to Moldova and Ukraine, although they had demonstrated their willingness for deeper cooperation. The “third tier” contained Belarus, which was the only EaP country which lacked its own PCA with the EU (European Commission, 2014, p. 5).

Within five years of the Eastern Partnership, this situation changed somewhat due to reconfigurations in the development of the EaP countries’ relations with the EU. The Lithuanian EU Presidency Programme (2013, p. 17), which culminated with the EaP Summit in November 2013 in Vilnius, may serve as a good benchmark of this. Initially, the signing of the Ukraine–EU Association Agreement, including its DCFTA part, was seen as the highlight of the summit. In the cases of Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, the EU strived to complete negotiations on similar agreements before the summit. With regard to Azerbaijan, “[t]angible prog-

ress in negotiations” was expected. The specifics of Belarus-EU relations were not covered by this programme. Thus, the progress in negotiating the Association Agreement was seen as the main determinant in bilateral relations between the EU and its eastern neighbours. This status quo also predetermined the public interest with regard to these countries before and during the Vilnius Summit. Both prior to and during the summit, the greatest amount of attention was focused on Ukraine, then on Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, while Azerbaijan and Belarus drew the least degree of interest. Such logic complied with the “more-for-more” conditionality formula applied by the EU in its relations with the EaP countries. At the same time, if the most “pro-European” statement with regard to the development of their relations and readiness for further tangible progress in negotiations with the European Union were to come from Azerbaijan or Belarus, it would hardly exceed public attention to the “top tier” (Kaschian and Vasilevich, 2013, p. 2).

However, the way the situation developed in reality turned out to be different than expected by the European Union. First, Armenia refused to initiate an Association Agreement and declared its intention to join the Russian-led Customs Union (Gotev, 2013). During the summit, against the background of the announced decision of the Ukrainian authorities led by the then president Viktor Yanukovych to postpone the signing of the Association Agreement (largely perceived by the general public as a covert rejection of the document), the initiation of the Association Agreements with Georgia and Moldova could be seen only to a very limited degree as being a success of the EU foreign policy.

Moreover, the Yanukovych decision had far-reaching consequences both for Ukraine and for the entire region. Yanukovych’s regime was overthrown, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula, and ongoing armed confrontations between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine led to numerous deaths of both civilians and combatants.

The subsequent signing of the Association Agreements by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine on June 27, 2014 reframed the EaP countries into two tiers. The top tier was formed by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which have signed the Association Agreements, whereas the “second tier” consisted of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, which for various reasons have not done so thus far.

Considering the aftermath of the Vilnius Summit, a number of issues should be stressed. First, as of now, the EU-designed EaP framework has proven to be attractive only for three out of the six EaP countries. Second, the EU-EaP rapprochement was closely observed by Russia which became

one of the main international actors vis-à-vis the post-Vilnius EaP developments, particularly in the case of Ukraine. Third, all three countries which signed the Association Agreements are subjects of territorial conflicts involving Russia. Considering these factors, it is important to address three particular issues: how the EaP is viewed in comparison with other regional integration initiatives, what is the role of Russia in the region with regard to the EaP, and why the EaP integration framework appears not to be the most attractive alliance option for the other EaP countries.

Competing initiatives?

In practice, the Eastern Partnership initiative evolved as the first attempt by the EU to see its six eastern neighbours outside the Russian dimension of policies, though Russia itself refused to be a part of the EaP framework. In other words, as Delcour and Wolczuk (2013, p. 190) argue, the Eastern Partnership entailed a move from the soft law approach based on persuasion and assistance to a comprehensive, binding and detailed legal framework structuring relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours. ... While lacking a membership perspective the Eastern Partnership nevertheless aims to anchor participating countries in the EU's 'sphere of influence' in the legal framework of the Association Agreement with DCFTA.

Despite the lack of any clear prospect of membership, for instance, the Association Agreement with Moldova contains a reference to Article 49 of the Lisbon Treaty which provides that any European state may apply for EU membership (Kasčiūnas and Keršanskas, 2014, p. 10).

At the same time, "Russia sees the Eastern Partnership as the EU attempting to become involved in a part of the world that it sees as their sphere of influence" (Johns, 2013, p. 158). Consequently, it was the EaP that triggered Russia to develop own integration projects which also contain a legally binding framework (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013, p. 191). Thus, promotion of both EU- and Russia-led integration frameworks provides grounds for experts to refer to them as competing initiatives.

European integration, though in its limited EaP format, and the Russian-led Customs Union/Eurasian Economic Union (CU/EAU) are presented as mutually exclusive options. Within the EU perspective, the framework of Association Agreements excludes participation of the EaP countries in the Russia-driven regional economic projects (European Commission, 2014, p. 2-3). At the same time, any competition requires some kind of symmetry which is quite vague when it comes to the comparison of the two projects.

First, while any Russian-led integration project in the post-Soviet space is per se dominated by Russia, the EU is a club in which a number of countries such as Germany, France or the UK counterbalance each other, preventing the others from being a dominant power in the Union. Second, contrary to the lack of clear EU membership perspective for any EaP country, the Russia-driven integration projects ensure full and comprehensive membership in the CU/EAU, which provides certain possibilities for influencing decisions within these organizations. At the same time, “in contrast to the EU, [Russia] is not regarded as a credible source of modernisation through rule-based economic integration” (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013, p. 180). However, it is Russia that uses a predominantly traditional “hard power” approach to convince its neighbours to follow a post-Soviet integration path (Zhurzhenko, 2014, p. 21), while the impact of its “soft power” remains “small compared to Russia’s image as a country which uses force to promote its interests” (Kobzova, Popescu and Wilson, 2011, p. 93). Nevertheless, despite such images of itself in the neighbourhood, Russia has significant room to exploit dependencies of the EaP countries on it in the economic, political or security areas, which enables the Kremlin “to alter the costs and benefits associated with the economic integration of these countries with the EU” (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2013, p. 180).

All these factors combined imply competing integration projects vis-à-vis the general public in the EaP societies. In reality, the Russian approach can be described as that of “the rich older brother,” as it implies a central Russian role in the design of its integration project and readiness to work here and now. In its turn, the EU approach can be characterised as “the high society club”, which means that in order to get full access to it, a prospective candidate has to reach a certain status first before any decision on accession can be made (Kascian and Vasilevich, 2013, p. 2).

At the same time, these qualitatively different approaches of the two major regional players are presented to the societies on an equal footing through various opinion push polls conducted in these countries (e.g. IISEPS in Belarus or the Razumkov Centre in Ukraine) which measure geopolitical choices of the population between the EU and Russia/CU/EAU. The pro-European geopolitical option is usually referred to as “joining the EU” or similar, even though the issue of accession of any EaP country to the European Union is off the agenda both in the mid- and long-term perspective. Even though no data is available on whether the respective population in the EaP country is aware of the lack of any prospect of membership, it is obvious that such opinion polls are in fact com-

paring the two scenarios – virtual EU full-fledged integration and real cooperation with Russia.

As a result, there is a significant divergence of the two integration formats. In the case of the Russian-led CU/EAU the prospect of full-fledged membership has been clear from the very beginning of the integration process, whereas in case of the EaP, the final benefit of the integration process is uncertain and blurred, which means that an EaP country following such a path has to face a virtually never-ending process with numerous obstacles and potentially unknown outcomes.

Moreover, the aforementioned “self-perception of the EU combined with the lack of clear membership perspective for the EaP countries” largely complicates what is referred to as “a European perspective to the region” (Kascian and Vasilevich, 2013, p. 2).

The “Russian world” vis-à-vis Europeanisation

The perception of the EaP countries within their own sphere of influence by the Russian political elites in recent years has obtained additional elements that go beyond the countries’ common Soviet past. This common past still largely remains an important element for life in society in both Russia and the EaP countries, and is interpreted by authors such as Grigory Ioffe (2012) as “cultural preconditions”, which in some cases such as Belarus allegedly determine the country’s geopolitical alliances in favour of the pro-Russian choice. At the same time, such an interpretation fits into the logic of the above-mentioned opinion polls, which forces their respondents to make a choice between participation of their country in the EU or Russian integration initiatives. Such a framework does not answer the question of why these countries themselves made certain choices, whereas the individual economic and political interests of the EaP countries is largely omitted as being irrelevant. As a result, this “either-or” vision treats [each EaP country] merely as an object of international politics but not as its subject, limiting the country’s capacity for manoeuvre to taking an obligatory decision as to whether to ally with Russia or the EU (Kascian, 2013).

At the same time, the shared political culture among the Soviet-formed older generation of the elites significantly simplifies relations between both Russia and the EaP countries on the one hand, and between the EaP countries themselves on the other.

Moreover, the expansion of Russian influence towards its immediate neighbourhood has been accompanied by the concept of the so-called

“Russian world” (Russian: “russkiy mir”) which has become a dominant doctrine of the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church. The application of this doctrine explains Russia’s claims on enhancing its linkage to the neighbouring territories, and is rooted in the historical and cultural foundations of the Russian state. According to Tishkov (2008, p. 416), within this doctrine, the notion ‘world’ means “a trans-state and transcontinental community which is united by its affiliation to a particular state and the loyalty to its culture.” Thus in this framework, special attention is paid to the role of the Russian language. According to Vladimir Putin (2007), it should be promoted as the language of the historic brotherhood of nations and international communication for a community entitled the “Russian world” which is much broader than Russia itself. The Kremlin policies in this regard are backed by the Russian Orthodox Church, which declares Belarus, Russia and Ukraine as the direct heirs of the Kyivan Rus and the core of the “Russian world” (DECR Communication Service, 2010). Moreover, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow (2009) has repeatedly stressed that the Church is called Russian not on the ground of ethnicity. This designation indicates that the Russian Orthodox Church performs a pastoral mission among the peoples which take Russian spiritual and cultural tradition as the basis, or at least a substantial portion, of their national identity.

Even though the sovereignty of the states is not questioned and this space is declared not to be based on any hierarchy in the relationship between the countries in question, it is obvious that this vision promotes a Russo-centric view on the history and culture of the neighbouring states. Within the EaP region, the potential impact of the “Russian world” doctrine is highest in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, which all belong to the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchy. A particular symbolic role in this regard belongs to the city of Kyiv, which is viewed by proponents of the “Russian world” doctrine as being its cradle.

Thus, in its policies towards the immediate neighbourhood, Russia started applying ideological constructs which are rooted in the foundations of history, culture and language. Combined with the significant presence of Russian media in the region and their quite effective work in promoting of the Russian vision, as well as numerous options available for Russia to exploit the dependences of the EaP countries on it in terms of their economy, politics and security, these options constitute important elements for the promotion of the Russo-centric doctrines in Russia’s immediate neighbourhood, and strengthen those countries’ ties with Russia.

Hence, while measuring the effectiveness of the EU policies in the region within the EaP or any other framework, it is often argued that the

focus should be on “break[ing] the link between corrupt elites in Russia and other post-Soviet states, undermining the very notion of the “post-Soviet space” as a coherent geographical and political expression (Maknoff, 2012, p. 289). However, such endeavours are virtually impossible without more active reference by the EU to the common historical and cultural foundations which tie the EaP countries with common European heritage and thus go far beyond the limits of the values promoted by the EU in its eastern neighbourhood. This is particularly relevant in the cases of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, and is compatible with their national historical narratives, which in each case represent a type of counterbalance to the Russo-centric view on the region’s history.

Conclusion

The implementation of the EaP initiative was intended to provide qualitative changes in relations between the EU and its eastern neighbourhood, particularly through a case-by-case approach towards individual countries. At the same time, the design of these policies measured through Association Agreements merely illustrates the use of the one-size-fits-all approach by the EU. Furthermore, the “more-for-more” conditionality formula does not take into account the geopolitical choices and economic ties of the EaP countries. Moreover, such a “rational” approach fails to consider historical peculiarities which influence not only previous alliances but also determine institutional approaches and the behaviour of officials in the EaP countries, who in many cases are representatives of the Soviet-formed nomenclature.

Another set of EaP inconsistencies is yet again linked with the Russian factor. On the one hand, Russia itself refused to be a part of the EaP framework. However, such a decision by no means meant that Russia would not pursue its interests and historical claims in the region. Thus, the EaP failed to take into account the rising and increasingly enhanced ideas of the “Russian world” doctrine pursued by the Kremlin in cooperation with the media and the Russian Orthodox Church. The failure to consider these factors resulted in a situation whereby almost all EaP countries are confronted with frozen conflicts on their territories. These conflicts have the potential to develop, which could lead to the destabilisation of the situation in each EaP country in question, as has been illustrated by the recent developments in Ukraine, with special emphasis on Russia’s role in this process.

Hence, after five years of its implementation, the potential added value of the EaP was largely diminished due to the EU’s somewhat excessive demands

as exhibited by the “high society club”, the marginal benefits of the EaP due to the lack of clear membership perspective, as well as incorrect assessment of the historical background and geopolitical status of the EaP region at large.

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Russia, zoopolitics, and information bombs

Russia's national coat of arms depicts an eagle with two heads. Russian propaganda, too, is a two-headed beast. A two-faced Janus, it looks in opposing directions, and its contradictory directions show that there is no solid ideological basis for a new Russian project. Within Russia and for the Russian-speaking audiences in the former Soviet Union, Russia's key television channels send a profoundly traditionalist message. Russia, as the most important heir to the USSR, is an old civilisation, they say. It smashed Nazism; it has been a stronghold of Eastern Christian culture; it has always had a "special way", a Russian *Sonderweg*.

For international audiences, however, Russia presents itself differently. It is part of a "brave new world", a new multipolar world order that has a profoundly futurist agenda. This new world will displace the global order centred on the declining and old-fashioned West. This is the profound contradiction of the two-headed eagle of Russian propaganda: to the domestic audience, the Kremlin says that Russia's strength lies in the past, while to the international audience it says that Russia's strength is in the future, in the unknown, in a new style of politics, business, and communication.

This new style has nothing to do with the politically correct, with humanism, or with mutual respect. It is more aggressive and more animal-like. It is more *zoopolitical*.

Zoopolitics

In the period since the end of the Second World War, the West has been trying to construct itself according to a "win-win" logic. This logic presumes that, in every relationship, all sides should win. The only injustice is in the division of the shares of the pie: some wins are big, while others are modest.

Russia, on the other hand, operates according to a "lose-lose" logic. This framework decrees that, in every relationship, you should not lose more than your opponent. The world is a battlefield, and you are guaran-

teed to be wounded and to lose blood. So, your primary goal must be to kill, so as not to be killed; to eat, in order not to be eaten. Russia's famous return to "geopolitics", therefore, is in fact a return to *zoopolitics*.¹ This is an understanding of politics as, essentially, a battle between big animals, or animal states, for their survival and for their "living areas". Putin's repeated comparison of Russia with a "bear in his taiga" is a metaphor that reveals the hidden logic behind his actions: the imagery of a "struggle for survival" prevails here over rational win-win calculations.² The Kremlin has returned not so much to the Cold War epoch as to the Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century: people are animals, states are animals too, and states can only survive if they kill or injure other states.

Zoopolitics dominates Russian propaganda in the West. The language at RT, for example, is explicitly brutal, "politically incorrect". It is aimed directly at the hearts and minds of those who suffer from "civilisation fatigue", those who consider the West's political correctness, diplomatic softness, and values of respect and tolerance as expressions of its decadence and weakness. For example, RT is not afraid of giving the floor to anti-Western intellectuals such as Pepe Escobar (2014) who suggest dividing Ukraine between Poland and Russia. And there are many instances of messages of this kind.

Importantly, Russia sees its zoopolitical struggle as being global. For the Kremlin, the battle is not just for Crimea, for Ukraine, or even for "Novorossiya". It is a challenge to the world as a whole, and specifically to the West. Like Hitler's Nazism, which disguised German petty nationalism within a global narrative of the fight between races, Russia presents its struggle as a fight for the whole planet. The key difference from the Nazis' horrible fantasy is that the Kremlin replaces the concept of "race" with the concept of "civilisation". In order to show that the fight is neither local nor regional, Russia says that it itself is not a state, not a nation, but a "civilisation". "Russian is not an ethnic [...] but a civilisational characteristic", Russian culture minister Vladimir Medinskii once said (Vasiasamosvalov, 2013). If Russia sees itself not as a country or a nation, but as a specific civilisation, it can present itself as an alternative to Western civilisation.

A big alternative

It is often argued that the key method of Russian propaganda is to confuse, to relativise, and to persuade the reader that objective truth does not exist. Peter Pomerantsev says, for example, that the aim of Kremlin pro-

paganda is to “sow confusion via conspiracy theories and proliferate falsehood” (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014).

But another narrative is present in Russia’s information policy. This tactic says that Russia and other “emerging countries” present a “big alternative” to the world, which is now temporarily dominated by the West.

The “big alternative” narrative is present on propaganda channels like RT (Russia Today), aimed at a Western audience. This narrative tells a story not about Russia, but about the world itself, about the planet as a whole. “Telling the untold” (the slogan of *Sputnik*, a new media brand launched by the Kremlin in 2014) means telling the world the untold “truth” about itself, which until now it has not known. The first message is that the world is no longer unipolar: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, RT says, are already successfully challenging the dominance of the West. Their competitive advantage consists in their pragmatism and the fact that they pay zero attention to “values”. While the West is stuck in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, or Ukraine, these emerging powers travel around the world and strike deals.

The alternative model that Russian propaganda is trying to propose to a global audience is not the alternative “social model” promoted by the USSR and communist China in the twentieth century, when they said to the West: “We suggest to you a new society”. The new alternative is the “network”. “We are better at networking”, they say; while the West is focused on traditional problems, the rest are doing business, building new networks in Asia, Africa, and South America. They do not suggest a new society; they suggest new connections between societies. They are not better leaders, but better dealers.

The second message that RT conveys is that the world is dynamic, and that this dynamism is centrifugal rather than centripetal. The new emerging powers are moving away from the West rather than towards it, RT likes to repeat. It plays with stories of these new Euro- and America-sceptics: Turkey, which is shifting away from the European Union; Brazil, which largely ignores the West’s advice (unlike Argentina); the economic powerhouses of China or India, and so on. The message is directed at the West, and it says: “Everybody is running away from you. You too should run away from yourself. Or, at least, you should run from your values.”

Russia and “suicide states”

The past several years have changed the nature of terrorism. “Traditional” terrorism has transformed into something new – something that Ukrainian

writer Tetyana Ogarkova calls “surterrorism” (in Ukrainian, *siur* indicates “surrealist”).

Traditional terrorism was an asystemic attempt to break the system without suggesting any viable alternative. Sur-terrorism suggests something more than protesting. It tries to organize its antisystemic attack within a systemic form, in the form of a *state*.

The two forms of contemporary sur-terrorism are Russia and Islamic State, both of which claim to represent different civilisations to the Western one. Their opposition to Western civilisation is no longer chaotic and network-like: it is an order aimed at bringing disorder, it is an anti-chaotic chaos machine. Instead of dispersing bombs, Russia scatters “bomb states”. Instead of sending suicide bombers, it launches “suicide states”. The self-proclaimed states of the Donetsk People’s Republic, the Luhansk People’s Republic, Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia are the bomb states that Russia throws out, and their only *raison d’être* is to explode.

As with a terrorist, the Kremlin’s Russia does not know who its enemy really is. It feels that the enemy is everywhere; the enemy has a million faces and, therefore, it is faceless. Russia identifies its enemy vaguely as “the West” or “the system” or “the unipolar world”. It has equal disrespect for liberalism and socialism, Islam and Islamophobes, Jews and anti-Semitism – because it has lost the ability to distinguish between them.

Its information strategy is quasi-terrorist too. The primary aim of channels like RT is to explode, to bring disorder, to harm as many as possible. Kremlin propaganda praises traditional values and flirts with the Front National or other right-wing parties, but it also tries to bring Islamic immigrants to its side by saying that Europe suffers from Islamophobia. It backs leftist groups and seems to have sympathy with their anti-capitalist visions, but it blames “Gay Europe” for its tolerance of homosexuality.

It might seem that the Kremlin is trying to find friends on both the right and the left. But the reality is that it fears its enemies are both on the right and on the left, in the centre too, and, what is more, behind its back.

“Ukraine crisis”?

Russian aggression against Ukraine is often presented in the Western media as the “Ukraine crisis” or the “Ukraine conflict”. This wording leaves Russian aggression out of the picture, creating the impression that the issue is all about Ukraine’s “internal conflict”, “civil war”, or domestic mess.

There is now plenty of evidence that Russian troops are on Ukrainian soil.³ There is evidence that Russian arms have been supplied to pro-Russian militia. A recent journalistic investigation into the downing of flight MH17 found traces both of the Russian BUK and the Russian military team who operated it (Correctlv, 2015). The chronology of events in Crimea and the Donbas shows that professional and highly competent Russian special forces quickly seized key strategic buildings and arms arsenals. Given these facts, it is short-sighted and cynical to call Russia's war against Ukraine and its pro-EU choice a "Ukraine crisis".

Imagine calling Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia a "Czechoslovakia crisis". Or Hitler and Stalin's invasion of Poland a "Poland crisis". Or the Holocaust a "Jewish crisis". This is exactly what happens with the wording "Ukraine crisis". Its logic mentions only the victim. It implies that invasion and aggression are the victim's fault.

Believing in values

The English political journalist Douglas Hyde wrote a book published in 1950 called *I Believed*. An "autobiography of a former British Communist", the book gave an account of the quasi-religious belief in the communist idea held by some leftist activists in the mid-twentieth century.

The belief, even faith, that many Western intellectuals placed in totalitarian ideologies represented one of the biggest challenges for both pre- and post-war European society. To modernise and humanise itself, Europe needed a fresh scepticism, similar to British sceptic philosophies of the eighteenth century. From the 1960s on, this new scepticism brought about a less fanatical and more pluralist view of the world.

However, in the early twenty-first century, mistrust in beliefs or convictions has become ubiquitous. Believing in something has become obsolete and old-fashioned. The spread of this kind of scepticism is no less dangerous than fanaticism: it undermines one of the most important human capacities, the capacity to distinguish between good and bad, and between better and worse. Total scepticism leads to indifference: if I do not believe in anything, then everything must be equally bad.

Russian propaganda throughout the world plays on this mistrust as one of its key traps. Iran might be bad, but the United States is equally bad, it says. Totalitarianism is bad, but democracy is no good either. The annexation of Crimea was bad, but recognising Kosovo was bad too. "We are as bad as you are", Russia says to the West.

Russia does bad things, but it does bad things because someone else did bad things. The West's era of critical and sceptical thinking contained one important moral dimension: mistrust was needed so as to become better. The Kremlin reverses all that: mistrust is needed so as to become as bad as all the rest.

I have argued before that Europe today has two faces: the Europe of rules and the Europe of faith (Yermolenko, 2014). The first Europe, which is too prominent within the EU itself, follows its rules without believing in its mission. The other Europe believes in Europe's mission without really following European rules. Ukraine is part of this "Europe of faith". Both Europes have their advantages and disadvantages, but both need each other, since faith without rules is anarchic, and rules without faith are desperate.

Ukraine needs European rules, but Europe equally needs to regain its convictions, its belief in itself. Ukraine's Euromaidan showed that the European idea is still able to inspire change. The events in Ukraine showed that the European project keeps expanding, even if Europe itself does not know it. European values are expanding faster than the European institutions.

All you need is to believe.

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Notes

- 1 On Russia's return to "geopolitics", see Evrazia TV (2012).
- 2 See, for example, Rhetoric TV (2014).
- 3 Dozens of videos of interviews with captured Russian soldiers are available online; see, for example, Gram Zeppi (2014); Benalvino1860 (2014); The Moscow Times (2014).

How can you grow an English lawn in Moldova? Reflecting on the reasons for establishing and participating in the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Union

Introduction¹

What I will address in this article are some of the perspectives that are underlying the EU's efforts to (re)build relations with countries outside its external borders, the so-called "third countries". The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) are the core instruments invented by the EU in order to re-frame its relations with countries that are not offered EU-membership for the time being, and education policy is one chapter covered by these political programmes. The ENP and EaP are intended to bring these countries in line with European standards in many policy fields, and to prevent "new dividing lines" (Commission, 2004) between members and non-members of the EU. Since this also applies to the domain of education policy, my basic question is: how can we interpret the efforts of the European Union to partly open up its education policy to third countries and to the citizens of these countries? How far does the EU take the idea of preventing new dividing lines, if we bear in mind that education policy is still perceived as one of the main instruments nation states have at their disposal in order to make "their" citizens (see e.g. Turner, 1994, p. 159). Education systems are used as a means of making people not only think in terms of a collective entity, but also to make them "competent members" of this entity according to its values and rules (on competence see Turner 1994, p. 159; Isin & Wood 1999, p. 4). Yet the definition of a group implies the definition of boundaries and with it the definition of outsiders at the same time. Like identity, we can define citizenship as a group marker, the latter having rather legal implications,

the former having cultural and social implications (Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 20). The two concepts overlap in that they both relate to, or are even based on, a sense of belonging (ensemble of belonging, Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 21; see Isin, 2008, p. 37 and Wiener, 1993, p. 211), which in the case of citizenship is complemented by a legal belonging or membership. They overlap also in that both concepts deal with the relation between individuals and some bigger social entity: the individual and the state, the individual and a group. They overlap thirdly in that both are said to have aspects of status and practice alike (Turner, 1994, p. 159; Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 4; Isin & Nielsen, 2008).

As we will see throughout this article, education policy at EU level was approached in a similar way as at the national level: it is perceived as a potential instrument to promote the idea of an (again) collective identity, yet one not limited by national states' borders but instead, drafted as one that could be integrative to the existing diversity within the space of EU member states.

By way of introduction to the subject, I will in the first part of the paper roughly present the difficult discussions surrounding the development of a common education policy, which were difficult precisely because of its implications, with the idea of constructing a "European" identity and a "European" citizen(ship). Yet while the efforts to invent some collective identity on an EU scale may be seen as the logical consequence of the progressing integration in other policy fields – with Erasmus being widely recognised as an important milestone in that sense (among others Medrano, 2011, p. 33) – it is not so easy to understand why the EU tries to extend its education policy, and with it certain dimensions of the identification offers or patterns, towards its formal "outside". While some research does exist on ERASMUS, research dealing with the expansion of the exchange scheme into ERASMUS Mundus by which Higher Education Institutions (HEI) of the EU become much more accessible (and vice-versa) to non-EU citizens, is very scarce.

What interests me in the second part of the paper is to find out more about the motivation behind the establishment or the extension of the exchange scheme as one concrete example of how the ENP and EaP are put into practice. In order to do so, I will look at how the notions of identity and citizenship are used in EU documents related to the establishment of Erasmus in a first step. I assume that on the political-rhetorical level, these notions stand rather for some idealistic imagination or desiderata concerning inhabitants of the union and the development of a society on an EU scale, which are presented in a way as being the pre-

condition for a prosperous economy. Political rhetoric, however, must be distinguished from how these notions are defined and used in scientific debates. With the help of more recent concepts of citizenship, I will try to reframe this talk about citizenship. This will enable us to identify certain parallels between the ways in which EU-citizens are referred to and the ways in which non-EU citizens are referred to, meaning that at this point I will turn to documents related to the establishment of Erasmus Mundus. Here, I will draw particularly on works that focus on the distinctions and overlaps between citizenship and identity (Isin & Wood, 1999), and others that focus on the question of “substance” of EU citizenship in general (Vink, 2004; Wiener, 1993).

In the third part of the paper, I will deal with the concrete experiences individuals have had participating in the Erasmus Mundus exchange scheme, since these ultimately reveal something about the concrete effects these political approaches unfold at the local level². Thus, the idea is to look at how (large-scale) EU politics translate into concrete (small-scale) practices of individuals by talking with former participants about their experiences in the exchange programme. Evidently, the EU seeks to influence education policy in these countries on a larger scale than that of the individual, but the question is what kind of local effects we can identify in these countries. To what extent do the participants perceive themselves as being actors of the intended change? In order to interpret the concrete experiences of individuals (participants in Erasmus Mundus), I will draw on the idea of “acts of citizenship” developed in Isin and Nielsen (2008). Their differentiation between active and activist citizens relates to different patterns of claiming rights or practices as already being citizens (active citizens) who tend to follow established “scripts” (Isin, 2008, p. 38) which are reminiscent of the sets of duties common in many citizenship concepts. Active citizens are contrasted with activist citizens as being the more creative ones, those who rather interrupt established orders and patterns of doing things, inventing new ways of putting forward claims and thus inventing new forms of citizenship. I will analyse how societal context matters for individuals in order to realise aspects of self-conception that have been gained or altered in another context, coming to some preliminary conclusions about the gap between intentions and practices on the level of individuals that ultimately tell us something about the impact different societal contexts have on the permeability of the (dividing) lines between EU states and their direct neighbours.

Europeanising education policy

“After more than fifty years of institutional construction and legal development, the visionaries of Europe await the sociological proof of a new highly Europeanised population.” (Favell, 2008, X).

Traditionally, education policy is seen as one of the core chapters of national politics because it is assumed to be one of the main instruments of citizen formation or to be a means of reproducing national culture. These ideas are bound up with the introduction of a clear distinction between the members and non-members of nation-states and the definition of a certain state territory. Thus, not only the nation-state as such, but also the concept of the citizen as the legitimate inhabitant of a certain nation state, has acquired an exclusionary character, partly due to compulsory education (Soysal, 1994, p. 17; Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 93) which fundamentally aims at making people aware of belonging to an imagined community (Anderson, 1996), or at “attach[ing] all to nation and flag” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 91).

Yet, as mentioned above, by defining a “we”, one is defining an “other”, too. Choosing criteria for eligible citizens means that at the same time, one defines the “outsiders” or “aliens” (Shaw, 2007, p. 20), and this applies to national education systems as well. So on the one hand, we can consider primary schools in particular as being part of an “increasingly powerful machinery [of states] to communicate with their [the nation states’, HZ] inhabitants” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 91), trying to make them believe in a specific exclusionary vision of the community they are part of. On the other hand, a certain international dimension was present in education from the beginning, too, precisely because national education systems were established as a means of distinguishing oneself from others (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 19; Anderson, 1996, pp. 75ff., 88ff.).

The implicit dimension of “internationalisation” in academic institutions (Jons 2010, p. 97) or, referring to our regional focus, “a sense of wider Europe”, is however mostly absent in the narratives of historians of education, who “have tended to produce constructed silos of the national” (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 19).

Bearing this in mind and turning to the second half of the 20th century and the then still young European Community, it becomes easy to understand that first attempts from within the relatively young Community structures pointing into the direction of opening up these “silos” (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 19), failed. For a long time, education in the sense of primary and secondary education (in contrast to vocational training)³ represented “a sensitive issue” (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 35) if not even a

“taboo” (Corbett, 2003, p.315; Pepin, 2006, p.22 and also Jařab, 2008, p.89) which “should not be part of Community competence” (Corbett, 2003, p.318). In other words, forms of Europeanisation in the sense of institution-building at the European level or any Europe-induced policy changes (Borzel & Risse, 2000, p.3) in this political domain were not a subject at all, or if they were, it was a peripheral one on the agenda.

The idea of framing education as a domain of Community politics and as something of supranational importance grew only over time. First initiatives from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s are classified rather vaguely as being “cooperative” in character (see Corbett, 2003, p.319ff. on the “Deal on Cooperation”; Lawn & Grek, 2012, p.39f. on “Governing by Cooperation”)⁴. The circumscription of what exactly the aim of cooperation should be was again a matter of debate. After in one of the first documents, this aim had been defined as “a European model of culture correlating with European integration” (Pepin, 2006, p.64, cit. Resolution 1971), the expression “European model” had to be removed, reflecting once again “sensitivities in the field of education” (Pepin, 2006, p.64; Corbett, 2003, p.322–323 on fights about other wordings).

The institutionalisation of education matters progressed, and in 1981, education together with vocational training were attached to the same Directorate General, namely that of employment, social affairs and education. Finally, the matter gained more importance on the agenda of European politics (Pepin, 2006, p.92–93) and was included into the treaty of Amsterdam in 1992. But even after its “enshrinement” (Pepin, 2006, p.143) into the treaty framework, in practice, “softer” forms of cooperation continued to characterise efforts in the field of education. The role of the European level for education matters was perceived as being a complementary one, which nevertheless aimed at encouraging collaboration.

Despite all this scepticism, the Erasmus programme was established in 1987 after “[e]ighteen months of bitter negotiations” (Pepin, 2006, p.117; see also Corbett, 2003, p.324ff.) on the budget and its legal basis. Its establishment is not only an example of intensified collaboration in the field of education, but should also be seen in the light of other processes that were ongoing at the same time within the Community, processes related to efforts to make people aware of being part of a European Community. From the very onset it was clear that Erasmus (without *Mundus!*), as a sub-chapter of the common education and vocational training policies, serves two aims: the first is economic in character, stressing the necessity to create a labour force fitting the economic needs of a “Europe” that was or is to evolve more and more into a “Europe of knowledge” (Commission,

1997). The second aim is rather cultural and consists of bringing “Europe” closer to its citizens or creating “a People’s Europe and a sense of European citizenship” (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 37). My focus will be on this latter aspect, the creation of the idea of a European citizenship as it has been promoted from the mid 1970s onwards in particular (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 37).

Precisely this “sense of citizenship” seems to have played a role when in 1985 two reports were issued by a commission with the title “ad hoc Committee on a People’s Europe” (Adonnino, 1985), being part of the “awareness raising” process just mentioned. The starting point for this initiative – according to a member of the Committee (quoted by Shore, 1992, p. 783) – may be traced back to the low turnout of the 1979 European elections, with European officials worrying ten years later again about the low interest of the public in European elections (Pepin, 2006, p. 100). Thus, part of the background to the initiation of Erasmus was a “lack of public awareness” among the citizens in the member states, made evident by the fact that they were not voting (as a part of following their script), ultimately posing a problem for political legitimacy or representing a “democratic deficit” (both quotations Shore 1993, p. 785; similarly Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 44) of the Community. The answer was to invent a whole strategy, an awareness-raising campaign with the help of a professional public relations company which bore the title “A People’s Europe” (see Shore, 1993, p. 788ff.). And it is exactly the consolidation of the concept of “A people’s Europe” to which also Erasmus is intended to contribute (Council Decision on Erasmus, 1987, art. 2, v). Its purpose was the “civic rationale of student mobility in the light of creating European citizens” (Papatsiba, 2006, p. 99).

Apart from the development of symbols – known from nation building processes – such as flags and anthems, passports, driving licences and number plates, and the introduction of a “Euro-Lottery”, the following was stated with reference to the role of institutions of higher education: “University cooperation and mobility in higher education are obviously of paramount importance” (Adonnino, 1985, p. 24). The overall aim was to “make Europe come alive for the Europeans” (Adonnino, 1985, p. 22; see also Wiener, 1993, p. 205). The parallel between the significance of the education of citizens in a single nation state with the attempts that were made at initiation on a supra-national scale is obvious (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 41 and p. 43). However, we need to take a closer look at the citizenship discourse at the level of political documents. In the next section, I will put this into perspective with concepts on identity and citizenship

from scientific literature, assuming that this will be helpful later in order to unveil argumentative overlapping in documents relating the establishment of Erasmus Mundus, in which a different vocabulary is employed.

If Erasmus is intended to contribute to the creation of European citizens, what is the purpose of Erasmus Mundus?

“In May 2004 the European Union acquired not just ten new member states but also several new neighbours”, (Smith, 2005, p. 757).

Erasmus became successful extremely quickly: by the end of the academic year 2008/09, two million students had participated, the aim being to reach three million in 2013⁵. It is “one of the most successful attempts to touch directly a large public” (Corbett, 2003, p. 325). And if the assumption put forward by King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003, p. 230) is true that especially young people can be “won” easily as advocates for Community matters, it should be interesting to reflect on the meaning of Erasmus Mundus, too.

We begin our analysis by returning shortly to the “A People’s Europe” communication (Commission, 1988) because it reflects the consensus on thinking about identity issues and the role of education at the European level of that time: “European identity is the result of centuries of shared history and common cultural and fundamental values. But awareness of it can be strengthened by symbolic action...” and on the European dimension of education: “the Ministers adopted a resolution designed to strengthen in young people a sense of European identity and to prepare them to take part in the economic, social and cultural development of the Community” (both quotes Commission, 1988, pp. 5, 15).

Here we find a view of identity as “common heritage” (Wiener, 1993, p. 205), as something that results almost automatically from shared history, where it is of course questionable what the meaning of “shared” should be. It is assumed that this identity already exists, without being sufficiently adopted, so that identity appears as something that is at least latently pre-existent. It is precisely at this point that the role of education is brought into the game, namely to help young people in particular to embrace their (pre-existing) identity.

However, all this is intended not for the sake of the discovery of such an identity only, but because it is regarded as necessary for the general wellbeing or positive development of the Community⁶. It is an appeal to a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of the context in which the young people are living.

What the quotations call for reminds us of the “competent members” in a community (Turner, 1994, p. 159), but within the framework of the concept of citizenship, this competence is often coupled with the legal membership, as well as with the social and legal dimension: “But those who do not possess the civil, political and social rights to exercise such citizenship would be denied to become such a competent and full-fledged member of the polity in the first place. Thus the sociological and politico-legal definitions of citizenship are not mutually exclusive but constitutive” (Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 4).

Obviously, Isin and Wood’s perspective is that of a citizenship “from below” (Turner, 1994, p. 158), people struggling to gain certain rights, which is in contrast with how it is promoted at the EU/EC level: the EC as it then was began to promote a cultural and social dimension of citizenship from above (passive citizenship, Turner, 1994, p. 159), with the legal/juridical dimension in terms of a European Citizenship remaining “under construction” until its establishment in the 1992 Maastricht treaty. In the light of concepts of citizenship resting upon the existence of formal citizenship, exactly this element is missing. “...[A]rguments for active citizenship or deep citizenship...presuppose that the status of citizenship already exists” (Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 19).

I would agree, therefore, that within Community logics at this stage, the aim was perhaps more concerned with inventing “a unifying myth” (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 44), and that efforts were directed much more towards the creation of a “feeling of belonging and identity” (Wiener, 1993, pp. 204, 207, 211) than the creation or definition of the legal ties of belonging, presupposing that a sense of belonging in terms of identity is also part of the concept of citizenship.

The more practical aim of these efforts, however did not disappear from sight. It seems that the strategy was to arouse people’s interest and get them engaged in Community affairs. According to the Communication from the Commission “Towards a Europe of knowledge”, the aim was for the educational area in particular to contribute to the idea of unity: “[it] must encourage a broader-based understanding of citizenship founded on active solidarity and on mutual understanding of the cultural diversities that constitute Europe’s originality and richness” (Commission 1997, p. 3). An inclusive perspective is emphasised, where before exclusive thinking dominated, symbolised ultimately in the lifting of the internal border regime when establishing the Schengen area (at the cost of restricting the borders with the new neighbours). In contrast to the first quotations, now in 1997 we had European Citizenship (the Amsterdam Treaty in 1992), even

if it was a status “granted to people who did not really ask for it” (Vink, 2004, p. 26). Still, however, the Commission appeared to stick to the cultural/identity issues (diversity, originality, richness) aspect and to the social dimension (solidarity and mutual understanding).

Thus, efforts are still being directed towards raising an awareness of community, of belonging together, which are obviously assumed to be a precondition for achieving the main aims that prove to be primarily economic in character, as we will see immediately below.

Turning finally to the decision regarding the establishment of the Erasmus programme, we find several (disillusioning) allusions to its economic aims: the programme should contribute to generating a “pool of graduates with direct experience of intra-Community cooperation”, it is meant to be the “basis upon which intensified cooperation in the economic and social sectors can develop at community level” (Council Decision on Erasmus, 1987, art. 2, v). Thus, the whole idea can be reformulated as promoting people who would identify themselves and consequently feel responsible for the further development of Community matters, including their role as members of the future work force at a European level. In short: it is about creating “agents of the European integration” (Findlay et al., 2005, p. 192) or “Eurostars”, described as “the very emblem of the new, de-nationalised Europe that the European Union has enabled” (Favell, 2008; Favell & Recchi, 2011, p. 72).

Summing up this sketchy analysis, we can say that in the quoted documents, what is alluded to as citizenship resembles more what Isin and Nielsen call the dimension of “depth” of citizenship (2008, p. 37), which is but one fragment in their concept, concerning the question of a feeling of belonging or emotive commitment, as Turner puts it (1994, p. 157). The dimensions of “extent” and “content” (voting, legal status) remain untouched in EU documents, provoking criticism for the lack of a political dimension of the understanding (Abelson, 2005, p. 9–10), being qualified even as “political kitsch” (Vink, 2004, p. 24). Clearly, efforts directed at the creation of a “feeling of belonging” preceded the establishment of the “legal ties of belonging” (Wiener, 1993, p. 211, *italics in the original*). The question that arises when we are moving on to the establishment of Erasmus Mundus is how we can consider the opportunities this programme offers to non-EU citizens in terms of the degree of integration of the participants (the ENP should be about avoiding new dividing lines, as mentioned already). Wiener hints at the general problem the European Citizenship concept implied once the Berlin Wall came down: “After Maastricht, a new debate unfolded over the gap between politically

included and excluded residents – that is, between citizens who had legal ties with the Union and so-called third-country citizens, or individuals who did not have legal ties with the Union but who might have developed a feeling of belonging” (1993, p.213).

Is it possible to frame the participation in Erasmus Mundus with what Shaw describes as examples, where “practical benefits of membership of a polity are in some circumstances extended also to those who lack formal citizenship” (2007, p. 19-20)? Similarly, Soysal is hinting at cases of non-citizen immigrants benefitting in some way from citizens’ rights while participating in education systems (Soysal, 2012, p.385).

If citizenship is one marker of the border between inside and outside (see Shaw, 2007, p.20; Wiener, 2013), then what can the decision to expand the programme to non-EU citizens tell us about the efforts of the EU to (re)build relationships with (citizens of) neighbouring countries who represent exactly those formal outsiders?

The decision to establish Erasmus Mundus was taken in December 2003 (Decision on Erasmus Mundus, 2003), the same year in which the European Security Strategy (ESS, 2003) was adopted as a consequence of the perceived risks and dangers in the aftermath of 9/11 and the forthcoming “big bang” enlargement (Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 17) of the EU in 2004. About half a year later, the Strategy Paper on the “European Neighbourhood Policy” was published (Commission, 2004): altogether this makes clear that the idea to open Erasmus Mundus for third countries has to be seen in the context of the EU’s efforts to re-order the relations with countries that were to become the “new neighbours” after the eastward enlargement of 2004. The main motivation lay with securing the EU by securing the neighbourhood, so in that sense the premises were quite different from those of Erasmus, which was intended as an instrument for fostering inner cohesion: “The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states” (ESS, p. 10). The EU’s efforts to handle its “outside” are framed by different concepts, e.g. extraterritorial engagement, external governance, or Europeanisation beyond Europe (see e.g. Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004; Lavenex, 2008; Sasse, 2008; Korosteleva, 2012). Despite theoretical differences, all of them analyse how the EU searches to influence the domestic policies of states in one way or another, even though for the time being, they are not to be offered the prospect of membership.

Even if education policy does not figure among the top priorities of the ENP, there are several references to it, mostly in connection with people-to-people contacts, presented not so much as an objective in itself but

as being important to achieve overarching goals of the ENP: “An effective means to achieve the ENP’s main objectives is to connect the peoples of the Union and its neighbours Thus... the ENP will promote cultural, educational and more general societal links between the Union and its neighbourhood.” (Commission, 2004, p. 19). So far, Erasmus Mundus has not been mentioned explicitly, although in other documents, we find that the chapter “contacts between people” translates into the Erasmus Mundus programme in the first place (European Commission, 2012). Above that, the significance attached to the programme is evident in the fact that the allocated budget for Erasmus Mundus has been doubled in 2012 (European Commission, 2012, p. 4).

The overlap with what is being attempted with Erasmus lies, I argue, on a level that has to do with the aim of making people identify with a certain idea. In a way, the EU had to rethink or to continue its reflections on what Europe “as a region in world politics” is, similar to the situation in 1989, before which time Europe basically meant “Western European” (both quotes Wiener, 1993, p. 210). Transposed to yet another scale, the aim of Erasmus Mundus is to help decrease distances between countries in the sense of building closer relations between them: “The external dimension [of education and training, HZ] famously encapsulated in the Tempus programme and recently extended through Erasmus Mundus, addresses an equally important and distinct set of needs. Cooperation in education and training is a very powerful instrument at the service of strengthening relations with third countries and *for fostering mutual understanding between EU countries and those beyond our borders.*” (Commission, 2004a, p. 8–9, emphasis added).

Given the fact that practically speaking, this kind of exchange and approximation can ultimately be organized only at the level of individuals, we also encounter again the idea of individuals (participants) becoming ambassadors, as it were, for the EU: “The aim of this programme is... to have an impact on the visibility and perception of the European Union around the world, as well as building *a capital of goodwill among those who have participated* in the programme.” (Decision on Erasmus Mundus 2003, 2, my italics). This idea takes more concrete shape if we look at the obligations formulated for individual participants or scholars: “Contribute... to the promotion and dissemination of the Erasmus Mundus programme in general...in their HEI and country of origin” (European Commission, 2012a, p. 29). On the level of institutions the task consists even in developing a durable strategy in order to disseminate European and social values (European Commission, 2012a, p. 55).

To sum up: on the one hand, there is a difference between the aims of the two programmes. While the above mentioned emblematic Eurostars emerging ideally from former Erasmus students are standing for inner-European integration, the bearers of goodwill emerging from those who participate in Erasmus Mundus are to promote the good conditions of the EU HEI and to attest to its attractiveness. On the other hand, there are at least two commonalities, one being that the achievement of different goals seems to rest on the same precondition, namely that the target group accepts and adopts what are said to be European values and to identify with these ideals. A second commonality between the two programmes is that ultimately, both refer to the optimisation of the workforce available in the EU, since Erasmus aims at training people familiar with the “European way of things” while Erasmus Mundus tries to attract the best students from third countries (Decision on Erasmus Mundus, 2008, (3)).

However, the question to be answered in this section is: what kind of membership does Erasmus Mundus offer the participants from non-EU countries? Even if they benefit for a certain period of time from their inclusion into the European Area of higher education, we can ask with Shaw (2007) whether that “does make...such persons, in some practical if not formal sense, ‘citizens’” (pp. 19–20).

Given the fact that the participants lack not only the legal status, but that they are also in the EU for comparatively short periods of time (in contrast to a part of the immigrant population from non-EU countries referred to above) and due to the fact that they benefit only from education systems, to see them as another kind of “partial citizens” (Heater, 1999, p. 131) seems inappropriate.

Despite this, we find an appeal to the ideal of equality between EU citizens and other “country nationals”, such as in the following quotation: “The Commission shall ensure that no group of EU citizens or third country nationals is excluded or disadvantaged” (European Commission, 2012a, p. 5). This appeal, however, should rather be interpreted as a part of the EU’s strategy to tackle (all kinds of) “global challenges”, among others which are securing the neighbourhood.

Erasmus Mundus altogether has to be considered as a part of the external dimension of EU education policy in which “soft power” (Nye, 2004) is employed in order to initiate domestic reform (Sasse, 2008, p. 295). Programmes facilitating people-to-people contacts are an instrument of “cultural diplomacy”, increasing attractiveness to partner countries (Commission, 2004a, p. 12), are part of this soft power approach. Participants are being exposed to the environment of an EU country which results ideally

in a process Schimmelfennig calls “transnational socialisation” (2009, p. 8) meaning that individual actors promote “European” values after they have gained some personal experiences: “[...] in the ‘transnational socialisation’ mode of governance, the EU may try to persuade these societal actors of its values, norms, or policy ideas.” As Schimmelfennig continues, he makes clear that the transfer of ideas is not finished when somebody returns with a head full of inspiration, but that then these ideas need to be brought home somehow: “Societal actors will then work to disseminate these ideas further domestically.”

Indeed, the decisions on Erasmus Mundus (2003; 2008) both make reference to “the social dimension of higher education” (2003, Art 1 [14]; 2008, Art. 1 [11]), mobility allowing for the discovery, experience and understanding of “new cultural and social environments” (2008, Art. 1 [11]). If we interpret Erasmus Mundus as a means of contributing to transnational socialisation, and if we further accept affiliation to some cultural identity or commitment to a set of values (defined as being part of the identity the belonging should be directed to) as one dimension of belonging which can be considered a part of citizenship, then we can reformulate the intention behind the extension of the EU’s education policy to “third states” such that: it is a trial to encourage non-EU citizens to follow its ideals of citizenship and all the associated values (democracy, human rights etc.). Participants as potential bearers of the “capital of goodwill” are invited to learn some of the meanings of European citizenship, or more frankly, they are offered the opportunity of sticking to the emotional dimension of one of the fragments of European citizenship: the feeling of belonging (again Wiener, 1993, p. 211) in the cultural sense, with limited opportunities to participate in the educational system of the EU. They are “offered” an association with the cultural ties, which are far beyond legal ties (Wiener, 1993, p. 211), but still significant from the EU’s perspective of soft power ambitions.

According to the programme scheme, participants are to return home after their stays, and this takes us to the final aspect of this section: the moment of returning home means leaving the new environment and going back to the societal, institutional context of origin.

So in terms of citizenship as a concept which defines a relation between individuals and society or state (Wiener, 1993, p. 199), closely tied to the notion of membership (Bellamy et al., 2006, p. 2–3), the situation of former Erasmus Mundus participants may turn out to be rather more complicated due to the fact that they have possibly become part of two different societal contexts. I argue that the question of what they can really make of

their potential new insights from a possibly different culture etc. once back home depends not only on themselves but also on the societal and political context of their home countries in which, however, they are full citizens. The concept of how citizens such as students and professors should behave and be involved in their home societies and on the political stage may differ, that is, in the “scripts” (Isin, 2008, p.38) available for citizens, the idea of the “good citizen” is context-dependent.

In the final section of the paper, I will illustrate the extent to which the situation of former participants can be described as “dislocated” or more precisely “bifurcated”: on the one hand he or she should, roughly speaking, accept a certain set of values as a consequence of encountering another environment, from the top down. On the other hand, he or she should make an effort from the bottom up to take these values home and promote them at the interface with institutions in his or her country of origin. As empirical evidence will show, there are differences at play depending on which side of the interface we look, making it appropriate also to differentiate further the concept of the citizen.

Being there and coming home – matching and mismatching citizenship concepts and societal context

“Being there we have enlarged our horizon and coming back it is like we want to change something, to make something better for Moldova” (student from Moldova, 955-957).

When talking to former participants in Erasmus Mundus from all participating universities in Moldova, you hardly hear any critical comments about the programme. All the people I talked to appreciated their stays abroad very much. The only aspect some of them remembered as not very satisfying or smooth was the border crossing or entry procedures. After all the above discussion of the emotional aspect of belonging, difficulties such as the punctuality of issuing visas, the cumbersomeness and inaccessibility of embassies in general or erroneous controls at airports when arriving or travelling back home relate precisely to the lack of legal ties, the legal status of membership as a mechanism of access or the denial of access to a community and its defined territory.

In order to address their experiences once participants have escaped the border controls, I will come back to the distinction between active and activist citizens introduced in the very beginning. The distinction will prove useful in order to analyse the experiences of some participants in

Erasmus Mundus which result from the double or bifurcated interface with which they are confronted.

Recalling the underlying intentions leading to the establishment of the programme (attracting the best students from outside the EU, turning them into bearers of a “capital of goodwill”), we could call these tasks a rudimentary “script” for the “good participants” in the Erasmus Mundus exchange scheme.

Those who act accordingly may be called active citizens (Isin & Nielsen) or perhaps “competent members” (Turner, 1994; Isin & Wood, 1999) according to the very limited concept on which I have elaborated above.

“Active” in this sense means to behave in a way that is intended by others, while presupposing the active embracement of proposed behavioural patterns, and to this extent, standing in contrast to passivity. Empirical evidence suggests that in some respects, the “plan” to employ participants as ambassadors works out quite well, while in others it doesn’t. Many professors and coordinators of Erasmus Mundus in Moldova mentioned that the level of interest among students in Erasmus Mundus is too weak. They described their students as amorphous, immobile, sleepy or not used to entering into a competitive environment. From their point view, students were not “active” enough, since they were too hesitant to apply. This is not to say that places offered remain vacant, but that they would welcome it if more students applied so that really the “best” students would profit from the exchange programme. Talking to students and staff members directly revealed a different perspective: looking at the initial access to the programme or the conditions of application in the home country, we find typically that while staff members describe the process of application as very smooth, students are confronted with impediments on the level of the programme administration at their home universities. For students, very much depends on the information policy of the universities and furthermore on the competencies of the specific personnel in charge of handling their applications: “When I applied in 2008 my only problem was that nobody could explain to me how to fill out the documents, where I need to go to have them signed. The coordinator of my university did not help me at all” (Vlad, student from Moldova, 194-197).

“My wife applied this year and in Mr. Sandu’s [programme director, HZ] office she stayed about an hour listening to how much he is fed up with Erasmus Mundus, how much he has to do and so forth. That he does not want to sign anything that she should go away, a whole hour.... So you can write a first recommendation: organize the administration of the programme outside the university, attach it to the office of EU or the del-

egation, it should be an office of its own, independent of the university, because it harms a lot" (Nicu, student from Moldova, 634–43).

First of all, it must be ensured that those students who apply for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship are ready to engage in a programme not known to them. In contrast to other forms of migration (labour migration especially), educational migration is not yet that widespread, and has also aroused the mistrust of parents who could not believe in the amount of funding provided by the scholarship. Since we talked to participants who were among the first ones from Moldova to leave with Erasmus Mundus, they should be considered pioneers. In that sense, they needed a certain degree of courage even, ignoring the scepticism of their own family: they can be said to have diverged from conventional paths.

Bearing in mind that Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine have only participated in the exchange since 2007, the difficulties encountered by Vlad may be explained by a lack of experience on both sides. Students as well as administrators at that time were inexperienced in a way (the total number of scholarship for all the three Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine was 231 in the 2008 call⁷). Several staff members mentioned that before Erasmus Mundus, opportunities to visit Western countries were extremely limited.

In contrast to this, Nicu's experience four years later points to a complex of problems that lies beyond the level of personal experience or motivation as it might appear at first sight. Since other students confirmed his experiences in relation to other staff implied in the programme administration, I think that they point to problems that have to do on the one hand with the highly hierarchical relation between students and superiors from the teaching and administration staff, while on the other with the problem that in Moldova, university employees in general are overburdened and underpaid.

Interpreting the experiences against this background with the help of Isin's distinction between active and activist citizens, I would like to stress the following: the will to overcome administrative impediments or individual resistance and traditional attitudes, to try to gain access to something unusual so far, can be compared to putting forward a claim (e.g. a claim for support in coming to terms with the procedure). It means making others used to being presented with new claims (resulting from obligations the university has assumed by concluding a contract with other EU universities), in a situation where access to these opportunities cannot be taken for granted yet, the appendant procedures having not been initially well established. A student engaging in getting a new type of scholarship who is in need of a certain degree of cooperation from his home university stands

in contrast to the general portrait professors used to sketch about their students. Obviously, those who become active in that sense break the usual patterns of students' behaviour in this specific context: they aspire to something new and in that sense have the appearance of being activist citizens.

After leaving the country with the scholarship, everything seems to evolve as the imaginary "script" foresees. Some quotations from the group discussion read like advertisements for the programme. An extreme, yet not unique, example is Bogdan who describes how his value system changed in the course of his scholarship (the dissemination of "European" values is one of the aforementioned aims): "My stay abroad had a very positive impact on me in the sense that I have learnt there to learn much better than I did before. Aaa, until I left there, I was ... well coming back I had become much less discriminating." Moderator: "Against whom?" "against everybody, I did not like Jews, gypsies, I was a nationalist, there I lived among strangers, and I saw that they are human too and that, in addition I got friends who are advocates in Russia, professors in Belarus, people from the Polish opposition and so forth. When I leave now to another country, I know whom to contact, who can help me for instance. I have friends in Ukraine and Spain alike. I have friends almost in the whole of Europe. That is the main idea for me" (Bogdan, student from Moldova, 924-930).

Many participants in the discussions, students and staff members alike, mentioned that their experiences abroad altered their perceptions about themselves, their country of origin and about their "university life". Almost everybody saw the scholarship as being helpful in order to compensate certain deficits of Moldova's system of higher education, primarily in some very practical respects: the availability of specific literature, the possibility of learning a foreign language, of being able to see the country you want to study and to establish relations for further collaboration, book exchanges, acquaintance with other teaching methods etc. All this is contained in the metaphor of the enlarged horizon. In addition, especially staff members mention that sometimes they felt like contributing to enlarge the horizons for others, too: "My doctoral thesis is about the bank sector in Moldova, some interior mechanism of the bank. Yet, I wanted to see what it is like in their banking system, how does this mechanism work there (...). That was what I wanted to see, the tangents. (...) Finally, I did a presentation how these things work in our country, how it looks like, what happens, and what is the current situation. Well, and as my other colleagues said, perhaps we don't know much about them, but they know even less about us. Somehow, we are still in a black hole. ((Laughing))" (Staff member from Moldova, 120-127).

If one keeps in mind the fact that in the respective call for applications from 2008, only 52 scholarships were reserved for applicants from EU countries wishing to apply for places in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, the imbalance is clear. The idea of promoting knowledge about each other, suggesting a reciprocal interest, is difficult to accomplish and the numerical design of the exchange “rates” suggests that the emphasis lies rather on advertising the EU HEI than on learning about the “new neighbours”. In that sense, making non-EU citizens familiar with part of scripts for EU-citizens is much more a priority than achieving a degree of “mutual understanding”, as suggested at the rhetorical level.

Finally, many discussants said that following their stay abroad, they wish to change something in Moldova, and in some cases they directly copy what they perceived as being “good practices” during their scholarship. “I want to say that recently ... at our university there was a professor from France. So this professor ventured to choose us in Erasmus for one month (laughing). All was on a very high level, but I coordinated everything. And she asked me how she arrives in our town? And I said, Mr. Dean, I know how we should receive her. We must go to the airport, receive her there and accompany her to our town, so that she doesn’t get lost on the way, because this is not France, this is not Germany (laughing) Simply, I wanted her to have positive impressions, and I think. Simply, I knew that we should offer her this, I was pleased by the way the welcoming was organized in my host country. (...) And I insisted that it should be pleasant, that she has positive impressions.” (Doctoral Student from Moldova, p.778-791).

All these are (small) examples at the individual level where the intended effects of Erasmus Mundus materialise. Participants use the chance to go abroad and the opportunities offered, almost as in a handbook, adopting or adapting parts of their value systems according to EU models, rethinking their relations to other people in their home country. Clearly, most of them accept the ways the visited HEI functioned as being preferable, calling them normatively “the reality” or as one of the staff members put it: “Thank God, there are some people who see how it is *normal*” (Staff member, 1112-13, my italics). But as I will describe in the remaining section, limitations may occur when one attempts to apply certain forms of knowledge gained during Erasmus Mundus stays abroad.

Individually, all of the participants have enlarged their personal horizon, but what about sharing these experiences with others, namely, to disseminate what you have acquired in another context within your home context, where you are a full citizen? Beyond that, the wish to act as

equal partners within newly-created cross-border collaboration networks is not at all easy to realise. At these points, the script often doesn't work as intended and the main questions are: how do the discussants interpret these interruptions and what conclusions do they draw? Addressing the context at home with new ideas proves to be quite a challenge because it implies another concept of what it means to be a citizen, which might contrast with established patterns of citizenship in the countries of origin.

Staying with the distinction between "active citizens" who "participate in scenes that are already created" (Isin 2008, p.38) and activist citizens engaged in creating the scene, I will point to three examples, which show on the one hand how difficult it is to be creative in a way that really produces an "effect" and on the other that behavioural patterns or other ideals accepted as good citizenship are not necessarily accepted in other national contexts. According to Isin, the creativity at play in the actions of activist citizens goes hand in hand with questioning, altering or rupturing actual patterns of behaviour (*habitus*) which is not always welcomed by others. What the following examples will show is that one certain behavioural pattern can be framed either as participation in a scene, as the creation of a new scene or as something in between, depending on the (national) context.

In our group discussions, one of our questions was what chances participants in *Erasmus Mundus* have or see in order to apply knowledge, practices or experiences in general after they had come back to their home institution. Unfortunately, during the students' discussion, we did not really touch upon this point, so all material is drawn from the discussion with teaching staff members. In their case, there was quite some agreement in several points, which I wish to illustrate in the following, some of which are slightly reminiscent of difficulties met by students in the application phase.

First, all participating staff members agreed that basically there is no problem with using the concrete scientific knowledge gained abroad in their classes, so that transfer of knowledge is in this sense unproblematic. If, however, you are changing teaching practices, things start to look different. One professor had indeed changed the way in which she tested students. In her exams, she accepts individual presentations instead of the traditional written exam because she thinks that it is essential for her students in their professional life to know how to give a presentation. In fact, written exams are still the only officially accepted form to test students, so that she really breaks a convention: "I want to say that, okay, I have been to different universities both in Europe and in the US. Basically, I have imple-

mented some teaching methods and methods of evaluation some time ago already, but some of them I apply in ... like that ... and I think when will somebody come and penalise me because I ...” – “Yes, that’s it” – “I realise, I do the exam not in the form we are to do but in form of a presentation While here [at our university, HZ], it is obligatory that all get the same identical exam without paying attention which is the specific of the class, which is the finality of the class, even if everybody is talking about finalities. But you cannot evaluate them all in an absolutely identical way.” (Staff members Moldova, pp. 905–923).

Obviously inspired by several stays abroad, she has changed her way of testing her students, so that her practice accords with the practice in the other contexts she has visited. Interestingly however, her change of practice back home remains effective only at the individual level: she is not trying to establish it on a higher scale, she is not calling for the discussion of the appropriate kind of exams in her discipline at her university. In that sense, she is not putting forward a claim, but simply rupturing her individual practice, seemingly not having suffered any sanctions so far but expecting them should her divergence be discovered one day. It is difficult then to appreciate whether her behaviour corresponds with what activist citizens do according to Isin and Nielsen, because the effect of this divergence or change in practice upon the relation between individuals and society remains more or less latent, until it comes to light at some point in the future.

Since, however, this staff member has touched upon the subject of “finalities”, the discussion takes an interesting turn. Finalities is one important term throughout the Bologna process, and a whole passage revolves around the question of the extent to which the Bologna process (to which Moldova had adhered within half a year) is used today as a means to legitimately further bureaucratised the HEI sector in Moldova without “really” implementing anything. The fact that some staff members have visited HEI in EU countries has several implications: they see the differences between here and there, some speak of “our Bologna” and “their Bologna”, alluding to the – from their point of view – purely formal implementation of the necessary reforms: “Like in this famous joke, when somebody asked the English: how come that you have these beautiful lawns? And it’s like: very simple – you just need to trim it every morning, for 400 years ((laughing)). That’s it, well, if you do not have these traditions, let’s say, that are passed from one generation to another, and you apply mechanically certain things you have seen here and here and there, it is very difficult.” (Staff member from Moldova, 776–779). “Yes, so, there is this tendency to: we try to formalise as much as possible, everything we have.” “And we tick that we...”;

“And we tick that we have done it...”; “According to the Bologna process”; “Accordingly, exactly.” “Don’t you forget that we are registered (laughing)” “Anonymously.” (Three staff members from Moldova, 963–976).

Aside from these critical observations, several participants describe how not only the Bologna process but also they as staff members are perceived in a rather hostile way. “The Bologna programme in the Republic of Moldova, it doesn’t look normal to them, it makes them angry. We believe that if you sincerely say yes, as colleagues said here somewhere, the modality to register at the faculty, the allocation of financial resources, the status of the university ... and then if you go and say, well look how they do it elsewhere, you create yourself a lot of enemies (laughing) from above. Who say to you: okay, you had a look, now shut up! (laughing). You had look, you walked around – now take a rest.” (Four staff members Moldova, 709–723).

The last speaker creates a “we” and a “them” group: the stay abroad in EU countries (or the US, see above) represents a commonality, creates similar visions about what would be good as well as similar criticism vis-à-vis the prevailing system in their home country. So again, personally they have been convinced, and they are even ready to correspond to their role as ambassadors and promote some aspects as worth a trial in their own context. So far, the aim of capturing some kind of “emotive commitment” (Turner 1994, see above) among the participants has been achieved. This engagement is not very welcome, however, and provokes even animosities with colleagues who have not travelled to the EU. The positive impressions cannot easily be made fruitful at home, the critical perception of their colleagues seems even to introduce or exacerbate a division of perceptions between how things work at home and how they work abroad: “... they have seen only Moscow, the same system, possibly Iași [Romania, HZ] and so on, but they do not know the system, for sure they think that what they do here is the centre of the universe, but ... it’s not”, (staff member, 824–827).

To sum up, their stays abroad also mean to a certain degree a potential tension with colleagues from within the university administration, as well as with colleagues from the teaching staff. While the EU intends to avoid new dividing lines between EU and non-EU countries on a large scale, on the level of Moldovan universities, the fact that a part of the staff identifies with certain aspects of how higher education can be organized opens a new dividing line among staff members. Commenting on the chances they see for changing the current situation in education in Moldova, their statements are pretty pessimistic. They see a need for comprehensive systematic changes, declaring them however as being totally out of their reach, even

if at the same time, some say that if not they themselves, nobody will produce these changes.

In conclusion, one can say that despite insights in other contexts, despite identification with other ways of organizing higher education, despite agreement on common critique and an higher education environment in Moldova that at least officially is being reformed according to EU standards, it is difficult to effectively put forward new claims with reference to altering established patterns of doing things in higher education institutions in Moldova and to become an activist citizen in this sense. To make the interface between individual staff members and a university work according to the model of activist citizenship presupposes a general societal context that is prepared and open to such kind of interventions, including the self-perception among citizens as being the ones who are able to initiate change. Individuals who come up with new ideas or suggestions are perceived rather as enemies and perhaps even as being alienated. From the point of view of EU external education policy as a means to create positive identification with its models and values, this represents a success, however: the intended raising of awareness and the building of a capital of goodwill is achieved. However, for the affected participants, this goes hand in hand with a feeling of alienation and powerlessness when back in their context of origin. Many of them have the feeling that they have the potential to change something, but they feel blocked, so that one could call them blocked or potential activist citizens.

What then of the possibilities of intensifying contacts made during the stay abroad, in order to not lose the connection entirely? Do they feel like emancipated members in the European space of higher education after their scholarship has ended, able to continue to knit their network, the incipient links between the EU and its new neighbours? The answer is negative. They are neither able to accept invitations coming from the networks established during their stays abroad, nor do they feel able to invite colleagues from the EU to Moldova because there is no money with which to finance the most basic items for international guests such as travel expenses, accommodation or food. Without any “carrot”, they are convinced that nobody will come: “Cooperation exists but the main problem is finances, because, I think I have six or seven invitations already for conferences. But financially ...”; “You cannot accept them ...”; “And to invite them here, again from the financial point of view ... the university does not have any accommodation, absolutely nothing, but only because of our beautiful eyes nobody no, you do not want to come here. Nobody comes. On their account.” (Two staff members Moldova, 1469-1474).

Continuing to act as “active citizens” according to the ideals formulated in European education policy, and fostering the desired mutual relations, is proving difficult in an academic environment which the participants describe as by and large unchanged since the end of Soviet times. Beyond that, and as banal as it may appear, departing from the traditional paths in Moldovan educational and academic practices and further pursuing the paths with which they became acquainted during their stays abroad depends, like all fruitful academic travel, on financial backing, which is not offered by either side.

Conclusions

The idea of European citizenship initially gained shape by debating the need for establishing a European identity. It aimed to create a sense of cultural belonging among citizens of the member states, in the hope that as a result, they would be more interested in the political affairs of the Community and in contributing to economic well-being. While EU-citizenship was also established later as a legal status, it can be observed that in the EU's policies towards its “outside”, towards the neighbouring countries, elements of the early citizenship approach pop up again without adding some kind of legal status. Among others, in the framework of Erasmus Mundus, the EU tries to promote a sense of belonging by fostering “mutual understanding” among EU and non-EU citizens, seeing participants in the exchange scheme as being potential bearers of goodwill who will disseminate “European values” in their countries once they have returned, and as a potential workforce for the EU. Since this approach is regarded as being a potential contribution to the goal of preventing new dividing lines emerging between the EU and its neighbours, and as the sense of belonging in terms of culture can be seen according many authors as being one dimension of citizenship, the question arises as to what exactly the integrative effect of this policy should be at individual level. Given the fact that the level of emotive commitment represents just one part of the dimension of belonging (the other being legal status), that the stays abroad are short and that regardless of status level, nothing changes for the participants, I decided not to apply the notion of citizen. The remaining question, therefore, is what happens in cases where participants do indeed develop the intended cultural ties, become convinced by another system, by the way of organizing things differently in education according to some model encountered in the EU? Empirical evidence suggests that in most cases,

it is difficult to invest or valorise the capital accumulated abroad beyond the individual level. Suggestions to change certain practices are rejected by colleagues, while others change their practices (of teaching) “clandestinely” without telling colleagues, anxious of being “discovered” and sanctioned one day. Furthermore, contacts established during the stay abroad are difficult to maintain and risk getting lost again or remaining isolated if there are no follow-up options either on the part of the EU or on the part of Moldova. Coming back home means in many respects returning to the point of departure. Thus, in cases where the cultural ties of belonging are not substantiated by personal contacts, these will be difficult to keep up and develop.

When belonging (as is the case, for example, with citizenship) says something about the relation between an individual and a larger community, the intention of Erasmus Mundus can be said to be twofold. First, it tries to establish a relation between non-EU citizens and some kind of EU identity/culture/value system on the one side. Second, the citizenship element of emotive commitment/the feeling of belonging, which in the case of many participants does indeed emerge or is strengthened during the stay abroad, should be transferred in a disseminating manner into the non-EU context; it should be related to this context. While the first step is completed quite smoothly, experiences of coming back home remind participants of returning into a “dead-end street”, into a context depicted as unchanged since the end of Soviet times. The participants see virtually no chance of making a contribution in order to change this situation or to put forward their claims for changes which from their point of view are desirable. The fact that the group discussion in which the cited material was generated was the first occasion on which they exchanged their experiences in a wider circle is therefore telling. The accumulated capital of goodwill is at risk of remaining isolated instead of being a connecting element, and of having little effect beyond the very limited personal level.

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Notes

- 1 My thanks go to Pawel Karolewski and Timofey Agarin and an anonymous reviewer for their thorough and constructive comments on the first drafts of the paper.
- 2 I adopt here the perspective as it has been developed in the research project "Within a ring of secure third countries. Regional and local effects of the extraterritorial engagement of the European Union in Belarus, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova", coordinated by Bettina Bruns at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, see [http://www.ifl-leipzig.de/en/research/project/detail/im_ring_sicherer_nachbarstaaten.html]. The empirical data I will refer to in this article have been generated in the framework of this project. We talked to students and staff who have all participated in Erasmus Mundus in 2008 and 2009. All the quotations are taken from the two discussions in Moldova, organized in March 2012, which were moderated by people from the local context. Interestingly, to organize group discussions in the field of education turned out to be more difficult in Belarus, while in Ukraine it was totally impossible. All names and locations have been changed or are omitted.
- 3 We will see that on a European level, education in this sense and "vocational training" were treated differently from the beginning. Even if in most of the literature,

education and vocational training are treated together, they are clearly distinguished as two different aspects, education identified much more or even exclusively as the task of single states, whereas vocational training due to its more obvious economic relevance is identified quite early as a matter of the community.

4 The phase of cooperation lasted roughly from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s.

5 <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/stat/1011/report.pdf> (p. 14.).

6 Consisting at that time of the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

7 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compensia/selected_projects_action_2_en.php

The role of the EU in the development of civil society in Armenia

A brief introduction

The development of the civil society sector in post-Soviet countries began right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hundreds of organizations were established due to large funds, grants and donations from donor organizations interested in building democracy in the post-communist states. This phenomenon is often known as the “mushrooming of NGOs” or “NGO-isation of civil society”.

Armenia has a long tradition and history of civil society; if one takes into account the ancient and medieval concepts of civil society as communal life and human associations, then interest groups outside of the state have existed here for centuries. However, if we use the modern understanding of civil society developed and conceptualised mainly by western academics, Armenian civil society is only 25 years old. In this article I use the modern understanding of civil society as being “a realm of autonomous and independent non-governmental organizations, movements, networks, grassroots associations, social enterprises, in other words any value-, need- and interest-based social groups established voluntarily by people who through collective action try to fulfil certain goals that bring benefits for a particular group of the society or to the society as a whole”. Following this logic, the development of modern civil society in Armenia traces back to the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

Most of the NGOs and movements formed back then were generally connected to environmental causes. Those environmental movements, inspired by Gorbachev’s reforms and partial tolerance of the Kremlin towards environmental activism, could be observed in Armenia, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine (Ishkanian et al., 2013, p. 17). In general, the development of the modern Armenian third sector was influ-

enced by several important historical factors, such as the inheritance of the Soviet era and its collapse, the 1988 earthquake and the subsequent flow of humanitarian assistance, armed conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and the growing interest among development organizations, the Armenian diaspora and other donors in Armenia (Blue & Ghazaryan, 2004, p. 11).

Since 1990, the increasing donor support directed to the development of non-profit organizations has played an important role in the progress of current civil society, and has shaped Armenian civil society. Aside from foreign donors, international aid and humanitarian organizations, the European Union and other donors, it is important to mention that one of the key players in the development of Armenian civil society is the Armenian diaspora. Since 1991, it has played an important role in the implementation of a range of reconstruction and humanitarian projects (CIVICUS, 2010, p. 26).

The development of civil society and its organizations in Armenia continued after the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh that ended in May 1994 with a ceasefire agreement. This development occurred from 1995 to 2000, together with the gradual and relative democratisation of political institutions and governance in Armenia. CSOs became more organized and targeted in their attempts to address social issues such as unemployment and health. They were intended to spread the values of human rights and democratisation according to the typical example of similar organizations in the west (Blue & Ghazaryan, 2004, p. 11).

Armenian civil society today: a mixture of achievements and failures?

After 25 years of post-communist existence, Armenian civil society represents an interesting mix of achievements and failures (CIVICUS, 2014, p. 13). The development of civil society in Armenia started in difficult circumstances. It was influenced by the collapse of the regime, a war and a devastating earthquake. This was combined with a lack of knowledge, skills and capacity, and the non-existence of laws, appropriate legal frameworks or necessary infrastructure.

Civil society in Armenia became an important and recognised stakeholder that is still facing divergent challenges. In order to respond to this changing environment, the Armenian government adopted a policy of creating participative institutions, providing each citizen with the opportunity of participating in the legislative changes of the country through

civil society organizations. Furthermore, a code of participatory cooperation between some ministries and public organizations has been elaborated, as well as a local self-government law which has been amended to give the citizens and civil society groups and organizations a right to participate in public hearings and the work of local authorities (EU Heads of Mission to Armenia, 2014, p.3).

There are several big networks in Armenia, mostly composed of civic organizations that take coordinated action together with the parliament, government and other state bodies. Unfortunately, there is also a large number of governmentally organized organizations, or GONGOs, which support unpopular policies of the government, creating an impression that citizens participate in the legislative processes. In this way, the government tries to legitimise its non-legitimate policies.

During the last 15 years, the civil society sector in Armenia has undergone considerable changes and transformations, recording new achievements, trends and failures. Recognising the increasingly important role of the NGOs, the state tried to prevent this trend. The Ministry of Justice, for example, presented a proposal of amending NGO legislation to the government, which was approved and put before the National Assembly of Armenia (the parliament). However, thanks to coordinated activities of NGOs against this amendment, it was not passed. Many high-profile NGOs considered this amendment to be a worrying signal. Developments around the amendment and the success of NGOs in persuading lawmakers have shown that the power of civil society to influence decision-making processes is growing.

From 2005–2006 and 2008–2010, the international organization CIVICUS, together with different local and international partners, completed a Civil Society Index, with the aim of evaluating the state of civil society in Armenia. Diverse research methods have been used to analyse collected data in order to provide a realistic evaluation. CIVICUS evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of Armenian civil society, interestingly noting that one of its strengths is the legal environment in which it functions (CIVICUS, 2007). Due to this positive legal environment, many organizations and foundations were registered in the country without any obstacles. According to the CIVILITAS Foundation, in 2008 there were 2,824 registered organizations, with 3,066 in 2009 and 3,300 in 2010. The number of registered NGOs in Armenia was 3,781 as of January 2012 (CIVILITAS, 2010). Nevertheless, according to different data, there are 3,000–5,000 NGOs in Armenia. However, it is only possible to find precise, up-to-date information about a few dozen of them on the Internet or in different directories.

There have been different assessments of the civil society situation in Armenia. One of the assessment mechanisms is the ‘Sustainability Index’ developed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). According to this index, in 2010 the overall sustainability of the NGO sector in Armenia remained unchanged from 2009, and the results of financial crisis severely affected the NGO sector. Because of limited funding opportunities, the framework of the activities of NGOs started to narrow. Moreover, post-election tensions in 2009 contributed to the development of an atmosphere of apathy among citizens (USAID, 2011).

In 2012, the Sustainability Index reported that “CSOs in Armenia increased their organizational capacity [...] recognised the importance of strategic planning, adopted new technologies to share information and keep themselves updated on nationwide developments in their fields” (USAID, 2013, p. 2). Referring to the Ministry of Justice, the index reports 3,432 public organizations, 733 foundations, and 301 legal entity unions registered in Armenia as of October 2012. However, the authors estimated that only up to 20% of these institutions were active (USAID, 2013, p. 23). One of the significant developments in 2013, according the index, is that “the Armenian government officials and affiliated groups label advocacy and watchdog groups as “grant-eaters” to discredit them [...] there was also state pressure including some inspections, arrests, and fines” (USAID, 2014, p. 2). At the same time, advocacy of civil society has been improved, and “informal groups were particularly active in advocacy, confronting unfavourable state decisions [...] and continued to improve their institutional capacities” (USAID, 2014, p. 18).

Freedom House is another watchdog of freedom and democracy in Armenia and elsewhere in the world. As of 2014, around 4,000 NGOs are registered in Armenia, but many are not operational due to a scarcity of funding or capacity. There are some state-funded organizations that are inactive, and the main aim of the governmental funding of those NGOs is money laundering. Trade unions and labour organizations are considered weak (USAID, 2014).

The data from Freedom House’s comprehensive, comparative study “Nations in Transit”, which demonstrates the democratic developments in 29 countries from Central Europe to Eurasia, shows that “Armenian non-governmental organizations operate in a generally favourable legislative climate and [...] Armenia’s civil society is vibrant” (Iskandaryan, 2012, p. 67). They have improved their advocacy, but the “impact of such public advocacy on government policy remains limited” (Iskandaryan, 2012, p. 67). The Nations in Transit report from 2013 suggests that the demo-

cratic gap between three Caucasian states is growing increasingly, with Armenia and Georgia moving forward with democratic reforms and Azerbaijan, by contrast, continuing its “brutal suppression of public gatherings” (Habdank-Kołaczowska, 2013, p. 3). Freedom House reports that the political situation in Armenia as of 2014 contributes to the development of civil society and “Armenia’s civil society remains active, diverse, and independent” (Iskandaryan, 2012, p. 67). However, it does not have a fundamental impact on politics, and the level of trust towards civil society remains low (Iskandaryan, 2012, p. 67).

The role of the EU in the development of civil society in Armenia

The European Union is one of the main donors to civil society in Armenia, and its support of civil society has been growing significantly during recent years. The European Union has emerged only recently as a major stakeholder engaging with civil society in Armenia. In the early 1990s, civil society developed mainly with the support of US-based donors and American governmental agencies. That is why many Armenian civil society organizations have replicated the working styles and habits of similar organizations based in the United States. However, with the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy and especially the Eastern Partnership Program, the EU has strengthened its engagement with non-state actors in Armenia, becoming the main civil society supporter and shaping its further development.

Relations between Armenia and the European Union are based on the EU-Armenia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was signed in 1999. Already in this agreement, we can see the will of the EU to engage itself in civil society development. Article 68 of the agreement states that “the parties shall encourage contacts and exchanges between their national, regional and judicial authorities [...] and non-governmental organizations” (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1999). However, EU engagement with civil society in Armenia was narrowly limited to technical and humanitarian assistance, and support for civil society did not represent a priority area of the EU in Armenia. From 1991 to 2006, European assistance to Armenia totalled more than 380 million Euros, of which nearly 120 million was for humanitarian assistance (ENPI, 2007–2013, p. 13).

EU technical assistance to Armenia was implemented within the TACIS programme, which expired in 2006. It was mainly focused on assistance

for institutional, legal and administrative reforms, the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, assistance in addressing the social consequences of transition, the development of infrastructure networks, etc (EUR-Lex, 2007). A very small percentage of the money was directed to civil society through different programmes, such as the LIEN programme (Link Inter-European NGOs), the IBPP (Institution Building Partnership) and The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, or EIDHR (Simão, 2011, p. 62).

The LIEN programme was “an initiative of the European Commission to support nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the social sector in the New Independent States (NIS)” (European Commission, 2001). It was developed by the European Commission at the request of the European Parliament in 1992 with the aim of providing funding and technical assistance to civil society (European Commission, 2001). The TACIS LIEN programme was succeeded by the Institution Building Partnership Programme (IBPP) aiming at supporting the capacity-building process of NGOs, local and regional authorities, and professional organizations (European Commission, 2003). These were the main programmes from which civil society benefited. In the period from 1990–2006, the EU cannot be considered a major actor involved in the development of civil society in Armenia. The same tendency can also be seen in other countries of Eastern Neighbourhood where EU support was mainly of a technical nature.

A new phase of EU engagement with civil society in Armenia was marked by the European Neighbourhood Policy. By joining the policy, Armenia was invited to enter into intensified relations with the EU that also influenced the intensification of the relations between the EU and Armenian civil society. The ENP Action Plan, which identifies the main strategic objectives of the cooperation between the EU and Armenia, states that the facilitation of the development of civil society in Armenia is one of the general objectives of EU–Armenian cooperation (EEAS, n.d., ENP). It also mentions that the parties should contribute towards a peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by promoting the active involvement of civil society, as well as its involvement in environmental policy and people-to-people contacts, namely education, training and youth (EEAS, n.d., ENP).

The EU interacts with civil society in Armenia within the framework of different programmes of the European Union. Through the direct funding of the civil society and different governmental agencies that are intended to facilitate civil society participation, the EU promotes the development

and strengthening of civil society in Armenia. Most of its funding had been transferred to civil society within the Eastern Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (2007–2013: 285.1 million Euros) and is now being implemented through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) – (2014–2017: 140–170 million Euros) (EEAS, n.d., Armenia). The total allocation for 2014–2020 under the ENI to Armenia will vary from 252 million Euros to 308 million Euros, and 5% of this money is allocated as complementary support to civil society organizations (EEAS, n.d., Programming). Complementary support means “supporting the role of civil society in building credible and inclusive policy processes, stronger democratic processes and accountability systems. [...] This can include measures aiming to promote a conducive environment at all levels for civil society participation in public life, measures to boost domestic transparency and accountability, including the budgetary process” (EEAS, Programming, p. 13).

The main areas of EU financial intervention in Armenia under the ENI are private sector development, public administration reform and justice sector reform. According to the EU Single Support Framework, “support to civil society will be mainstreamed throughout all three sectors of intervention [...] with the ultimate goal of ensuring effective and inclusive policies at the national level” (EEAS, Programming, p. 7). Unfortunately, since the government of Armenia and its different ministries are the main beneficiaries of the funding, there is scepticism as to whether all the envisaged reforms will be effectively implemented. However, merely the fact that civil society development in Armenia has become a priority of EU confirms the hypothesis that the EU is attempting to become an increasingly engaged stakeholder in the area. In contrast to the ENPI, the ENI is introducing support to civil society as a new area of priority and a separate area that is specifically being funded.

One of the EU programmes which supports civil society organizations in Armenia is the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Programme (EIDHR), which launched its activities in support of NGOs in Armenia in 2003. The main objective of the programme is to promote human rights and to support Armenia in the areas of democratisation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. In 2003, this instrument funded 11 projects, for example. Projects covered areas such as the fight against corruption, peace-building between Armenia and Azerbaijan, human rights protection, etc. Gültekin-Punsmann & Avery, 2008, p. 20). The number of projects funded under the EIDHR increased to 15 in 2010, and to 12 in 2012 (European Commission, 2015). Some of the projects are long-

term, such as establishing a one-year MA programme in human rights and democratisation at the Centre of the European Studies of Yerevan State University for students from Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova.

The EIDHR, however, did not prioritise civil society organizations in processes of democratisation at the beginning of funding in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU. Very often, funds were granted to professional and large organizations such as the Council of Europe or UN Agencies. Thus, the smaller organizations were not able to benefit from this instrument. This situation changed in 2005 after new developments in the east such as the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (Shapovalova & Youngs, 2012, pp. 2–3).

The level of interest of the EU in Armenia has grown considerably since the launch of the Eastern Partnership in 2009. Civil society viewed this process as an opportunity for transformation based on European democratic values (Babayan, N. & Shapovalova, N., 2011, p. 2). With the establishment of the Eastern Partnership, the role of civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries has been accorded greater importance by the EU.

In 2011, Clause 22 of the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw confirmed that civil society plays an important role in influencing the goals of Eastern Partnership Program. The statement underlined the fact that the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and its National Platforms are essential to promote democratic values. Furthermore, the declaration highlighted the fact that EU support for civil society will be implemented through different mechanisms, such as a Civil Society Facility and a European Endowment for Democracy (Council of European Union, 2011).

The role of civil society within the Eastern Partnership was highlighted with the establishment of the Civil Society Forum. The first meeting of the Civil Society Forum took place on November 16, 2009, in Brussels. During the meeting, four groups were formed which were to work in the following fields: democracy, human rights, good governance and stability, economic integration and convergence with EU policies, the environment, climate change and energy security, and contacts between people (European Commission. External Relations, 2010). Additionally, the organizations that are involved in the National Platform of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership are generally active in the process of Armenia's European integration and impact its deepening.

Following the Arab Spring, the EU tried to create a mechanism of rapid, less bureaucratic and effective reaction to the democratic changes happening in the EU Neighbourhood. With this intention, the European Endow-

ment for Democracy was created under the Polish presidency of the European Union. The Endowment claims to support ideas that are unfunded. The application process is relatively easy, and there is no deadline. So far, it has funded 155 initiatives throughout the Neighbourhood (EED, n.d.).

It is not possible to access the number of projects that have been funded in Armenia or any other country, in order to ensure that grantees do not face personal security concerns back in their countries. However, the website does provide information on nine funded projects in Armenia in the areas of women's rights protection, increasing the role of civil society in political processes, strengthening freedom of expression, providing legal assistance to activists, governing urban green spaces, etc. (EED, n.d.). It is not possible to assess the difference that the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) makes in Armenia, since the number of projects and the amount granted are very limited. At the same, the EED is a new tool, and there are as yet no reports that can provide any information about financed projects, their overall budget, impact and outcome.

One of the largest EU funding tools to civil society, and youth organizations in Armenia in particular, was the Eastern Partnership Youth in Action Window (EPYW), which was launched as part of the Youth in Action Programme for the period from 2012–2013. It was set up in order to address identified needs of young people in Eastern Partnership countries by promoting regional cooperation between policy institutions, youth organizations, youth workers and young people (EU Neighbourhood Info Center, n.d.). Out of the six countries of the Eastern Partnership, Armenia and Georgia had the largest number of beneficiaries, with Armenia having 151 projects funded and Georgia 186 (Motamed-Afshari, Fras & Webbert, 2014). The Eastern Partnership Youth in Action Window became the biggest and the most accessible fund for youth organizations in Armenia.

One EU tool to strengthen civil society in Armenia is the “Support to Democratic Governance in Armenia” project implemented by the British Council. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the project contributed to the amendment of the Law on Public Organizations in accordance with EU standards. The programme was launched in March 2014 with four components. One of these components is strengthening the capacity of civil society (British Council, 2015).

According to the British Council, “the project will promote strengthening of the capacity of civil society to become more engaged in the legal reform and the monitoring of its implementation, to carry out social entrepreneurship and other financial activities, to be better involved in political analysis and active citizenship” (British Council, 2015). The foremost

outcome that is expected by the programme in the area of strengthening civil society is “strengthened capacity of the CSOs to engage actively in policy reforms and monitoring their implementation, to become financially independent and capable to undertake entrepreneurship activities, and to engage the public in the monitoring of reform processes in order to increase the government transparency and accountability” (British Council, 2015).

The delegation of the EU in Armenia mainly works with state authorities, political parties, civil society representatives and organizations, as well as with the media, educational institutions and international organizations (Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, n.d., Political). In order to give civil society the possibility to voice their views on different relevant issues on the development of EU-Armenia relations, the delegation created web-based consultative page, where the organizations can register and submit their views. This aims to ensure better interaction between the European Union and civil society in Armenia (Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, n.d., Civil).

The EU delegation to Armenia launched an EU information centre in Yerevan as part of the EU-funded project “Support for EU communication on reforms in Armenia”. The duration of the project was two years, from 2012-2014. The principal idea of the EU Centre in Armenia was to ensure the quality of the publicity materials of the EU-funded projects and assist them in their communication efforts.¹

The EU Centre, with an office in the very heart of Yerevan, also makes its premises available to the civil society organizations that are implementing EU-funded projects or initiatives which are anyhow related to Europe and European values. The level of interest among civil society organizations in the centre was rather limited, however. Most of the organizations that benefited from the Centre were EU-funded youth organizations or start-up initiatives. One of the interesting EU Centre projects was the establishment of the EU Alumni Network in 2013, which included 8 active NGOs operating in Armenia. The aim of the network is to “unite the past participants of the European educational programmes in Armenia, [...] foster the involvement of young people in the European educational programmes at different levels in formal education, non-formal and informal learning activities providing them with information, support and guidance”². However, since its establishment there has not been any further progress with the network, and its efficacy is rather limited.

Lastly, the European Union has become a serious actor influencing the development of the civil society in Armenia in different domains. Thanks

to various projects aimed at strengthening its capacity to actively engage in policymaking, monitoring of governmental policies and becoming financially independent, civil society performance has improved and in many areas it has become a vocal stakeholder. However, there have been also various side effects of this influence.

Challenges and opportunities of EU engagement with civil society in Armenia

There is sizeable scepticism and suspicion when it comes to foreign assistance from various donors aiming to strengthen civil societies in third countries. Some critics argue that instead of strengthening the NGOs, donors weaken them and their role in democratisation processes through their financial assistance (Encarnación, 2011). Without supporting any of these arguments, it should be mentioned, however, that the lack of understanding of the existing environment where donors support civil society, and the public attitudes that are generated as a consequence of this support, harm the overall image of civil society and result in many side effects. There are potential risks in promoting civil society in developing countries (Windfuhr, 1999, p. 1).

Some of the side effects mentioned in the academic literature are concerns that instead of giving a voice to voiceless segments of society and empowering the vulnerable groups, civil society organizations are promoting themselves. Furthermore, the external support for NGOs in developing countries results in their weakening and a risk of overdependence on donor organizations (Riddell, 2008, p. 305).

These concerns are also relevant when it comes to European Union assistance for civil society in Armenia. There are several challenges that the EU faces in its support for civil society in Armenia. Here, I distinguish some of the major ones:

Proper assessment of the needs of civil society: very frequently, the European Union is accused of funding projects that are very far from being needed in particular societies. This problem exists both when the EU is dealing with civil society inside the EU and in its external relations with civil society in third countries. There is a major problem in the EU with proper needs assessments in the countries where it funds civil society organizations. This also applies in the case of Armenia.

The lack of proper assessment results in detached EU priorities, which are not necessarily the same priorities as those of their beneficiaries and the

communities they represent. However, taking into account all the financial constraints these organizations are facing, they reshape their goals and create projects that match the requirements of the European Union. These projects, for obvious reasons, do not impact massively the communities of beneficiaries, but instead impact the civil society organizations which gain the financial capacity to further maintain their sustainable existence.

In order to find out whether the European Union is aware of this issue, I conducted some interviews at the European Commission during my visit to Brussels. In one of the interviews, the head of the Regional Programmes Neighbourhood East team at the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Carmen Falkenberg Ambrosio, mentioned that the EU is aware that this problem exists. According to her, “there are some NGOs that look for money and they change from year to year to fit the annual priorities of the European Union. The way the European Union responds to that is its priorities that are set up in EU programmes. Those priorities are agreed together with the EU member states. Those priorities are set up for seven years, and the NGOs already know about them as they are available online. The needs assessments of civil societies on the ground are made by the EU delegations together with the European Commission. They consult civil society in order to come up with priorities.

There are overall priorities of the EU, but there are also local priorities in terms of local calls done by delegations. The global calls for funding are worldwide, but specific ones are available on the websites of EU delegations. It is also important to mention that the EU is not a service provider. So if, for example, there is a local need of improving the situation of local schools, the EU will not necessarily provide school building, but it would support the NGOs to advocate for the school building. In that sense it might be assumed that the EU does not correspond to the local needs, because it is not building the school but, at the same time, it supports the civil society organizations to become stronger and lobby for this cause or any other causes that might arise in the future.³

Yet this system of needs assessments of the European Commission in third countries remains rather unclear. Every EU delegation has its own mechanisms of consulting the local CSOs, and in every country there are different levels of CSO development and various political and economic environments in which these organizations operate. The direct link between Brussels and civil society organizations in third countries is still weak.

Inclusion of diverse civil society actors: another challenge faced by the European Union in its assistance to Armenia and other Eastern Part-

nership countries is making sure that all the various civil society actors, perhaps not equally, benefit from its support. One of the reasons that small, non-experienced and new organizations have trouble getting funds from the EU is their lack of knowledge of the EU funding system and their difficulties in complying with all the requirements. Additionally, the EU funds are often monopolised by the well-experienced organizations that have built their capacity thanks to long-term EU funding. On the one hand, there are experienced “grant merchants” hunting for all possible funds. They are very familiar with the EU jargon and know all the techniques needed to sell their ideas to the EU. On the other, there are inexperienced organizations whose participation as an active civil society organization can bring some changes and added value to the overall situation of civil society in Armenia. These organizations, however, do not possess the necessary knowledge regarding EU funds and are not familiar with the rules of fundraising and the complicated application and reporting requirements of the EU. This leads to further strengthening of already strong civil society actors and potentially excludes those who could bring some fresh air and innovation to the field.

The high level of bureaucracy and complicated regulations result in the exclusion of the smaller NGOs and contribute to the creation of the “NGO mafia” which holds a monopoly over the EU funds in Armenia. This assumption is confirmed by the numbers given in the EU Financial Transparency System. For instance, the International Centre for Human Development received 10,000 Euros in 2008, 1,950,000 Euros in 2010 and 79,320 Euros in 2013. A similar case can be observed with Eurasia Partnership Foundation, with 34,727 Euros in 2009 and 63,650 Euros in 2011. Aside from the foundation and NGOs, there has been similar tendency to fund limited liability companies. In 2010, LLC Deem Communication was granted 43,680 Euros. In 2011, the figure increased to 50,980, in 2012 to 79,890 and, finally, to 98,750 Euros in 2013 (European Commission, 2015). These numbers confirm that the EU has been funding bigger and more experienced organizations, enabling them to secure sustainable funding. The EU also mainly consults these organizations. These consultations have proven to be largely ineffective so far and are treated as a necessary formality (Lada, 2011, p.3).

This was not the case with smaller organizations until 2012, when the Eastern Partnership Youth Window (EPYW) was launched for 2012–2013. During this period, dozens of small organizations applied for EU funding and were successful in their applications for grants for several projects. Relatively easy regulations and reporting requirements encouraged

many organizations to apply. Of course, this also resulted in the creation of number of organizations that functioned only throughout 2012–2013 with the sole purpose of obtaining funds under the EPYW (Motamed-Afshari, Fras & Webbert, 2014). However, this illustrates the fact that through simplifying the procedures and requirements of funding, the EU can foster the participation of less active and less capable organizations and engage them in civil society development processes.

Management of EU funds, measuring impact and ownership: the EU not always has the capacity to monitor properly how the funds it has granted have been used. This also creates discontent among EU citizens who pay taxes to enable the EU to promote democracy in third countries. In the case of Armenia, this problem was identified in a briefing paper requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs back in 2008. The paper suggests that "the efficiency of EU sponsored projects would increase considerably with better management from the EU side" (Gültekin-Punsmann & Avery, 2008, p. 11).

Along with the lack of appropriate management, the EU is considered by its beneficiaries in Armenia as a donor and not as a partner. This also explains a lack of ownership by some organizations with regard to their projects. At the same time, the EU considers the NGOs to be beneficiaries of its assistance and not institutional partners. In the projects where the local NGOs are coupled with European NGOs, the lack of local ownership is also an issue, because the knowledge of local needs does not make the local NGOs the leaders of those joint projects. This situation can be changed with further capacity-building projects for NGO representatives (Lada, 2011, p.3).

It is very difficult to measure the impact that civil society organizations funded by the EU have, or the impact that the EU has on civil society organizations. There is also no single database, portal or directory where one can find concise information about the projects funded by the EU, their outcomes, successes and failures, budgets and target groups. Such a portal could help civil society organizations to update the progress they have made after the project is completed, and to provide information as to whether they managed to secure the sustainability of their project, or whether it was a one-off initiative.

Engaging civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities: when it comes to the EU role in engaging civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities, the EU is almost absent from Armenia and the South Caucasus, despite the fact that this is one of the most troubled regions with diverse and complex conflicts. The European Union is reluctant to support Armenian and Azerbaijani civil societies in

starting peace-building projects and encouraging tolerance and reconciliation through civil society organizations.

Furthermore, the EU has the tools that could be employed to support conflict prevention in the region. One of the tools that has not been used in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the EU Instrument for Stability, which was created in 2007 by the European Commission to work in the area of conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding (EEAS, n.d., Instrument). The Peace-building Partnership could be used in particular, which is a part of the Instrument for Stability, and which was created to strengthen civilian expertise for peacebuilding activities (EEAS, n.d., Instrument). In 2012, the Instrument for Stability received approval from the EU member states to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (European Commission, 2013, p. 9). However, this support either has not been provided or has not reached civil society organizations in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

One of the reasons that the EU does not engage with this particular conflict might be the fear of the reaction of the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments, with whom EU is holding high-level dialogues in different domains. One of the other reasons might be the crackdown on civil society in Azerbaijan, where civil society organizations cannot engage in the peacebuilding projects, since this is considered state treason. By contrast, in Armenia, NGOs find it easier to engage in “conflict-related activities with a bilateral character” (Simão, 2010, p. 22).

The only visible EU programme which engages civil society actors in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK), which promotes a dialogue between policymakers, the media and civil society representatives from Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is funded by the Instrument for Stability and represents a consortium of five European NGOs and local partners which work together to have a positive impact on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process (European Commission. Press Release Database, 2015).

The European Union seems to be more successful as a conflict manager when it comes to engaging civil society in the Armenia-Turkey normalisation process. As part of the Instrument for Stability, which was not very well deployed in the previous case, the EU is funding the “Support for the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process” programme with an overall budget of 2 million Euros. The programme is being implemented by a consortium of eight civil society organizations from Armenia and Turkey, and aims to promote civil society efforts towards the normalisation of relations

between the two countries (Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process, 2014). The consortium only manages the funds, and is not implementing the projects itself. It creates grant schemes and invites individuals and civil society organizations from Armenia and Turkey to submit their own project ideas, with grants ranging from 5,000 to 30,000 Euros. Within this programme, dozens of projects, researches, fellowships, movies, art projects, travel grants and study visits have been funded, increasing the level of participation of Armenian civil society in the Armenia-Turkey normalisation process.

The impact of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Civil Society Forum National Platforms: as mentioned above, in order to achieve the goals of the Eastern Partnership, National Platforms of the Civil Society Forum have been created in all the Eastern Partnership countries. However, the engagement of National Platforms with national governments remains rather limited (Lada, 2011, p. 3). One of the problems with National Platforms is the fact that the same civil society organizations are represented in them, and they become a type of closed circle. Even though on paper, recruitment into the National Platform in Armenia is easy and should be accessible to all the organizations which fulfil certain criteria, there are still some difficulties. Another issue is that the platform is not very attractive, and its mission and goals are not well promoted among local civil society organizations.

Further recommendations and comments

The EU should work more closely and directly with civil society organizations, grassroots associations and social movements, since supporting civil society through cooperation with local authorities and the governments has proven to be inefficient and high-cost. State interference in the management of EU funds can result in unfair fund distribution to finance NGOs that are governmentally created or oriented. Support should be channelled directly to CSOs, without any intermediary actors. As well as increasing efficiency, this would also raise the level of ownership of the civil society organizations with regard to their projects, and would strengthen their capacity to engage actively in the policymaking processes. The EU should also increase the opportunities for NGOs based in the EaP to apply directly for funding. In cases where projects are applied for by the EU partner organizations of EaP-based NGOs, there is a lack of ownership.

The EU should conduct a proper needs assessment in the countries of the EaP. The assessments conducted by the EU delegations and the European Commission are not sufficient in order to fully understand the situation on the ground. Local experts and civil society organizations should be consulted and included in this assessment, ensuring that local knowledge and expertise is taken into consideration. In order to obtain an accurate picture of the reality in different EaP countries, the EU could establish a network of experts in the EaP which would be responsible for needs assessments in cooperation with the European experts. The network could include representatives of the six EaP countries and experts from EU countries from Eastern and Central Europe. There are many similarities between the EaP countries, and in most cases civil societies face similar challenges. What's more, experts based in the region are better able to understand and evaluate the situation. This could have a considerable impact on the efficiency of EU assistance, and would support the EU in being able to meet the real needs of civil societies by shaping funding priorities based on those needs, and not vice-versa.

The EU should encourage entrepreneurship of civil society organizations in the EaP in order to make sure that they do not become financially over-dependent on the EU. This can be done by pressuring the local authorities to amend the laws which prohibit NGOs from providing paid services and generating income. This could be a major solution for NGOs, which would enable them to secure long-term financial sustainability, rather than hunting for every possible EU grant. The financial independence of civil society both from the state and from foreign donors would create the opportunity of self-funding their own projects and carrying out truly independent activities.

In order to increase the sustainability of the EU-funded projects in the EaP, the European Commission could create an open and accessible online database or portal, where all the beneficiaries of the EU in the EaP would be obliged to publish information about their projects, indicating the main goals, the main activities and the overall budget of the projects, and providing information as to whether the goals of the project were achieved, anticipated impact and the real impact after the implementation of the project. This platform could also suggest to beneficiaries that they add information about the sustainability of the project and how it was followed up after the funding from the EU has come to an end. Aside from providing tools for ensuring accountability and transparency of the EU-funded projects, this could also contribute to measuring improved impact of those projects and would encourage sharing of best practices across the EaP. The

other donors and enterprises could be also encouraged to register in the portal, learn about the projects and further support the sustainability of those projects after the EU funds have expired. The creation of a comprehensive framework for recording the results of the EU-funded projects in the EaP countries would increase their outreach.

The EU should ensure that the procedures for application and funding become more applicant-friendly, and accessible not only to experienced “grant hunters” but also to less experienced civil society organizations based in the region. Time-consuming, complicated and highly technical guidelines, coupled with complex requirements and bureaucratic reporting procedures, do not allow small and newly-established organizations to benefit from EU funds and to bring their perspective and innovation to bear. These changes and simplifications would create equal opportunities for all the civil society actors and would avoid the situation where organizations with greater experience and perfect knowledge of EU funding rules and technicalities monopolise the sphere. To partly resolve this situation, the EU could encourage its agencies to provide training to newcomers in European programmes on the management of EU funds, project management, fundraising, monitoring and evaluation tools, reporting, etc.

Merely increasing the budget for civil society organizations in the EaP is not a long-term solution to the issues they face. The increased budget should be accompanied by increased responsibility on the part of the EU for monitoring the spending of the budget and ensuring that the funded projects follow the objectives they have envisaged during the application process. It is also important to check the nature of the beneficiaries of the EU grants. These are potentially NGOs that are created by the government and are being used to bring more money for those projects that should have been implemented by the government itself. Funding of GONGOs can be a very negative development and will further contribute to the low level of trust towards NGOs and the EU in Armenia. To manage this, a list or a database of EU beneficiary organizations could be created that would contain the data of the organizations with their goals and missions. Furthermore, the final financial reports of the received EU funding could be made available, which would increase the accountability of those organizations.

The EU must be less reluctant to support civil society organizations in engaging in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. The EU already has all the necessary tools that can be employed to support conflict prevention in the region. The EU could employ the Instrument for Stability along with its Peace-building Partnership component in order

to strengthen civilian expertise for peacebuilding activities in the EaP. The active involvement of the EU in funding peacebuilding activities and encouraging civil society organizations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine to undertake a larger role in area could be seen in the respective societies as a sign that the EU supports peace and stability in the region. Additionally, the EU could assist civil society building in conflict areas such as Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria.

One of the main goals of the EU should be further support for improving the NGO legislation in the EaP countries. As long as the legal environment in these countries is not favourable, EU assistance to civil society will remain ineffective. In some countries such as Armenia, Georgia and Moldova there has been major progress in this area. The laws are more NGO-friendly and do not create artificial legal barriers for operating. However, this is not the case in Azerbaijan and Belarus, for example, where the laws limit the opportunity for civil society organizations to operate freely and register smoothly. The registration requirements remain time-consuming and complicated. This is combined with governmental pressure, a crack-down on civil society organizations and massive repressions. In the case of Azerbaijan, the EU is still reluctant to critically observe the situation and to respond to it through its diplomatic and political channels. This energy interest-driven politics of the EU contradicts the claims that it is a normative power. The EU can boost its assistance to civil society actors operating in a difficult and dangerous environment by reinforcing its support through the European Endowment for Democracy and the EIDHR.

The EU should further prioritise those civil society organizations that are not functioning in the capital cities of the EaP. A greater involvement of civil society organizations in rural areas and small communities would have a bigger and more sustainable impact. Some researchers suggest that NGOs enjoy high-level support in rural communities and small communities, where their work is more visible. This should be taken into consideration, and large organizations should be encouraged to open branches or offices in the regions. Small organizations should be encouraged to move their projects from urban to rural areas. This would develop rural infrastructure and help local communities.

Together with improving its assistance mechanisms to the civil society organizations in the EaP, the EU should also pay greater attention to the visibility of this assistance. There could be additional funds allocated for promoting EU-funded projects, the publication of materials, the organization of promotional campaigns offline and online, and the creation of

visibility materials, videos, movies, etc. Furthermore, these promotional materials should be published in local languages to ensure that they are accessible for all those who speak neither English nor Russian. This would raise the visibility of the EU and would encourage NGOs to improve their public communication strategies. These reforms would make the EU more present in the EaP and would create a positive image of the NGOs that are supported by the EU.

The European Commission should consider reopening the Eastern Partnership Youth Window for the period from 2016–2020, so that youth organizations can directly benefit from funds in the fields of education and training. The closure of the window resulted in a situation where already empowered organizations could no longer operate. Relaunching the window would secure the long-term sustainability of the civil society organizations and would maintain cooperation between EaP-based organizations and EU-based organizations to promote a further exchange of practices, knowledge and experience.

English language text provided by the author.

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Notes

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- 2 EU Centre – Retrieved December 8, 2015, from <http://news.am/eng/news/180147.html>
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