

2017-12-04

When Rules and Common Sense Collide: Expressions, Roots, and Impact of Informal Civil Society in Ukraine

Svitlana Krasynska
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Comparative Politics Commons](#), [Eastern European Studies Commons](#), and the [Social Welfare Commons](#)

Digital USD Citation

Krasynska, Svitlana, "When Rules and Common Sense Collide: Expressions, Roots, and Impact of Informal Civil Society in Ukraine" (2017). *Dissertations*. 99.
<https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/99>

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.

WHEN RULES AND COMMON SENSE COLLIDE:
EXPRESSIONS, ROOTS, AND IMPACT OF INFORMAL CIVIL SOCIETY
IN UKRAINE

by

Svitlana Krasynska

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2017

Dissertation Committee

Hans Peter Schmitz, PhD
Paul J. D'Anieri, PhD
Robert Donmoyer, PhD
Zachary Gabriel Green, PhD

University of San Diego

© Copyright by Svitlana Krasynska
All Rights Reserved 2017

University of San Diego
School of Leadership and Education Sciences

CANDIDATE'S NAME: Svitlana Krasynska

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: WHEN RULES AND COMMON SENSE COLLIDE:
EXPRESSIONS, ROOTS, AND IMPACT OF
INFORMAL CIVIL SOCIETY IN UKRAINE

APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Hans Peter Schmitz, PhD

_____, Member
Robert Donmoyer, PhD

_____, Member
Zachary Gabriel Green, PhD

_____, Member
Paul J. D'Anieri, PhD

DATE: December 4, 2017

ABSTRACT

Western donors have dominated third sector developments in contemporary Eastern Europe in efforts to replicate their own institutional models as a way of reconstructing the region's post-totalitarian civil society. These efforts resulted in limited success, frustrating the donor community and puzzling scholars. Civil society in the region has long been labeled as weak based on a general lack of citizen participation in formal organizations. This dissertation argues that such assessment of civil society fails to recognize the role of below-the-radar civic engagement in contexts where informal practices permeate economic, political and social spheres.

Based on 70 in-depth interviews with civil society actors from 14 locations across Ukraine, supplemented by social media data, this dissertation addresses fundamental questions about the nature, drivers and impact of the country's informal civil society. The study demonstrates that informality constitutes an essential component of civil society and shapes how Ukrainians address social and political issues.

The study documents a range of informal activities in Ukraine's civil society and questions the distinction between formal and informal sectors. Importantly, the study finds that citizen engagement flourishes in the absence of official registration and financial reporting, and informality allows individuals to engage in a range of service and advocacy-focused activities.

The study examines the motives for informal engagement by relying on normative and rationalist explanations of citizens' actions. Central to these activities are the fundamental trust built within familial and local networks, as well as the distrust of formal institutions expressing either neglectful or repressive behaviors.

Informality fosters citizens' relative autonomy from the incongruous and antagonistic formal institutions, and serves as a tool for attaining and expanding civic agency. Furthermore, informal associational activity not only preserves spaces free of external intrusion, but also counteracts the negative side-effects of donor-driven institution-building processes that tend to detract citizens from genuine civic engagement.

The study's findings call for expanded and alternative approaches to assessing and supporting civil society in the region. Future research should consider shifting the unit of analysis from organizational membership to more specific inputs and outputs, as well as to the nature and efficacy of interactions between members of the polity.

*To my mother, Vira Krasynska,
for all her sacrifice and loss of sleep in my upbringing, for her enduring support and
healthy skepticism of my endeavors, and for inspiring and holding me always.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*To all who have supported me on this arduous and immensely gratifying journey,
I am forever in your debt.*

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee, whose mentorship and guidance have been unparalleled. I extend my profound thanks to my committee chair, advisor, and mentor, Professor Hans Peter Schmitz, for relentlessly testing the bounds of my intellectual capacity, for his painstaking scrutiny and insightful critique of my work, and for always being – and keeping me – honest and resolute in this monumental pursuit. I am deeply grateful to Professor Paul D’Anieri for his more-than-generous support and mentorship, and for his, all at once, objective cynicism and love of Ukraine. I am endlessly indebted to Professor Robert Donmoyer, my advisor and avid supporter since 2003, who encouraged me to join this PhD program, and whose guidance helped my first academic publications see the light of day. I am infinitely obliged to Professor Zachary Gabriel Green for illuminating the path of integral learning, and for revealing the limitless nature of possibilities.

I would like to specially acknowledge the faculty and staff at the Department of Leadership Studies who have made this doctoral program an all-round educational experience in every sense. I am particularly grateful to Professors Terri Monroe, Afsaneh Nahanvandi, Fred Galloway, Lea Hubbard, and Marcus Lam, as well as to the department’s extraordinary staff, Beth Garofalo, Heather Gibb, and Sarah Kirk.

I could never give enough thanks to Pat Libby, the mastermind behind the Nonprofit Institute, for getting me started and pushing me forward on this professional path. I am particularly grateful to Laura Deitrick and the Caster Center staff, especially

Mary Jo Schumann, Jenny Jones, Taylor Peyton Roberts, Kim Hunt, Crystal Trull, and many others, for their mentorship, collegueship, friendship and support.

I cannot imagine surviving this program without the community of remarkable PhD students, who have provided feedback, shared notes, encouraged, collaborated, commiserated, and cared for me in so many ways. I cherish what I hope will become lifelong friendships with Elizabeth Castillo, Sue Carter Kahl, Dominika Bukalova, Maria Trias, Maria Horsley Kelly, Mara Vicente Robinson, Elena McCollim, Anna Leskinen, Peter Maribei, Rod Smith, those already mentioned above, and many, many others.

This work and my greater scholarly pursuits are fundamentally inspired and empowered by the Ukrainian people who, often against unspeakable odds, endure in their efforts and hopes of building a free and fair society in my original homeland. I am humbled by Ukraine's civil society and am immeasurably grateful to my study participants who so generously and candidly shared with me their stories, sentiments, and aspirations. I sincerely hope I have provided justice to their collective narrative and that this work contributes toward the progress that will ultimately create a more favorable environment for civil society in Ukraine and the world.

My endless love and utmost gratitude are shared with my immediate and extended family, particularly my husband and best friend, Gennady Shnaider, who has empowered me in countless ways, and who tolerated and supported me through thick and thin throughout this process, as well as my incredible children, Mikhailo and Kalyna, who have been and continue to be my life's greatest teachers. Finally, I am deeply thankful to my mother, Vira Krasynska, to whom I dedicate this work; her strength, intellect, wisdom, love, and selfless kindness inspire me to be a better person every day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER 1	
<i>Informal Voluntary Action in Ukraine:</i>	
<i>Residual and Elusive, or Viable and Mainstream?</i>	1
Understanding Civil Society and Informality	4
Dimensions of Informal Civil Society in Ukraine	8
Research Design and Methodology	11
Chapter Overview	12
Conclusion	18
CHAPTER 2	
<i>Ukraine's Informal Civil Society:</i>	
<i>What It Is, Why It Matters, and How to Study It</i>	19
State of Research and Methodological Conundrums	23
Methodological Problems in General	24
Dubious and Malfeasant CSOs	27
Partisan politics in disguise.....	27
The ineffective 'grant-eaters'	28
The 'Soviet' unions.....	30
Broader Scholarly Contexts	31
The 'Weakness' of Postcommunist Civil Society	32
'Not Just the Usual Suspects'	33
Conceptualizing and Studying Informal Civil Society	35
Expressions of Informality	36
Explanations of Informality	39
Effects of Informality	41
Conclusion	45
CHAPTER 3	
<i>What's in a Name?:</i>	
<i>The Spectrum and Boundaries of Ukraine's Informal Civil Society</i>	46
Eight Stories of Informal Civil Society	47
Save the Theatre!	47
Crisis Center	49
'Like a Village without a Church'	50
De-Communization and the Historic Society	51
The 'Forbidden' PTAs (parent-teacher associations)	52
The Civic Blogger	54

Civic Council and the Association of Initiatives	55
Army Assistance	57
The Dimensions of Informal Civil Society	60
Below the Radar: Unregistered, Cash-based, and In-kind Operations	62
Groups with temporary purposes	63
Organizations and groups with ongoing operations	64
Individual initiatives (temporary and ongoing)	65
Shades of Gray: Registered Organizations, Unreported Activity	69
Official in name only: all-cash, in-kind operations	69
To report or not to report?: A bit of both	71
Informality and Boundaries	75
Formal and Informal Civil Society	76
Semi-Formal or Quasi-Voluntary?	78
Sectoral Boundaries	80
Conclusions	84

CHAPTER 4

Institutions, Norms, Choices, and the Magnetic Forces of Trust:

<i>The Roots of Ukraine's Informal Civil Society</i>	87
Demand-Side: Informality and the Formal Institutions	89
At Odds with Regulations: Formalization is Impossible	90
The Hassle of Bureaucracy: Formalization is Undesirable	94
Supply-Side: Informality and the Informal Institutions	98
The Fish and Its Water: Informality is a Norm	99
The culture of informality	100
The informal institution of self-regulation	105
The Pragmatic Choice: Informality is Expedient	108
Flexibility and mobility	109
Independence and freedom of action	111
Efficiency and cost-effectiveness	112
Crossing Over: Why Register an Organization?	114
Official Communication	114
Resource Acquisition	116
The Magnetic Forces of Trust	117
Out to Get You: Distrust of the Government	119
Grants and Omar Lobsters: Distrust of Formal CSOs	123
‘Vsi Svoi’: Trust in Familiar Networks	127
Actions and Words: Expanding the Radius of Trust	129
Conclusions	132

CHAPTER 5

Between Family and Public Sphere:

<i>The Role and Impact of Ukraine's Informal Associations, Norms, and Publics</i>	135
Part of Society: Service, Advocacy, and Schools of Democracy	137
Getting Things Done: Results First, Formalities Second	138
Schools of Democracy?	140

The Pros and Cons of Informality	144
Kind of Society: The Past, the Future, and in Between	146
Formality and Informality: The Good, the Bad, the Beautiful, and the Ugly	148
Black Sheep, Gray Herds, and Big Bad Wolves	153
Seedlings of Normative Change	157
Public Sphere: Tension, Contention, and Boundaries	161
Capacities, Limitations, and Tensions	163
Between Private and Public Spheres	168
Conclusions	172
 CHAPTER 6	
<i>No 'Easy Button':</i>	
<i>Implications and Recommendations</i>	175
Theoretical and Methodological Implications: Institutional Conundrums	175
Formal-Informal Interaction	175
Nuanced relationship	176
Boundaries	177
Institution Building	178
Research Design and Methods	179
Widened scope	179
Outside the box	180
Future Research: In Search of Sustainable Institutions	180
Deeper Dive, Wider Net	181
Depth	181
Breadth	182
From Bottom-Up to Top-Down	182
State-civil society	182
Western aid-civil society	183
Institutional interplay	183
'Back to the Future,' or Onward through the Past?	184
Recommendations for Policy and Practice	184
Policy Development	185
External Funding	186
Closing Thoughts	187
 REFERENCES	188
 APPENDIX A	
Research Design and Methodology	197
Data Sources	198
Sampling Strategies	199
Informal Approach to Participant Selection	202
Interview Process	203
Interview Guide	204
Other Sources of Data	206
Data Analysis	207

Limitations	209
 APPENDIX B	
Coding Scheme	211
 APPENDIX C	
Primary Data	214
Interviews	215
Facebook Profiles	218
 APPENDIX D	
Abbreviations	220

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Trust/Distrust Perceptions Associated with Formal and Informal Institutions..	118
--	-----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Key dimensions of informal voluntary activities	10
Figure 2. Dimensions of informal civil society activities	61
Figure 3. Dimensions of unregistered organizations, groups, and initiatives	63
Figure 4. Drivers of informality	87
Figure 5. Negative perceptions of formal institutions	149
Figure 6. Positive perceptions of informal institution	150
Figure 7. The spectrum of positive and negative institutional characteristics	151
Figure 8. The ‘good’ informal and ‘bad’ formal institutional perceptions contrasted	151
Figure 9. The arenas of democratization (Howard 2010)	168

CHAPTER 1

Informal Voluntary Action in Ukraine: Residual and Elusive, or Viable and Mainstream?

*Between rules and common sense,
people will always choose common sense.*
(Respondent 70; May 20, 2016)

It was late afternoon in the summer of 2016, and I was in the midst of my dissertation field research. Rushing from a metro station to a local café in suburban Kyiv to interview my next study participant, I saw people selling fruit, vegetables, and bunches of fresh herbs on the side of the pedestrian walkway. Their colorful produce was delectably displayed on top of newspapers and plastic bags on the pavement. The day was almost over, and this locally-grown produce looked and smelled irresistible; it was also cheap. Torn between buying some fruit right then or after my appointment – not really keen on bringing groceries with me to an interview – I nudged a woman walking by: “Excuse me, do you know how late this market is open today?” The question, very perceptibly, stopped her right in her tracks: “This is not a market!” she exclaimed, bewildered by such an odd question, “It’s just people – selling their stuff. As soon as they sell it, they will go home.” Of course, that should have been obvious all along to this born and raised Ukrainian. This informal “non-market” is so common and mundane, and, indeed, inseparable from everyday environment, that ascribing formal dimensions to it can sound almost impudent to your ordinary passerby. Markets have structures, permits, licenses, employees and open hours; *this* is “just people... selling stuff.”

More than half of Ukraine’s gross domestic product (GDP) is produced in the informal sector (Schneider, Buehn & Montenegro 2011). Second only to Georgia, where

informal economy accounts for nearly two-thirds of the country's GDP, and in close company of several other Eastern European countries, Ukraine is certainly not unique in these dynamics. Informality is particularly pervasive in virtually every sphere of post-Soviet societies (Aliyev 2015), often being the key to adaptation and survival in an environment characterized with recurrent and sweeping sociopolitical changes, and enduring uncertainty (Stepanenko 2006). While the activities in my story do not appear in any official data, collectively, with hundreds of thousands of such clusters of people selling their wares next to public transit stops across Ukraine, these people-to-people transactions help millions of individuals make it through adverse economic conditions. They also lend a peek into the complex informal dynamics underlying Ukraine's society and its various individual and collective pursuits.

The country's voluntary sector is very much embedded in this innately informal culture. Pervasive informality, however, is not visible in most of the sector's extant empirical and official data, which is based largely on the information about formal civil society organizations (CSOs) (USAID 2011-2014; Bekeshkina & Kaźmierkiewicz 2012; Palyvoda & Golota 2010; Ghosh 2010; Stewart 2009; Anheier 2004). A recent study by a prominent Ukrainian civil society research institution, entitled, notably, "Defining Civil Society for Ukraine: Research Report," explicitly excluded informal organizations from its analysis, citing methodological difficulties of obtaining data on informal groups (Palyvoda, Vinnkov & Kupriy 2016). The majority of earlier third sector studies have done the same, defining civil society chiefly in terms of formal CSOs, with informal activities commonly being perceived as ephemeral, elusive and largely inconsequential. This predominant focus on formal CSOs in research promulgates a rather pessimistic

outlook on the efficacy of the country's civil society, with scholars concluding, overwhelmingly, that Ukrainians are not likely to associate through CSOs to solve their common problems (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Lutsevych 2013; Stewart 2009; Anheier 2004).

At the same time, regular uprisings sustained by mass protests propel momentous sociopolitical changes in Ukraine (Marple & Mills 2015; D'Anieri 2010), demonstrating significant levels of informal activism and grassroots organizing. For instance, almost three quarters of activists in the 2013-14 Euromaidan protests, which mobilized millions of Ukrainians and resulted in drastic political changes in the country, were not members of any CSOs (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015). Where did they come from? Research says, the majority joined the protests with family and friends, or by themselves (Onuch 2014). What, if anything, exists in the seeming empirical vacuum between friendship networks and formalized structures of CSOs? Over a decade ago, almost half of Ukrainians reported to have provided active support to different causes outside of formal organizations, while only slightly more than eight percent reported volunteering for CSOs (Kuts & Palyvoda 2006, p. 28). This gap between official statistics and unofficial organizing puzzles scholars of civil society. How can a population be apathetic and engaged at the same time? Or are we looking at it all wrong?

This state of affairs in research raises the following important and interrelated questions. What is the nature of informal organizing in Ukraine? What compels, or predisposes, people to organize informally and not through officially-established CSOs? And what does the existence and proliferation of this activity mean for the development civil society in the country? Currently, answers to these questions in scholarly literature

are fragmented, muddled, and often devoid of contextual nuance. This study attempts to tackle the empirical conundrum of the submerged informal activism and service provision by adopting a theoretically informed yet, at the same time, grounded and culturally-nuanced approach to considering informal civil society's nature, the forces and mechanisms driving it, and the significance it has for civil society, democracy, and the overall sociopolitical developments in Ukraine.

Understanding Civil Society and Informality

The key issue in the discussion of the intersection of informality and civil society is that of institutionalization. Namely, must civil society function primarily as a formal, institutionalized, sector in order to achieve its purposes effectively? While the dominant approach to civil society building in the post-communist space has been heavily focused on institution-building, the efficacy of such approach has been debated in civil society scholarship. Howard (2003) argued that the prevalence and persistence of the informal friendship networks underlies citizen's resistance of joining formal voluntary organizations in the post-communist Europe, thus weakening the region's civil society (Howard 2003). Way (2014) echoed these findings in his post-Euromaidan analysis of Ukraine's civil society and its role in democratization, asserting that "the very qualities that made Ukraine's recent protests so inspiring to the world—their spontaneity and reliance on private citizens rather than preexisting organizations or elites—also hint at the fundamental weakness that characterizes Ukrainian civil society" (p. 41). Gatskova & Gatskov (2015) agreed, stating informal tendencies in civic association potentially erode formal cooperation and hinder consolidation of society.

Countering this viewpoint, Hungarian economist Böröcz (2000a) puts into question the Western-developed “institution-building” approach to the post-socialist civil society development, suggesting that CSOs “can exist and do even have a reasonably healthy life under pronounced informality” (p. 138). Lagerspetz (2008) takes this notion even further in his analysis of civil society developments in Estonia, contending the externally-driven professionalization of the sector corrodes the long-term sustainability of authentic and indigenous civic engagement. While, scholarly views on the meaning of informal voluntary action in this context can be divergent, the fact remains that our empirical knowledge of its nature, causes and effects is still rather limited. All in all, however, it is becoming increasingly apparent that without a nuanced understanding of informal organizing, our knowledge of Ukraine’s civil society is incomplete, if not distorted, as it screens out “a large proportion of the Ukrainian population” and its activities (Stewart 2009, p. 181), whatever their effects may be.

Our scholarly perspectives also have important practical implications. Overlooking informal activities not only misleads our conceptual understanding of civil society, but also, arguably, hinders its overall development, as funding sources that shape the sector work predominantly with official and well-established CSOs (Gatskov & Gatskova 2015; Ghosh 2014; Lutsevych 2013; Bekeshkina & Kaźmierkiewicz 2012). What is worse, an almost exclusive focus by funders on well-established CSOs has provided a fertile ground for the emergence of an “NGO-crazy” – an elitist third sector that has lost its grassroots base (Lutsevych 2013). This phenomenon, once again, is not unique to Ukraine, and has been exposed in multiple other developing contexts (Chahim & Prakash 2014; Burger & Owens 2013; Choudry & Kapoor 2013; Henderson 2000),

further contesting the argument for externally-driven institution-building approach to civil society development.

Why does such a seemingly glaring omission in research and practice exist in the first place? Scholars across academic disciplines admit that informality is exceedingly difficult to study, not only methodologically, but also conceptually (Aliyev 2015; McGahan 2012; Bruton et al 2012; Helmke & Levitsky 2004; Hussmanns 2004; Misztal 2000). Informality is often characterized as an ephemeral, residual and elusive concept, both in theory and everyday life: “The problem with the concept of informality is that it is a mundane term, difficult to define not only in sociological theories but also in everyday language” (Misztal 2000, p. 17). While acknowledging these difficulties and the resulting lack of empirical data, scholars studying informality in different contexts and across academic disciplines maintain that informal practices permeate most spheres of developing and developed societies, and our knowledge of many phenomena is incomplete without an understanding of their informal components (McGahan 2012; Helmke & Levitsky 2004; Hussmanns 2004; Misztal 2000). Pervasive informality has been documented in most aspects of Ukraine’s economic (Williams & Onoschenko 2014; Schneider, Buehn & Montenegro 2011), political (Kuzio 2012; Helmke & Levitsky 2004), and social (Berenson 2010; Stepanenko 2006) spheres. Still, echoing trends in different scholarly disciplines, informal practices continue to be under-researched in this context, and “studies on informality in post-Soviet spaces as a sociologically grounded phenomenon are scarce” (Aliyev 2015, p. 192).

A sizable faction of Ukraine’s voluntary sector mirrors closely my informal ‘market’ story conveyed earlier: when a local issue arises, people get together informally,

discuss a viable solution, pull resources through their personal networks to address the problem, and, when all is said and done, they ‘go home.’ After a particularly long and engaging interview, I ended up without fruit that day. Similarly, researchers are very likely to miss data on these informal activities if they look for them at a wrong time, or, metaphorically, by the wrong metro station. Most of these activities do not exist in any official records. Unsurprisingly, there is scarce empirical data about this part of the third sector in Ukraine, yet it fills tremendous gaps in government and market services, improving economic, political and social conditions, and even saving people’s lives. Evidence uncovered by this study also suggests these activities can be a precursor for subsequent, more active community engagement for many individuals, as well as make nascent contributions towards democracy building.

That being said, these ephemeral, sporadic, and episodic activities are only one part of the story about Ukraine’s informal civil society, which further complicates the sector’s investigation and understanding. Informality occurs not only within an entirely informal domain, but is often inextricably intertwined with formal institutions and processes. Informal activities habitually transcend, and challenge, the conceptual formal-informal and sectoral divides. Certain groups can operate very similarly to institutionalized organizations, demonstrating “centralized, bureaucratic, and role-based structures, regimented and replicable processes, and coordinated multi-organizational strategies with supporting rules and regulations,” yet have no official registration with the government (Krasynska & Martin 2017, p. 422). There is a multitude of formally established organizations (i.e. registered as civic organizations or charitable foundations with the Ukrainian government) that conduct all their activities unofficially – via cash, in-

kind, or barter transactions. Most civil society organizations, groups and initiatives, however, utilize a mix of the above strategies, oscillating on the formal-informal spectrum depending on the context and issue at hand.

Lastly, informality is not only ubiquitous and complicated, but it is also “here to stay” (Morris & Polese 2014, p.1). While the informal practices have been routinely branded as a “‘transition’ phenomenon – something that institutionally-deficient Eastern European countries are plagued by,” in reality, levels of informal activity have been persistent, if not growing, in the past two decades, and the role of informal practices in the economic and social developments in post-socialist societies remains unfailingly pervasive (Morris & Polese 2014). Is it even possible to estimate the informal civil society’s collective size, scope and impact? Should it be considered a distinct subsector of civil society (if not a separate sector altogether, as proposed by Smith, 2000)? Can these activities be fostered through external support without undue interference? How does our assessment of civil society change when we consider these multifarious initiatives a vital part of the third sector? Before engaging these questions more intently, a word of definitions is in order.

Dimensions of Informal Civil Society in Ukraine

What defines informal civil society in the Ukrainian context? I delineate two principal dimensions of informality exhibited by Ukraine’s civil society. First, informality is expressed by the lack of governmental registration. Registered organizations have a status of either a civic association or a charitable foundation, with the latter having greater tax-exemption privileges. Unregistered organizations, on the other hand, are absent from most forms of formal observation. The second key

dimension of informality is the level of financial reporting to the government. Every legal entity, according to Ukraine's legislation, is required to submit regular financial statements to the tax authorities, as well as to multiple other governmental bodies. Registered organizations can have varied levels of noncompliance with this reporting requirement, from underreporting certain financial activity to not reporting any financial activity at all.

Figure 1 provides a simple illustration of these two key dimensions. Whereas registered organizations exhibit a range of reporting and non-reporting of the financial activity to the government, the unregistered entities conduct chiefly cash-based, barter, and in-kind operations. In exceptional cases, certain unregistered organizations' outputs can be reported to the government, such as supplies delivered to the army units at the front lines, or parent-teacher associations' donations to public schools. However, unregistered groups sometimes find ingenious ways of making their informal contributions official in order to subsequently ensure they are appropriately and efficiently utilized. Even when reporting occurs in certain situations, most activity conducted by unofficial organizations and initiatives remains completely below the official radars.

Reporting of financial activity	<i>Full reporting to government</i>	X	
	<i>Partial reporting to government</i>	X	X
	<i>No reporting to government</i>	X	X
		<i>Registered (charitable foundation, or civic organization)</i>	<i>Unregistered (organization, association, group, individual initiative)</i>
Official status / Governmental registration			

Figure 1. Key dimensions of informal voluntary activities.

While the description of these groups and initiatives is illustrated by placing them within the two key dimensions, these categories are not rigidly distinguished in practice. For instance, an unregistered organization may one day decide to register a legal entity with the government, or an inherently informal organization may attain an official status for a specific purpose and, once it is fulfilled, the group may have no use of the official status and let the registration be unutilized. Furthermore, each of these two categories of entities may have different and also shifting organizational, relational and temporal manifestations. The activity can have a service or advocacy focus; it can have an ongoing or temporary character; it can be structured as a group/organization or take place on an individual level; finally, it can be completely voluntary or implicitly involuntary, and at least partially reside in another sector of society (i.e. business or government). As with the official status of a legal entity, an organization or initiative can morph from one

type into another fairly effortlessly in response to the changing environment or emerging needs, thanks in large part to its inherently informal nature.

Research Design and Methodology

To shed more light on the prevalent phenomenon of informal civil society and its significance in Ukraine, this study turns to the informal civil society actors for answers to fundamental questions about their activities' nature, drivers, and impact. Thus, the study is based primarily on data derived from 70 interviews with individuals who could speak with authority and first-hand knowledge of Ukraine's informal civil society, including its activities, motivations and possible impact. Interviewees were solicited from diverse parts of Ukraine in order to engage as diverse a spectrum of perspectives on informal voluntary action as possible, across rural and urban divides, as well as geographic locations with divergent historical legacies.

Study participants included predominantly leaders of civil society initiatives, groups and organizations that were at least to some degree unregulated by the Ukrainian government. Several Ukrainian scholars were also interviewed for a broader understanding of the informal third sector dynamics. An interview guide was used to direct the semi-structured conversations with participants; the guide encompassed both exploratory and confirmatory inquiry approaches. Most of the interviewees discussed in their own words the nature and scope of their civic activities, their reasons for operating informally, as well as the nature of their interactions with other stakeholders in the polity. Social media content, along with a variety of secondary data sources, was used to triangulate the interview data.

Both inductive and deductive approaches were employed in the analysis of interview data. While the applicability of some concepts identified during literature review outlined in Chapter 2 was assessed in the process of interview coding (deductive approach), other concepts emerged from the data and were used for theory generation (inductive approach). Additionally, an *analysis of narrative* (Polkinghorne 1995) approach was used in the construction of mini cases that provided contextual richness to the description of informal civil society's expressions in Chapter 3. Excel spreadsheets were used to create descriptive statistics of study respondents' activities; these statistics were subsequently used for understanding the overall body of respondents, as well as contextualizing and presenting this descriptive analysis in Chapters 2-4. A more detailed description of the study's methodology, including sampling strategies, participant selection, interview guides, data analysis, and study's limitations is provided in Appendix A: *Research Design and Methodology*. The study's *Coding Scheme* and *Primary Data* are outlined in Appendices B and C, respectively.

Chapter Overview

Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 sets the stage for the study by presenting four interconnected themes that point to the relevance of this dissertation research. First, informal activities and initiatives are prevalent in Ukraine's civil society, as Ukrainians are more likely to engage in civic activity informally than through formal and official methods. Second, without knowledge of informal activity, our knowledge of Ukraine's civil society is, at best, incomplete, and, at worst, distorted, which has critical implications for the sector's development. Third, currently there is scarce empirical knowledge on the informal components of civil society in Ukraine (and, more generally,

in Eastern Europe), including its manifestations, causes, and impact on civil society dynamics. Finally, these trends echo the outstanding need in civil society scholarship for including below-the-radar civic activities in non-Western contexts, in order to develop more inclusive and nuanced theories in the field.

Borrowing relevant literature from a range of academic disciplines, including economics, political science, management, sociology, as well as interdisciplinary civil society and post-communist studies, Chapter 2 introduces three central research questions that guide and frame this dissertation, namely: *What does informal civil society look like in Ukraine? Why does it exist and persist? What impact does it have?* The subsequent three Chapters (3-5) of the manuscript address each of these in turn.

Chapter 3 reveals a range of informal activities, practiced by diverse organizations, groups and individual initiatives, defined by two major dimensions of informal activity, as briefly noted above: the absence of governmental registration, and financial reporting. The empirical realities of the sector illustrate a wide spectrum of informality, thus discounting the binary view of organizations as being either formal or informal. While there are pros and cons to the efficacy of informal voluntary action, Ukraine's civil society may require all of these types of associational activity to endure and survive the country's turbulent environment of political instability, imperfect policy-making and its selective enforcement, staggering corruption levels, undulating economic crises, and the trauma and confusion resulting from the loss of territories and ongoing military incursion.

Based on these findings, the chapter offers some additional approaches to civil society research in contexts where informality flourishes. While comparative civil

society studies rely largely on the data that captures membership in formal organizations, scholars thus not only discount informality, but also claim that informal networks undermine citizens' inclination to join organizations (Way 2014; Gatskova & Gatskov 2015). In contrast, my research finds that the predominance of informal networks is one of the vital manifestations of civic engagement in Ukraine, rather than simply a symptom of apathy and distrust. Additional approaches to researching civil society in such contexts should include assessing the sector's realistic inputs and outputs (Böröcz 2000), as well as considering the nature and efficacy of interactions between civil society stakeholders and other actors in the polity (Ekiert & Kubik 2014).

Chapter 4 examines the roots of informal behavior in Ukraine's civic engagement. Informality in the sector is driven by two sets of structural factors. First, an incongruous regulatory and political environment deters formalization. Second, prevalent social norms both condone and promote the informal behavior. These structural factors give rise to pronounced individual motives driving informality that are based on the calculated costs and benefits of formalization. Thus, informality is a rational response to the inefficacy of formal institutions; it also gives individuals a significant degree of freedom and independence from incongruent formal institutions. This chapter further identifies trust and distrust – trust in familiar networks and informal reputations, and the distrust of governmental institutions and formal CSOs – as some of the key informality-enabling and formalization-inhibiting mechanisms binding the various drivers of informality.

Chapter 4 concludes that informality in Ukraine's civil society is expressed as one of the key ingredients in enabling relative *autonomy* from those institutional and environmental factors that are deemed incompatible with the realities on the ground.

Civil society actors work in parallel, adapt, adjust and compromise, reducing transaction costs, while increasing independence and maneuverability, through a spectrum of informal activity. They engage and associate to solve common problems instead of expecting solutions from the government or the formal CSOs. Furthermore, informality is the method for the Ukrainian society of attaining and expanding *civic agency* (Fowler 2010) that is needed to establish effective governance locally. Informality is, thus, not necessarily a threat to formal institutions, nor is there a path leading inevitably from informality to formal rule. Informal practices will endure and, at least for the foreseeable future, will continue to both detract from and contribute to the efficacy of formal institutions in Ukraine. Thus, instead of treating informal civil society as a residual concept (Misztal 2000) and discounting it altogether, or, worse, seeing it as a hindrance to formal processes and as a detractor from citizens' association with formal CSOs (Way 2014; Howard 2003), informality should be treated as an integral part of the civil society landscape.

Chapter 5 examines the significance of informal civil society through the lenses of the three dominant scholarly discourses of civil society (Edwards 2014). The first lens purports that civil society is a *part of society*, emphasizing citizens' associational life in the traditions of Alexis de Tocqueville (1945). Informal associational life in Ukraine, at its core, is an outcome-driven part of the sector, intent on getting things done, as effectively and efficiently as possible in a highly volatile and resource-deficient environment. In the process of achieving its goals, a vision of building democratic institutions is present, but the efforts are still nascent and unsystematic. While informal associations by definition lack institutionalization, they rarely contain an articulate vision

for democracy. There is evidence, however, signifying that informal associational activity can be offsetting the negative side-effects of predominantly externally-driven institution-building processes (e.g., corporatization and ‘bureaucratization’ of the sector), that tend to detract citizens from authentic civic engagement (Skocpol 1999; 2003, Lagerspetz 2008). The informal side of Ukraine’s civil society provides a ‘space’ for more familiar and relatable associational institutions.

The second lens looks at civil society as a *kind of society*, depicted as the ‘good society’ fortified by positive norms and values and the ability to reach common goals (Edwards 2014). This study reveals an apparent tension between the norms and values associated with formal and informal institutions in Ukraine. Informal actors’ idealized visions of civil society, characterized by family-like values, including personal engagement, mutuality, transparency and trust, are in direct opposition of their attitudes towards formal institutions that are perceived as transactional, corrupt and unresponsive. While ‘Soviet legacies’ explain part of the apathy and lack of engagement (Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2013; Howard 2003), there are other values and norms at play on the long and arduous road to a widespread ‘good society’ in Ukraine. Informal civic activists, while feeling vastly outnumbered, often burnt-out and discouraged (and even directly embattled), see their role in contributing their part of paving that road. It will take concerted efforts, spanning far beyond the capacity of civil society, however, to eventually build the appropriate institutions that would foster public trust and cooperation, providing impetus for engaging more widespread civic participation in public processes. A concerted and strategic effort across all three sectors of society needs

to be expanded towards the development of cultural norms of altruism and civic engagement.

The third lens considers civil society as the *public sphere*, or the space for deliberation, debate, public association and institutional collaboration (Edwards 2014, p. 10). When negotiating the varied challenges and opportunities in Ukraine's public sphere, civil society does not have a prominent space in it, with the exception of mass protests and the informal publics. Informality can have both positive and negative effects on fostering dialogic politics coined by Habermas. On the one hand, informal interactions can help transcend the formal boundaries and bureaucratic hurdles, leveling the playing field and opening alternative spaces for participation and deliberation in certain contexts. On the other, they can create fractured and disconnected polities focused on localized issues, even pursuing radical agendas, rather than engaging in open dialogue and all-inclusive collaboration. While this drives both positive and negative developments, including corruption and indigenous problem-solving, without a broader recognition of its impact, we do not fully understand Ukraine's public sphere. While informal civil society is largely uninstitutionalized, it is not inconsequential. Civil society actors in the informal domain actively participate in the formal publics through a combination of formal and informal means, and manage to contribute to the creation of policy and reform of the outmoded and corrupt formal institutions, and mass protests have proven Ukraine's citizens' ability to change the country's geopolitical course altogether.

The concluding Chapter 6 discusses the study's key theoretical and methodological implications, presents directions for future research, and offers recommendations for policy and practice. Particularly, it highlights two major topics that

emerged in the discussions of findings throughout Chapters 2-5, as follows: the formal-informal interactions and their effects on civil society in Ukraine, and the efficacy of institution-building processes in non-Western contexts driven predominantly by Western theory and practice. Based on the insights derived from these discussions, the chapter also offers three specific research directions stemming from the study's findings: deepening, generalizing and scaling up the study's findings; examining other stakeholders' perspectives whose decisions play a significant role in driving informality, such as the Ukrainian state and the Western aid community; and reexamining the historical legacies affecting civic engagement.

Conclusion

This dissertation does not provide all the answers about Ukraine's informal civil society and its dynamics, and it is certainly not without limitations. It does, however, fill a significant gap in our understanding of the informal side of the sector by drawing an intimate picture of its activities, offering a glimpse into the drivers of informal civic behavior, as well as hypothesizing on its significance for Ukraine's social and political developments. My findings open doors for possible reconceptualization of civil society institutions in Ukraine and similar contexts, offers new roadmaps for more meaningful ways of providing external support for democracy and civil society building, and poses important questions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Ukraine's Informal Civil Society: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How to Study It

*Contemporary civil society discourse [in Ukraine] ...
overcomes the simplified view of itself as of merely the
activity of a network of nongovernmental organizations...*
(Stepanenko 2015, p. 89)

– Or does it really?...

Civil society research in contemporary Ukraine has generally focused on the activities and indicators of formal organizations (USAID 2011-2014; Bekeshkina & Kaźmierkiewicz 2012; Palyvoda & Golota 2010; Ghosh 2010; Stewart 2009; Anheier 2004). One of the most extensive empirical studies tracing the developments of Ukraine's third sector between 2002 and 2009 (Palyvoda & Golota 2010) is based entirely on data provided by officially registered civil society organizations (CSOs). In 2016, a new study was published by the same research institution, entitled, notably: "Defining Civil Society for Ukraine: Research report." Similarly to most previous studies, the report excluded informal organizations and activities from its purview, noting: "...information relating some types of CSOs, particularly CSOs that do not have a status of a legal entity, is vague. Ukraine does not have a state record for such CSOs" (Palyvoda, Vinnkov & Kupriy 2016, p. 23).

Focusing almost exclusively on formal organizations, local and comparative studies conclude that Ukraine's civil society sector continues to struggle in the post-Soviet transition for various economic, political and societal reasons, leading to Ukrainian citizens' general lack of engagement in CSOs (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Stewart 2009; Anheier 2004). Many a scholar has concluded that Ukrainians are not

likely to associate through formal organizations to solve their common problems (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Anheier 2004), and, “[d]espite the growing numbers of registered NGOs,¹ few citizens participate, volunteer their time or make donations to NGOs” (Lutsevych 2013, p. 4).

At the same time, Ukrainians partake in civil society – ostensibly, on a substantial scale – outside of formally functioning civic organizations. A survey conducted in 2006 found that almost half of Ukrainians provided active support to different causes outside of formal organizations, while only slightly more than eight percent volunteered for CSOs (Kuts & Palyvoda 2006, p. 28). The informal manifestations of civil society have become especially evident during the Euromaidan protests, which mobilized millions of Ukrainians in the winter of 2013-14. These turbulent developments attracted wide scholarly attention resulting in a number of studies examining the role of Ukraine’s civil society in democracy development, state building, and civic engagement. They also began shedding more light on civil society’s informal manifestations. A study based on a national representative survey found that almost three quarters of Euromaidan activists were not members of any CSOs (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015). The authors of this study conclude that Ukrainians generally prefer to organize informally to solve their common problems, and recommend that external donors focus on supporting local and short-term initiatives for long-term democracy assistance rather than focusing on the established formal CSOs (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015).

Emerging literature begins to investigate the qualities and boundaries of informal civic activity which can take place both at the individual level, and within more

¹ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are used synonymously with civil society organizations (CSOs) inside citations throughout this text.

formalized groups and organizations (OSCE 2015; Krasynska & Martin 2017). A study including several informal organizations in its sample proposed that some civil society groups choose to not register with the government and, thus, to operate unofficially; respondents reported either not seeing an advantage in becoming a registered organization or even “evoking the possibility of negative repercussion or retaliation” (OSCE 2015, p. 4). Furthermore, an examination of groups and initiatives participating in Euromaidan concluded that it may be worth distinguishing between “formal” and “official” organizations as some unregistered organizations demonstrate high levels of formalization while resisting official status with the hostile government (Krasynska & Martin 2017). At the same time, as this study will further reveal, many registered organizations continue operating under the official radars by not reporting all of their activities to the government.

Informal organizing also has been pivotal in the developments of an ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine that ensued in 2014, shortly after the conclusion of Euromaidan. The hostilities have spurred an unprecedented wave of predominantly grassroots voluntary engagement supporting the needs of the Ukrainian army and providing assistance to individuals fleeing the war zone, popularly termed as the “volunteer movement.” Notably, the volunteer movement is perceived by the Ukrainian public as something different from civic organizations: whereas civic organizations are generally understood to be registered CSOs, the volunteer movement tends to be driven by grassroots, horizontal structures grounded in informal networks – with or without governmental registration. The national sociological polls, when soliciting perceptions of trust in various social institutions, separate these “volunteer” activities from the activities of

formal CSOs, with volunteer groups consistently garnering higher levels of public trust than the CSOs (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2017; Razumkov Center 2016).

Recognizing and acknowledging the preponderance of informal activity within Ukraine's civil society (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Stepanenko 2015; Krasynska & Martin 2017; Krasynska 2014; Lutsevych 2013), the emerging yet still rather limited and fragmented literature strongly suggests that the traditional reliance on formal organizations as the basis of knowledge about civil society has significant limitations in the Ukrainian context. Not only such an approach distorts our understanding of civil society by screening out "a large proportion of the Ukrainian population" (Stewart 2009, p. 181), but it also potentially hinders the sector's overall development (Ghosh 2014, p. 3), as funding sources that shape civil society dynamics work predominantly with official and well-established CSOs (Gatskov & Gatskova 2015; Ghosh 2014; Lutsevych 2013; Bekeshkina & Kaźmierkiewicz 2012).

The most dominant of such funding sources, by far, is Western donor assistance which funds and sustains more than half of Ukraine's CSOs (Palyvoda & Golota 2010). Scholars begin to acknowledge, although mainly in passing, a potentially critical error in the traditional approach of focusing solely on formal CSOs and, thus, excluding informal associations and initiatives from funders' purview (Lutsevych 2013, p. 16; Gatskov & Gatskova 2015, p. 16). However, while donors begin to recognize this apparent shortcoming (Bekeshkina & Kaźmierkiewicz 2012, p. 22), they are still "reluctant to work with new and informal groups" (Lutsevych 2013, p. 16), and currently "there are hardly any new approaches to strengthening civil society in the region" (Lutsevych 2013, p. 17). Furthermore, an almost exclusive focus by funders on well-established CSOs,

Lutsevych (2013) argues, has promulgated a concept of “NGO-crazy,” driven by an elitist sector that has lost its grassroots base. This phenomenon has been documented in a variety of other developing contexts (see, for example, Chahim & Prakash 2014; Burger & Owens 2013; Choudry & Kapoor 2013; Henderson 2000).

In sum, while it may appear that “Contemporary civil society discourse [in Ukraine] ... overcomes the simplified view of itself as of merely the activity of a network of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and associations”² (Stepanenko 2015, p. 89), it currently does so chiefly in theory. Empirical literature on the nature and dynamics of the informal components of civil society in Ukraine is nascent. While acknowledging the limitations of the traditional approach to studying and funding civil society, nonetheless, scholars and practitioners continue to rely upon data derived from official CSOs (USAID 2011-2014; Bekeshkina & Kaźmierkiewicz 2012; Stewart 2010; Palyvoda & Golota 2010), and no studies, as of yet, have taken an in-depth look at the informal side of civil society sector specifically.

State of Research and Methodological Conundrums

Omitting informal groups and initiatives in civil society research is but one side of our gap in knowledge about the extent and impact of Ukraine’s third sector. The data available on formal organizations can also be incomplete and inaccurate, and even intentionally distorted and misleading. First, obtaining reliable data on formal CSO activities is riddled with methodological difficulties in view of various legislative and contextual issues. Second, there are certain formal CSOs that tend to belie voluntary, nongovernmental or public-benefit features characteristic of true civil society, including partisan politics in “civic disguise,” the ineffective “grant-eaters,” the outdated trade

² Translated from the Ukrainian language by the author.

unions, and the outright devious organizations founded with the purpose of misusing public funds.

Methodological Problems in General

The available third sector data in Ukraine generally have significant reliability issues. For instance, while there have been recent positive changes in Ukraine's legislation governing CSOs, which at least in theory should now allow for a more streamlined recording of the sector's activities and organizations, major issues remain with its application and implementation (Krasynska 2015). Palyvoda, Vinnkov & Kupriy (2016) describe the methodological issues inherent in using official data in their most recent report on Ukraine's civil society:

...CSOs in Ukraine are not currently subject to comprehensive audit, monitoring, and statistical analysis of their administrative information. The state statistics of Ukraine does not have a direct link between the non-profit status of an organization relating to its taxation, ... and its affiliation with the institutional sector of the economy and types of activities. ... [I]t is not possible to clearly define the main macroeconomic indicators of CSOs in Ukraine (e.g. for the number of institutional units, employment/activities, revenues and expenditures). (p. 24).

The convoluted legislative definitions of CSOs are also mirrored in the colloquial characterizations of the activities of civil society. In the course of this study, different terms were used by interviewees to describe the phenomena I investigated, including the following: initiative, initiative group, civic initiative, working group, volunteer (as part of a group/organization or as an individual), volunteer organization, volunteer group, volunteer movement, *hromadska* (civic) organization (with or without 'legal entity'), foundation, charitable foundation, fund, enthusiasts, activists, and simply 'people getting stuff done,' with no particular title. Notably, a word search within 64 interview transcriptions revealed that only seven respondents used the word "membership" during

interviews, in each instance referring (or drawing a parallel) to formal membership in either a political party or a formal CSO.

Aside from legislative factors, there are also contextual factors contributing to the issues inherent in the extant data. Palyvoda, Vinnkov & Kupriy (2016) further comment: “...it should be noted that representatives of CSOs (very often the only sources of information) are very reluctant to take part in surveys. When combined with poorly structured and limited data of the national statistics, it is difficult to receive quality and reliable results” (p. 23). One of this study’s respondents, a sociology professor and a quantitative researcher working extensively with official statistics, confirmed:

R42: It is very difficult [to conduct research] because any kind of accounting is very poorly conducted. ... We have a very specific context here; it differs from the one in the West. ... To put it simply, in the West there is order because of bureaucracy, the norms are working, the rules work very well, but in our context, there is complete chaos in that regard. ... Even the Western donors, the activists who work [here], with experience, they begin to understand the whole distinctiveness of the situation. ... The idea that some institutions are actually working well here, they [foreign workers], even better than Ukrainians, understand the whole travesty of the situation.

To further illustrate, many registered organizations officially report their employees as volunteers or consultants, citing legislative and financial burdens making it virtually impossible to formally employ staff. According to several study respondents, generally, only large organizations receiving continuous and multiple grants are able to officially employ their workers, whereas small and grassroots organizations are forced to find loopholes through which to channel resources necessary to pay salaries “under the table.” A respondent with work experience in the CSO sector, both in larger organizations and grassroots initiatives, reported:

R 25: [For instance], an organization writes grants for projects. ... The project lasts for half a year, and what happens afterwards is unknown. ...

People cannot officially register an enterprise for one project only, and then who knows what happens. Simply, they engage people through whom they cash out the grant, those people get salary. In theory, everything is official, taxes are paid, and all the dues, but since these people are not the actual project team, you have to find loopholes through which to cash out the grant, so that it is all in accordance with the law – the Ukrainian law, and to the donor’s law. ... Many organizations do this. ... There are very few organizations that can officially employ their staff. Most associations work as volunteers, or at the maximum, the director is employed and the accountant, but the rest are [officially] volunteers...

Such activities make it difficult to realistically assess employment and other economic indicators in the sector by relying solely on official and survey data.

According to USAID (2012), only 24 percent of CSOs reported to have had paid staff in 2012, representing a drastic decline from 48 percent of CSOs reporting to have had staff in 2009 (Palyvoda & Golota 2010). Accounting for the dynamics discussed above, questions arise: Had the decline in third sector staff actually occurred? Or had the salary resources been rerouted through informal channels, but actually stayed in the sector, responding to changes in legislation or donor requirements? Current methodological approaches cannot provide answers to such questions. However, these questions are especially pertinent since the same survey results indicate virtually no changes in the levels of service provision between 2003 and 2013 (USAID 2013). Study respondents themselves reported to have had little faith in the reliability of official statistics in the sector. A representative of a grassroots CSO conveyed:

R25: These reports, are a complete farce. And that is exactly what we submit, you can write anything you want in there. Even if you had one event, even if a million. To me, that is not any kind of indicator – the official NGO and civic activity statistics site. You can write any kind of paper report.

Dubious and Malfeasant CSOs

Informal approaches to accounting and reporting are not without a dark side. Study respondents reported about certain particularly devious CSO practices that further distort the available data on the sector's outputs and impact, in addition to damaging the sector's reputation in general. These practices are facilitated by the dual storyline habits prevalent in the sector's organizations, especially practiced by those having questionable purposes and motivations. Thus, what is being officially reported can be far from reality. This section glances at three kinds of such organizations that potentially have noteworthy implications for the accuracy of the available data on Ukraine's CSOs.

Partisan politics in disguise. Study respondents have noted there are numerous civic associations and charitable foundations that are nongovernmental in name only. These organizations can be founded for deliberate political purposes, such as candidate endorsement, or even for malfeasant fiscal practices by Members of the Parliament (MPs) or other elected politicians. While, officially, these organizations are nongovernmental, in essence, they are founded, financed and controlled by political figures. A respondent conveyed a perception which was expressed by over a dozen different respondents:

R62: There is a very big faction of organizations that are 'attached to' political parties. All those are quasi-organizations. Take any political party. There is [Name of Organization], really attached to [Political Party]. They are not a true civic association. They are politically biased, they are not independent. They are not just being controlled [by a political party], they are but voiceless followers. There can be no talk of them as civic associations.

Because funding for these organizations can come through informal channels, or through official governmental grants, these CSOs appear to be legitimate privately-funded associations of citizens. However, in reality, they can be, at least in part, but extensions of political parties and cannot truly be characterized as nongovernmental

CSOs. Once again, official and survey data would not allow for distinguishing these organizations from legitimate CSOs, further distorting the sector's statistics.

Certainly, the use of civil society organizations for political purposes is not unique to the Ukrainian context and the question regarding political parties and their inclusion into or exclusion from the purview of civil society is debated in scholarly literature (Edwards 2014, p. 24;) In this study, however, what distinguishes these organizations from the actual political organizations is their duplicitous intentions: while they proclaim being civic associations organized for public benefit, in reality, they are entirely funded and controlled by select politicians to promote their political agendas.

The ineffective ‘grant-eaters.’ Whereas some organizations report their financial activity to the government that differs from their actual figures, certain CSO can also abuse foreign funding programs by producing minimal or no outcomes yet subsisting entirely on institutional grants. While currently the extent of this phenomenon is unknown, it was perceived by some respondents as widespread. Such “grant-eating” organizations tend to have particularly negative effects on public trust (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4), furthering a distorted perception of the role and functions of formal CSOs. While this pertains more to the issue of effectiveness, it potentially furthers the unreliability of official statistics, at least with regard to reporting the economic and programmatic indicators of such organizations. Twenty-two different respondents described this trend in various ways, including the following examples:

R28: I know that, because of a lot of [foreign] funding coming into Ukraine right now, a lot of fake organizations appeared that just take the money.

R41: Organizations that shape their activity exclusively to meet the demands of grantors. In other words, they do not have an independent interest in this activity, but the grantor says this and they do it, subsisting

in this way. But this is a very widespread phenomenon in Ukraine, basically, that organizations live purely off of grants.

R58: God, they receive millions! But they do nothing. Organizing some forums, but no [abuse of power] has been stopped, not a single ‘corruptioneer’ arrested, nothing. Everyone has a three-story house, several cars. Plain and simple, people are improving their financial situation.

Several respondents even reported a concept of a “training tourist,” characterizing individuals and organizations that use foreign funding designated for training and capacity development primarily for recreational purposes. Respondents conveyed:

R46: This was a 100% grant-eating organization. ... It ... subsisted on grants of [two foreign foundations]. ... they essentially had an exclusive club, with a very narrow circle of people. I called them a travel agency. They delegated people and organized some sort of conferences for those grants – all for the same circle of people. And the whole purpose of those conferences was to listen to something, ask some sort of questions, eat a catered buffet – this mostly was taking place at [glitzy] hotels – essentially, to have a nice party. And then they would travel, taking trips to [list of countries]...

Foreign funders, who often lack practical knowledge of the realistic needs in communities, can contribute to the friction between the vital community needs and the activities of CSOs claiming to be addressing those needs. A respondent working for an organization that conducts sponsored research for a Western institution, conveyed:

R26: [A grant] comes specifically for a certain problem. We, artificially, gather some people with this problem and show some picture. But this money, it is being spent for a wrong purpose. We are getting substantial amounts of money to research a problem that does not exist. And I have taken part in this project twice already. ... I talk to these people who are in the [target population] category. And they tell me that there is no problem in the sphere we are researching. But why then do the grantors give money for that? The goal, after all, should be to improve something, right?

Again, as with the political organizations, the ineffective distribution and the misuse of foreign aid is not unique to Ukrainian CSOs. These dynamics have been documented in other developing countries by numerous scholars, questioning the efficacy

of the contemporary approaches to supporting civil society development and democracy promotion in these contexts (see, for instance, Chahim and Prakash 2014; Burger & Owens 2013; Choudry & Kapoor 2013; Mendelson & Glenn 2002; Sogge 2002; Crawford 2001).

While these instances may be more anomalous than customary, they contribute to the distortions in formal statistical data available about the sector's financial and programmatic activity. This further puts into question the efficacy of focusing primarily on the activities of established formal organizations in the assessment of the sector's outcomes and impact.

The 'Soviet' unions. The idiosyncratic nature of Ukraine's trade unions is another aspect of the potential distortion of official third sector statistics. Bidenko (2013) suggested that including unions in the examination of civil society in Ukraine "is not warranted and causes methodological distortions" (p. 147). She elaborates:

Labor unions in [Ukraine and Belarus] are legal successors of the membership, property and ideological baggage of the old Soviet trade unions. For twenty years of independence, most of them did not actually change their organizational structures, practices or discourse. ... Despite the fact that membership in professional trade unions in Ukraine and Belarus is higher when compared to membership rates in other NGOs, such membership is often a formality that does not ensure actual protections of labor rights. (Bidenko 2013, p. 147)

Although few respondents commented on the state of the trade unions (they were not asked to comment on them specifically), those who did, concurred with the above characterization. Said one:

R46: If you take, for instance, the professional unions sector, it is an absolute abomination. Fake Soviet unions that essentially play an imitation role. ... These formal professional unions, which are elected with the approval of companies' administration, even the big ones, their only goal is to 'rubber-stamp.' ... In effect, we do not have any real professional unions...

In sum, not only is there a potentially significant gap in our knowledge of Ukraine's civil society without an understanding of informal organizations, groups and initiatives, the data available on formal organizations can also be incomplete and inaccurate, due to the legislative and contextual factors, and even downright distorted and misleading due to the preponderance of organizations that cannot truly be characterized as voluntary, nongovernmental or public-benefit. While, potentially, data compilation methods can be technically improved to collect more complete and accurate data on truly functioning civil society organizations, improved methods may not necessarily address data distortion issues stemming from the existence of dubious and malfeasant organizations. This further reinforces the need for additional approaches to civil society research in contexts where the preponderance of informal activities is accompanied by economic strains, the weak rule of law and high levels of corruption in the government.

Broader Scholarly Contexts

While focusing exclusively on organizations, groups and individuals partaking in the activities of civil society in Ukraine, this study aims at contributing to greater theoretical contexts. First, developments in Ukraine can elucidate on civil society dynamics in other postcommunist and post-Soviet domains, addressing an apparent dissonance between extant theories and empirical realities in post-Soviet societies (Smith, Moldavanova & Krasynska 2017-forthcoming). Moreover, our knowledge about civil society, especially in contexts exhibiting abundant informal civic practices that often fall below the radars of academic and practitioner research, is particularly salient for advancing civil society scholarship in general (Edwards 2014, p. 129).

The ‘Weakness’ of Postcommunist Civil Society

As already noted in Chapter 1, the dynamic of formal-informal interaction in the postcommunist context has been debated in civil society literature. On the one hand, Howard (2003) argued that the prevalence and persistence of informal friendship networks underlies citizen’s resistance of joining formal voluntary organizations in the post-communist Europe, thus weakening the region’s civil society. Newer literature echoes Howard’s conclusions. Way (2015) in his post-Euromaidan analysis of Ukraine’s civil society and its role in democratization, stressed: “the very qualities that made Ukraine’s recent protests so inspiring to the world—their spontaneity and reliance on private citizens rather than preexisting organizations or elites—also hint at the fundamental weakness that characterizes Ukrainian civil society” (p. 41). Gatskova & Gatskov (2015) similarly conclude that Ukrainians’ tendency to organize informally erodes the “formally arranged cooperation, slowing down the establishment of public civic activity and thus hindering further integration of society” (p. 688). Overall, according to this school of thought, informal activity has a particularly negative impact on the CSO sector, thus “weakening” civil society in general, and the Soviet “legacies” play a leading role in these developments.

Countering this viewpoint, Böröcz (2000a) suggested that CSOs “can exist and do even have a reasonably healthy life under pronounced informality”; however, in order to understand their complex role in society, research should consider “the contextual conditions, among which ... high levels of informality and low levels of the moral predominance of formality are featured prominently” (p. 138). More recently, Ekiert & Kubik (2014) further challenged the idea that “postcommunist civil societies [are]

chronically weak,” in view of the great contextual differences within the region. Particularly, the authors suggested, “Instead of measuring civil society’s ‘strength’ by counting the number of organizations per capita or recording what people say in response to survey questions,” researchers ought to focus on the nature and levels of civil society’s involvement in political and public life, as well as on the nature and effectiveness of linkages between civil society and other actors in the polity (Ekiert & Kubik 2014, p. 52).

This study’s findings suggest that expanding the definition of ‘civil society’ by including informal engagement can potentially alter the findings and, therefore, conclusions regarding post-Soviet and postcommunist civic engagement, as proposed by Howard (2003) and later expanded upon by Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2013). These studies’ key dependent variable assessing civic engagement deficit is based on World Values Survey (WVS) indicators that tend to measure engagement in *formal* civic associations (considering the semantics of questions asked). The extent to which the story would change, and our overall understanding of civil society dynamics in the post-Soviet region, as result of this conceptual expansion, would need to be tested in future studies. This dissertation, however, offers a glimpse into what that alternative story could look like.

‘Not Just the Usual Suspects’

Why are these contextual nuances important for building robust theories in the field of civil society? Edwards (2014), in his comprehensive review, emphasized two blind spots in contemporary scholarship of civil society.

First, Edwards’ conclusions (2014) validate what has been emphasized throughout this chapter already: because scholars traditionally focus on formal organizations, little is

known about other “vital avenues of associational life,” “especially those below the radar of academic research such as community groups and grassroots movements” (Edwards 2014, p. 23). Secondly, because civil society theories were developed chiefly in the United States and Western Europe, they tend to make assumptions that do not translate well into other contexts (Edwards 2014, pp. 33-42). To overcome these shortcomings, Edwards (2014) suggests placing greater emphasis on “forms of associational life that ‘live’ relatively independently in their context – not just the ‘usual suspects’” (p. 126), and professes that, “because so little is known or understood about civil society in non-Western contexts, further research on the realities and complexities of associational life across the world is extremely important” (p. 129).

Investigating the dynamics of Ukraine’s informal civil society can contribute to several important questions pertaining to a number of intellectual discussions and practitioner conundrums. First, must civil society be institutionalized (e.g., function as a formal sector) in order to achieve its purposes effectively? If so, what kinds of formal institutions are appropriate in a given context? And, if not, how can the sector capitalize on the strengths of informality in order to compensate for its inherent weaknesses? Attempts to formalize civil society (using models developed primarily in the Western academy and practice) are proving ineffective in certain non-Western contexts. This is expressed by civil society’s apparent resistance to formalization, on the one hand, and by the formal CSO sector losing its grassroots base – on the other. These dynamics foster the elitist CSO cultures that tend to distort and even undermine authentic civic engagement and grassroots activism (Chahim and Prakash 2014; Burger & Owens 2013; Choudry & Kapoor 2013; Henderson 2000).

Does divergence from Western institutionalization-driven definitions makes civil society in these contexts inherently ‘weak’? Is informal civic engagement a residual concept, to be done away with, or can it potentially create and dictate new, more authentic rules of the game in civil society development? This study proposes that the inherent informality in Ukraine’s society does not merely weaken its civil society, as has been argued previously (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Way 2015; Howard 2003). The relationship between the informal action and the formal domain is, indeed, much more complex and nuanced. Echoing contentions made in political science and economics literature (Alter Chen 2012; Grzymala-Busse 2010; Hussmanns 2004; Helmke & Levitsky 2004), informal civil society does not *necessarily* have to be ultimately formalized or, otherwise, continue undermining the formal sector. On the contrary, more nuanced examination of these dynamics suggests that, while certainly not without limitations, the informal action can have a life of its own (Krasynska 2014), live in successful coexistence with formal CSOs (Böröcz 2000a), and perhaps even ultimately play a vital role in the development and growth of an authentic third sector, helping overcome the contextual complexities of a country in post-totalitarian transition.

How can informal civil society be examined thoroughly and systematically to address these important conceptual and empirical questions?

Conceptualizing and Studying Informal Civil Society

While literature on the informal expressions of everyday life is scarce and fragmented in view of the multiple conceptual and methodological challenges, scholars across varied disciplines agree that informal practices permeate most societies, and our knowledge of many phenomena is incomplete without an understanding of their informal

manifestations (Bruton et al 2012; McGahan 2012; Helmke & Levitsky 2004; Hussmans 2004; Böröcz 2000b; Misztal 2000). Informal practices are particularly prevalent in the postcommunist Eastern Europe, and are even more pervasive in the post-Soviet³ domain, with “the main distinction of Soviet informal institutions from their counterparts in other socialist countries [being] their presence and significance in virtually all aspects of everyday life” (Aliyev 2015, p. 187). Informality has been documented in most aspects of Ukraine’s economic (Williams & Onoschenko 2014; Schneider, Buehn & Montenegro 2011), political (Kuzio 2012; Helmke & Levitsky 2004) and social (Berenson 2010; Stepanenko 2006) spheres.

Though clearly emerging and signifying a pressing research agenda, as has been discussed at the beginning of this chapter, literature focusing specifically on the informal civil society in Eastern European context is still rather limited and very much fragmented. Thus, I supplement it by drawing on relevant insights gained by scholars in other academic disciplines to present roadmaps for studying informal civil society in Ukraine. Particularly, I review the conceptualizations, as well as drivers and impacts of informality, as examined by the economics, management, civil society, and political science research, which ultimately informed the development of the central research questions guiding this dissertation.

Expressions of Informality

The most extensive contribution to studying informal activity has been made by the economics literature. The informal economy, also termed “*underground economy*, *shadow economy*, *irregular economy*, *unobserved economy*, and *hidden enterprises*” (Webb et al. 2013, p. 600, emphasis in original), has varied definitions, including: 1) self-

³ Encompassing the fifteen countries formerly republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

employment in informal enterprises or wage employment in informal jobs (Alter Chen 2005); 2) market-based production of goods and services deliberately concealed from public authorities (Schneider, Buehn and Montenegro 2011); and 3) economic activities performed in communities based on relationships of kinship or friendship (Dallago 1990). Informal economic activities appear to have the following shared key characteristics: “they escape taxation, registration, regulation, and many other forms of public scrutiny in a context where similar activities are supposed to be and, to a certain extent, are, taxed, registered, regulated, and available for public scrutiny” (Böröcz 2000b, p. 354). Notably, it is estimated that the informal economy in Ukraine constitutes more than half of the country’s GDP, which is among the highest in Eastern Europe (Schneider, Buehn and Montenegro 2011, p. 34).

Management literature, in its discussion of informal firms, makes an important distinction between *legal* and *legitimate* activity, emphasizing that the informal economic activities are those “that are outside of formal institutional boundaries (i.e., illegal) yet fall within informal institutional boundaries (i.e., legitimate)” (Webb et al. 2013, p. 600). This distinction helps exclude from the definition of informal economy those activities which are illegal *and* illegitimate, such as, for instance, human and drug trafficking. Applying this concept to civil society, this distinction would disqualify from its definition the illegal and illegitimate associational activity, or the “uncivil society,” such as terrorism (Kopecky & Mudde 2005).

Another important concept is that of boundaries (or, ostensibly, lack thereof) between formal and informal activities. De Castro, Khavul & Bruton (2014) assert, “most management studies classify firms as either formal or informal, but ... this does

not capture the nuanced empirical realities of what it means to be an informal business in an emerging economy” (p. 90). Instead of the binary formal-informal view, the authors propose there is “a multidimensional continuum ... that reflects the multiple levels of engagement of the firm with its environment” (De Castro, Khavul & Bruton 2014, p. 90). To illustrate, in their qualitative empirical findings, authors revealed that firms may be formal and informal at the same time—while not paying taxes or being fully registered with the government (thus self-identifying, as well as being otherwise classified, as informal), these same firms may register and “pay fees at multiple levels and for multiple reasons” (De Castro, Khavul & Bruton 2014, p. 90). This point is important in formulating typologies of the informal civil society, as it can be both imbedded in the formal sector *and* functioning completely outside of it, with different manifestations of the activity on the formal-informal spectrum.

While the economics literature tends to focus on informal activity, and management literature – on informal firms, political science examines informality through the lens of informal institutions. Informal institutions can be defined as “as *socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels*” (Helmke & Levitsky 2004, p. 727, emphasis in original). The concept of institutions is useful in examining the governing mechanisms of the informal civil society in Ukraine in the absence (or irrelevance) of formal rules and regulations.

Finally, in civil society literature, Böröcz (2000a) questions the use of Western-developed constructs that focus predominantly on formal definitions of nonprofit organizations and the “institution-building” approach in the post-socialist transition (p.

138). Using the Hungarian context specifically, Böröcz (2000a) proposed investigating the informal components of civil society in terms of institutional processes of *inputs into* civil society organizations—i.e. how they obtain resources (either financial or in-kind), and *outputs from* organizations—i.e. how they transform and distribute those resources to individuals and other organizations.

Explanations of Informality

Perry et al. (2007), suggest that one of the two key root causes of establishing informal enterprises is the ‘exclusion’ by the state – that is, the legal requirements to run a formal business are so burdensome that they essentially exclude firms from participating in the formal economy. The second driver of informality is the voluntary ‘exit’ from the formal economy based on private cost-benefit calculations – in other words, the benefits derived from formal participation in the economy do not outweigh its costs. Although the two premises are highly related, the distinction is in the actor’s choice of action (i.e. in the first instance, the entrepreneur has no choice but to avoid formalization, in the second – the entrepreneur chooses the course of action upon weighing pros and cons of formalization).

Notably, within the second root cause of informal economic activity, Perry et al. (2007) purport, “a collective perception of ineffectiveness, unfairness, and illegitimacy of the state’s actions ... can give rise to a social norm of noncompliance with taxes and regulations (a ‘culture of informality’)” (p. 215). This is particularly pertinent to the Ukrainian context, where people tend to strive for limited contact with state institutions and pay as few taxes as possible to a government that provides limited protection (Kuzio

2012, p. 430; Berenson 2010). Such prevalent ‘culture of informality’ provides important insights into the drivers of informal activity in the civil society sector in Ukraine.

Within the wide-ranging sociology literature that focuses on informality, “the core concern [is] one of legitimacy” (Bruton et al. 2012, p. 3). The concept of legitimacy is likewise crucial for studying Ukraine’s informal civil society, as, contrary to the dynamics in many Western contexts, informal entities potentially carry greater legitimacy in the eye of the Ukrainian public than the formal ones (Krasynska & Martin 2017). This is related, in large part, to the persistently low rates of public trust in formal institutions in Ukraine (Zmerli 2012, p. 120). Public trust expressions were especially evident during Euromaidan protests, where individual activists and informal groups held far greater authority than political parties and their official leaders (Krasynska & Martin 2017).

Civil society literature suggests that informal activity within familiar networks “provides a sense of stability and predictability in an environment characterized by high levels of uncertainty—clearly a shared feature of post-state-socialist societies” (Böröcz 2000a, p. 136). With over a dozen governments, three civil revolutions, annexed territories, an ongoing armed conflict, and a constantly changing political and legal environment, Ukraine presents a particular case of instability and uncertainty. In such volatile environments, informal connections are considerably more reliable than what formal organizations and the constantly changing government can offer. Thus, the fluidity and flexibility offered by informal action, as well as the relative “freedom available to an actor” inherent in the informal domain (Misztal 2000, p. 230), are some additional factors that may be driving the informal civil society action in Ukraine.

Moreover, trust, intrinsic in personal friendship networks, has been documented as an important factor in creating informal enterprises (Bruton et al. 2012, p. 14).

Within different disciplines, scholars emphasize that informality is especially prevalent in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Morris and Polese 2014; Allina-Pisano 2010; Grzymala-Busse 2010; Böröcz 2000), purporting the overarching ‘communist legacies’ as the key explanation for the prevalent informality in the region (Howard 2003). Recent literature, however, proposes that the post-communist lens is no longer a constructive way through which to view civil society. Ekiert & Kubik (2014) argue that civil societies in the region “were *not* built from scratch,” but, rather, they are a product of norms both developed during the communist era and those predating the regime (Ekiert & Kubik 2014, p. 54, emphasis in original). Another poignant argument the authors bring up is that there is “*no* convergence on a *single* model” of the post-communist civil society (Ekiert & Kubik 2014, p. 54, emphasis in original), as the region is simply too vast and diverse to generalize into a single category. Empirically, these arguments also point to the importance of context and the need for comparative research in examining root causes of informality within civil society.

Effects of Informality

One of the key approaches to investigating the impact of informal institutions in political science literature is examining the nature of their interactions with the formal rules. While the bulk of political science literature presumes “that informal institutions will either become formalized, or persist to undermine formal institutions” (Grzymala-Busse 2004, p. iii), emerging literature suggests there is a more nuanced typology to their relationship. Helmke & Levitsky (2004) offer four types of formal-informal institutional

interaction, such as, complementary, substitutive, accommodating and competing, all four driven by a variety factors, most importantly, by the relative strength of the extant formal institutions. Grzymala-Busse (2010) offers an alternative typology including the following effects of informal institutions on the formal rules: replacement, undermining, support and competition; claiming, contrary to Helmke & Levitsky (2004), that the relative strength of formal institutions is irrelevant in these dynamics.

The point of civil society's interaction with the state is of particular relevance in contemporary Ukraine. In the events following Euromaidan, civil society (especially its informal function) has been pivotal in preserving order in the country in the context of government's temporary near collapse. D'Anieri (2017) suggested, "A high level of order was possible, despite the state's shortcomings, largely because of the strength of informal institutions which both weakened the state and compensated for its weakness" (p. 3). Minakov (2014) discussed the shifting boundaries between civil society and the ruling elites in post-Euromaidan Ukraine, proposing that civil society's taking on some of the purely governmental functions, including defense, homeland security, and countering propaganda, prevented Ukraine from becoming a failed state, while, at the same time, potentially undermined the state's sovereignty. Thus, in Ukraine, the same functions of the informal civil society can be both reinforcing and undermining state functions.

The economics literature generally concurs that the informal economy "plays an important role for employment creation, income generation and poverty reduction in many countries, especially developing and transition countries" (Husmanns 2004, p. iii). In other words, the informal economy (despite its obvious downsides, including non-payment of taxes and lack of legally-instituted labor protection) also has positive impact,

and, potentially, is an essential economic function in developing countries. Furthermore, economists begin to recognize “that much of the informal economy today is integrally linked to the formal economy and contributes to the overall economy; and that supporting the working poor in the informal economy is a key pathway to reducing poverty and inequality” (Alter Chen 2012, p. 4).

Thus, the informal economy potentially buttresses the formal economy, as well as offers alternative mechanisms to governmental role in poverty reduction. Stepanenko (2006), in discussing the Ukrainian context, reinforced the latter point, contending “the persistence of numerous informal connections between the people in post-Soviet countries, particularly in Ukraine, was (and still is) often the only rational strategy of adaptation and even of survival for many peoples and families during the transformation period” (p. 584).

Investigating the informal economy’s impact on formal institutions, the economics literature makes a distinction between its interaction with *formal firms* in the economy on the one hand, and interaction with the *regulatory environment* – on the other (Alter Chen 2012). In the former subset of formal-informal relationships, the distinction is further made between dynamics surrounding informal *enterprises* and those concerning informal *workers* (Alter Chen 2012, p. 12-13). The distinctions offered in the economics literature add additional dimensions to analyzing Ukraine’s informal civil society’ interaction with formal sectors.

To tether the insights derived from the political science and economics literature to our understanding of the effects of informal civil society, I use Edwards’ (2014) framing of the contemporary scholarly discourse of civil society identifying three major

schools of thought. These distinct yet related schools of thought view civil society as: first, a *part* of society, emphasizing citizens' associational life, characterized by civic organizations, groups and initiatives; second, a *kind* of society, depicted as the 'good society,' fortified by positive norms and values and ability to achieve common goals; and, third, a *public sphere*, or the space for deliberation, debate, public association and institutional collaboration (Edwards 2014). The impact of informality on the third sector dynamics can thus be analyzed by, first, examining the forms and functions of Ukraine's informal civil society and whether informal civil society contributes to democracy. Second, such analysis could encompass an examination of norms and values embodied by the informal civil society, and whether these norms enhance Ukrainian society's capacity to solve common problems. And, third, it can consider whether informal civil society promotes constructive civic deliberation and the creation the new publics in Ukraine.

In sum, extant literature offers various lenses through which to investigate the informal civil society in Ukraine. Informality in the third sector can be described through the organizational or institutional lenses, as well as by examining the sector's inputs and outputs. Of particular note in the discussion of informality are the boundaries between formal and informal activity. Causes of informality can be examined through the economic lenses of exit and exclusion, as well as through the lenses of social norms, trust and legitimacy, and as a response to the volatile external environment. Finally, impacts of informality can be examined as interactions of informal civil society with formal institutions, and through the prism of the three distinct yet interrelated schools of thought in contemporary discourse of civil society.

Conclusion

Four interconnected themes point to the immediate relevance of this dissertation research. First, informal activities and initiatives are prevalent in Ukraine's civil society, as Ukrainians are more likely to engage in civic activity informally than through formal methods. Second, without the knowledge of informal activity, our knowledge of Ukraine's civil society is, at best, incomplete, and, at worst, distorted, which has critical implications for the sector's development. Third, currently there is scarce empirical knowledge on the informal components of civil society in Ukraine (and, more generally, in the CEE), including its manifestations, causes, and overall role in civil society developments. Finally, these trends echo the outstanding need in civil society scholarship for including "below-the-radar" manifestations of civil society in non-Western contexts, in order to develop more inclusive and nuanced theories in the field.

Borrowing relevant literature from a range of academic disciplines, and inspired in part by Anheier's (2014, p. 116) summation of the basic third sector research questions, this dissertation presents one of the first in-depth studies of the informal manifestations of Ukraine's civil society. It does so by addressing the following interconnected research questions:

What does the informal civil society look like in Ukraine?

Why does informal civil society exist and persist in the Ukrainian context? and

What role does informal activity play in the dynamics of civil society overall?

The following three Chapters (3-5) address these research questions in turn.

CHAPTER 3

What's in a Name?:

The Spectrum and Boundaries of Ukraine's Informal Civil Society

What does the informal civil society look like? What, if anything, differentiates it from the formal sector? And how do we know it when we see it? This chapter paints a portrait of informal activities of Ukraine's civil society by formulating their definitions and boundaries.

Examining a range of civil society activities, as described by study participants in their own words during the interviews and in their social media posts, two key manifestations of informality in the sector were identified: an absence of governmental registration, and a lack of financial reporting to the government. Informally-driven organizations represent a variety of missions, purposes, and structural forms, as well as the degrees to which these key informal manifestations are expressed. What essentially distinguishes informal activity from its formal counterpart in practice is its visibility in research and governmental statistics, as well as, in the majority of cases, the ability to obtain institutional funding and to officially address the government. The lack of boundaries between formal and informal activities, as well as between the sectors of society in view of the prevalent informality, points to the futility of a binary formal-informal approach to assessing Ukraine's civil society. Instead, civil society manifests a spectrum of informal activity, with varied forms of interaction with its formal environment.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, it presents vignettes illustrative of informal groups and initiatives that were included in the study's sample. Then it offers

some frameworks for the development of taxonomy of informal organizations and activities in the third sector. The chapter concludes with a discussion of boundaries between the formal and informal activity, as well as between the three sectors of Ukraine's society, and suggests alternative approaches to civil society research in contexts where informality prevails.

Eight Stories of Informal Civil Society

This section offers eight vignettes portraying organizations, groups, and initiatives that were included in the study. While the names of actual organizations and their locations, as well as some of the descriptive details, were omitted here to protect respondents' confidentiality, these stories depict real organizations, groups and initiatives, presenting some of the typical accounts conveyed by the study's respondents.

Save the Theatre!

Theatres, like all property, had been owned by the government during the Soviet era. In the 25 years of independence, many theatres remained in the Ukrainian state's possession, while others became privatized. Activists in an urban area became concerned over the rumors that a local public theatre was to be auctioned off to investors. The process lacked even a modicum of transparency, according to the respondents, and, purportedly, entailed dubious schemes; officials claimed the building's increasingly dilapidated state as the reason for the 'necessary' privatization. The theatre, according to the respondents, was considered the heart of that particular community and was known for showing rare and antique films at relatively low prices as compared to those in commercial theatres. More importantly, it was a popular gathering place for the local bohemians.

A group of acquaintances organized an informal initiative, descriptively entitled “Save the [Name] Theatre!” Through this initiative’s activities, that included organizing multiple public gatherings and hearings, engaging the press, as well as conducting meetings with representatives of different factions of the government, activists were able to stop the proposed privatization and entice the government’s initiation of a public competition for ideas to repurpose the theatre for the needs of the community. The initiative’s leadership was involved in an intricate web of both collaborative and contentious relationships with representatives of different levels of government—while certain committees were supportive of the initiative, others overtly or covertly resisted its implementation. An interviewee reported:

R34: Our biggest problem was, after all, our collaboration with the government. We collaborated with supposedly the good government, with the department of culture – in this instance they were the good ones because they wanted to actually do something. ... But they had problems with members of the parliament (MPs). All their actions had to be approved by the MP corpus, and that is where we faced many problems. For instance, MPs started really disliking the director of this department. ... They wanted to oust her in any way possible. Our initiative went to them through her and it was obvious that it would not be supported. That is one nuance. The other nuance is that the theatre is real estate, and because it was obvious that it was being brought to a horrible condition so that someone could then appropriate it. And here, the story is in complete fog, and it is unclear who is who and what. We had numerous speculations.

Eventually, the situation improved after the parliamentary elections, as well as with staff replacement at the department of culture. While, after two years of the initiative’s existence, the situation has not yet been fully resolved, the work has resulted in a fair amount of publicity and visibility of the issue, and the theatre’s repurposing project was in the process of development with input from the community at the time of the field study. Interviewee attested:

R34: ...with this [initiative], we made a lot of noise and now everyone knows that this is an issue in [our city] and that this is being voiced. That we have brought it into some kind of public discourse.

The group never registered an official organization. In fact, it remained purposely informal in order to reveal, and test, according to one of its leaders who were interviewed, what a group of citizens can accomplish without an official intermediary (i.e. a CSO).

Crisis Center

In the spring of 2014, Ukraine witnessed a critical influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) either fleeing the war zone in Eastern Ukraine or escaping persecution in the occupied Crimea. In response to their critical needs, a multi-purpose assistance center sprouted in a major metropolitan area. First a network of people collecting in-kind donations and assisting individuals directly out of their personal flats, the initiative later obtained a semi-permanent physical location, and eventually registered a charitable foundation accepting foreign humanitarian aid and official donations to assist hundreds (and often up to a thousand) IDPs daily. The organization operated largely on an informal basis at the time of the study, having no paid staff and with the majority of its financial activity constituting cash-based transactions. The wide array of services offered by this group was made possible by a coordination of an extensive virtual network of volunteers and volunteer professionals developed during the 2013-14 Euromaidan revolution.

A visit to the center revealed a neatly organized compound of provisional bungalows located at the backside of a business owned and donated by one of the key volunteers and founders of the organization. Services included an onsite urgent care center with resident volunteer doctors, a psychological counseling and support center, a

recreational corner for children, a ‘soup kitchen,’ a warehouse and dispensary of in-kind donations of clothing and household necessities, a job referral and placement program, among other services required by the IDPs. Program offerings shifted organically with the changing demands of the constituents. An important part of the organization’s activities included connecting potential donors to potential recipients of aid, who then communicated directly and outside the official channels of the organization, with the organization aiding and helping manage the exchange.

‘Like a Village without a Church’

Churches are more than simply places of religious practice. A village church is often a place where some of the most important community and cultural events are observed and commemorated. A Ukrainian village with its own church is also a thing of status. A popular Ukrainian folk apothegm describing something that is not complete – not a real thing – compares such a thing to “a village without a church.”

One small village in Western Ukraine undertook to change its once churchless status. By opting to go around the formal channels during the construction process, the village initiative ended up in a tenuous relationship with the priest in charge of the district’s parish consisting of three neighboring villages. When the priest pressured the project leaders to pass all the funding pertaining to the project through the church’s official accounts, the community refused to do so distrusting financial practices, and even the goodwill, of the church establishment. Instead, all cash donations gathered by the community were immediately tallied up by the project’s leader in the presence of two witnesses and forwarded to the building crews managed by one of the village’s community members. In the end, the conflict was resolved by the removal and

replacement of the priest assigned to that community; the project continued to be conducted and managed by village residents with the official ‘blessing’ from the church.

At the same time, the village mayor (elected to the office by the same three villages), having informal connections to the project, helped barter some of the village’s natural clay deposits for bricks needed for the church’s construction from a nearby clay factory. A business owner residing in the village provided a substantial amount of various building material for the church. Former village residents residing in other countries or other parts of Ukraine sent their donations through relatives and friends remaining in the village. Village residents provided a variety of in-kind donations of goods and services as well as cash for this project in the span of eleven years. The church was nearly complete by the summer of 2016, with finishing work underway.

De-Communization and the Historic Society

‘De-communization’ in Ukraine, while commencing voluntarily with the dissolution of the USSR, culminated officially with the 2015 adoption of national laws requiring local governments to officially rename dozens of cities, towns and villages, as well as numerous public parks, streets and other geographic units. Sometime before this official requirement had come into effect, a group of activists in a small suburban community voluntarily formed a de-communization initiative. The group requested their local government to develop a renaming strategy that would offer informed and meaningful alternatives to the existing “Lenin boulevards” and “Red October squares.” The activists eventually created an official working group and helped develop a conceptual framework for the renaming of streets, involving input from community members, prominent local historians, and other experts, as well as conducting a

comparative study of other cities' experiences and strategies of de-communization. By the time the laws were passed, the city had a viable, laconic and informed strategy in place.

This story served as a preamble for the creation of a local historic society. The working group and the outcomes of the project have uncovered some fascinating facts of a rather prominent local history, inspiring local residents to learn more about their town's past and record it for future generations. Currently, the organization's membership has 10 very active members in its leadership committee, each in charge of a different program direction; there are also several other volunteers who support the initiative under their guidance. The key program of the organization is the creation of an online portal carrying articles, including encyclopedic entries, interviews with local residents, as well as informal and raw material that can be used in the future by historians studying the region. The initiative also involves educational outreach to local schools, and the focus on promotion of local tourism. According to one of its main founders, the organization has no intention of securing donations or getting institutional grants and, thus, has no use of an official registration with the government. Being comprised entirely of volunteers, it relies on the knowledge, expertise, and in-kind support of its members.

The 'Forbidden' PTAs (parent-teacher associations)

There are no formal mechanisms available in Ukraine to officially support and govern parent-teacher associations, such as is done via school foundations in the United States, for example. Thus, parents form informal mini-associations in each class (virtually every class has such an association, according to the respondents) that are often represented in general school parent committees. Parents belonging to these informal

organizations collect money regularly and perform a variety of tasks for the school's needs on a voluntary basis.

According to the study participants, the Ukrainian government is unable to provide the minimal necessities in a secondary school setting, such as proper textbooks and desks, sanitary supplies and drinking water, or sometimes even functioning windows and doors. Since, officially, the school is obligated to provide these essential accommodations but, for financial reasons, cannot do so, parents self-organize to collect money informally and then either purchase and install the amenities themselves, or submit money (in the form of cash) to the school whose management then makes appropriate expenditures. In conversation with a chair of one parent association, the respondent estimated staggering amounts of money that is potentially being collected in her mid-size city alone (this situation was corroborated by several other respondents who spoke about their PTA experiences); this individual reflected:

R1: So, here is a hypothetical approximation of all class donations, and a very conservative at that: 1 class x 34 student x 1,000 Hryvnias = 34,000 Hryvnias per year per class. Every grade level has four classes, and the school has 12 grade levels. That means 48 classes x 34,000 Hryvnias = 1,632,000 Hryvnias. [Respondent's city] has 30 schools, which means they are collecting almost 50 million Hryvnias⁴ per year! Considering that some schools collect much more money than ours, because ours is a small school.

Aside from the financial support, these informal PTAs actively provide logistical and in-kind support for their children's classes. Organization of field trips and extracurricular activities, holiday celebrations, purchase of birthday gifts to the children and welcome and farewell gifts to the teachers, as well as fixing furniture, painting walls, replacing lightbulbs, spring cleaning and an array of other in-kind services, are habitually

⁴ 50 million Ukrainian Hryvnias amounted approximately to \$2million US at the time of the study.

provided by the parent associations. These activities, while widespread and plentiful, are not recorded in any official statistics.

The Civic Blogger

With active military incursion into Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, the Russian Federation has engaged in an extensive information war with Ukraine.

Ukraine, as it turned out, was not prepared to combat cyber warfare, and this gap in governmental services is being filled, within the limits of their capacity, by legions of volunteer bloggers, according to study participants. A respondent conveyed:

R17: The situation with journalism and the ministry of information in our country is horrifying. ... And because Russia already has great expertise in information wars, we had enormous problems on social media with waves of panic, with people calling to start the third Maidan (revolution) and overthrow the government. But when you spend 15 minutes or an hour and you see that the person is actually writing from Moscow or Rostov-on-Don. ... We saw a necessity to take on the burden of explaining to people what is really going on, what to expect and what are the key principles of information war, so that people are not so easily tricked into [believing misinformation].

One volunteer blogger who was interviewed in the course of the study has made such civic journalism his chief evening “job” (while his daytime job in the information technology [“IT”] sector helped pay the bills). He reported choosing certain “hot topics” receiving significant attention on social media, conducting thorough review of the relevant publicly available facts, and producing independent analysis reports with links to reliable media outlets. While not officially coordinating his work with other volunteers or the government, he reported conducting it in a systematic fashion and having sizable presence on social media. In addition to posting his own reports and observations, the blogger reposts and provides commentary on blog posts by other volunteers, thus expanding the potential audience for the issues covered in this manner.

The volunteer analytical blogging, according to this respondent and confirmed by other respondents and social media content review, can take on various directions. For instance, two other bloggers that were discussed during the interview were reported to be actively monitoring the activities of the local police forces and the SBU (Ukraine's Security Service), providing weekly digests on such activities and thus refuting the "sound bites" designed to deepen public distrust of the law enforcement. A slew of volunteers monitors the adoption of new laws and provides legal analyses with links to the texts of the actual legislation, countering the "yellow press" reports with partisan approaches.

Finally, several groups of bloggers organize, through their personal and professional connections, face-to-face meetings with various Ministers and other politicians. Prior to these meetings the bloggers invite the public to submit their questions to be communicated to the politicians, and then report on the outcomes of these meetings. In this way, (R17) "they are trying to build a bridge of dialogue between the people and the bureaucrats." A blogger in charge of one such initiative had over 80,000 followers on Facebook at the time of the study.

Although not without significant limitations, these activities and the services they provide are especially valuable during the times of war and polarization of society. While such activities cannot truly be characterized as journalism, there was an indication of certain informal ethics and codes of conduct among the bloggers.

Civic Council and the Association of Initiatives

Executive committees of city administrations are mandated to form Civic Councils comprising local civic organizations that serve in an advisory role to the city

authorities. A group of informal yet rather active organizations in a small town, whose leaders were connected through personal relationships, were dismayed at the formation process of their town's civic council. Purportedly, some dubious organizations were selected to participate (while legitimate ones were disqualified) in a highly non-transparent and partisan manner.

One of the key eligibility requirements for participation in the council was official status as a civic association or a charitable foundation. As none of these groups had such a status at the time, their leaders decided to register their informal organizations with the government in order to qualify for council membership. Respondents from five of these groups reported in their individual interviews that they had no intentions of registering their organizations prior to the incident. However, in order to resist what they perceived as an illegitimate newly formed civic council, they decided to take part in the formal process by registering their organizations.

Over time, however, participation in the council did not prove to be constructive. Frustrated with the inadequacy and inefficacy of the process, the activists eventually resigned from the official council and formed an informal 'association of civic initiatives' to counterbalance the work and influence of the official civic council. Additional purposes of this new association, according to the study participants, included enhancing communication between civic groups and fostering mutual help and support. Its leader conveyed:

R51: When there is a civic council, which organized with a destructive purpose, we have to counterbalance it somehow. When they start making some declarations, there is a need for an additional union [force]. So what if we have fewer legal rights? We will have much more weight in the community; we have to make their activity visible.

This story is illustrative of one of the main reasons mentioned by study participants for obtaining governmental registration for their organizations: the ability to join the civic councils and have a more prominent voice in public processes.

Army Assistance

After the 2013-14 Euromaidan, the majority of activists redirected their attention and energy towards counteracting the military incursion and separatism in the country's eastern regions. Ukraine's state was caught off-guard and unprepared for war, and civil society picked up a number of essentially governmental functions at the time, from fighting on the front lines in volunteer battalions to supplying volunteer and regular army with the necessary provision, uniforms, equipment, technology, medical services, and tactical gear.

A group of activists who became acquainted during the revolution got together in the spring of 2014 to raise money for a thermal imager to be sent to the front lines. Eventually, the most active members of the group began traveling to the front lines themselves to ensure their supplies were used as intended; one of the leaders of the organization attested:

R5: Then we understood that in order for these things not to end up in the wrong hands, because there is corruption and different marauders, we began going to the [war zone] with the slogan 'hand-to-hand transfers,' so that we could see for ourselves to whom and where it needs to be [delivered] so that it would actually fight.

Regular trips to the front lines helped develop an on-the-ground understanding of the needs and extant gaps in provision and services. At the time of the study, although governmental provision of supplies has improved since the onset of the war, the organization continued collecting and delivering supplies to the front lines, focusing specifically on the areas of active military hostilities. In addition to delivering supplies,

they eventually expanded their services to providing first medical aid and evacuation of the wounded from the battlefields, having crowdfunded and purchased their own medical emergency vehicle.

Aside from aid and services delivered directly to the front lines, the group's members also consider contributing to public education and fostering civic engagement as important aspects of their mission. Volunteers visit secondary schools with lectures, take adults to the relatively safe zones at the front lines to educate them about the consequences of war and the outstanding needs, and in advocacy efforts to increase governmental provision at the front lines as well as services for the demobilized wounded warriors. The organization's leader attested:

R5: If before we thought that those [corrupt politicians/oligarchs] would make decisions for us, right now we understand that for the politicians it is business. We understand that it is the second front of our resistance.

R5: We travel to schools, in small municipalities, in villages. We give open lectures in these schools. Tell them what war is, why they have to do well at school to change this country, that they need to love this country. And in this way, we raise this spirit beginning in childhood, this is what we, as volunteers, can do.

The group has registered a charitable foundation in 2015, chiefly with the hopes of receiving greater financial and in-kind support from the public and funding institutions. However, the opposite has happened – the organization began receiving greater requests for assistance than offers of support. At the time of the study, the organization did not accept any cash donations and reported no financial activity to the government. When a potential donor expressed a desire to make a donation, the organization sent a volunteer to accompany the donor to the store to purchase the needed supplies, and then volunteer would bring the supplies to the organizations

office/warehouse. To ensure transparency and to maintain constituents' trust, all organization's inputs and outputs are reported on social media.

There have been innumerable organizations and individual initiatives of this kind since the beginning of war in 2014, and these organizations and initiatives have exhibited varied levels of formalization: from formal CSOs with significant public and institutional funding, to groups of women preparing prepackaged non-perishable food for the soldiers out of their houses, to individual initiatives crowdsourcing medical supplies and even substantial pieces of equipment (one of the study respondents crowdfunded an excavator for digging trenches). Most of the respondents engaged in this kind of activity who were interviewed conveyed their intentions to continue their efforts once the war is over by subsequently focusing on alleviating the devastating consequences of the war.

Taking a birds-eye view of the various initiatives and organizations discussed above, their stories reveal a great diversity of missions, goals and structural forms. They can be service or advocacy-oriented, or embrace both approaches. They can exist as response to government failure or as an expression of autonomous space. They can have broad strategies and ongoing long-term programs, or focus on specific and narrow one-time projects. Some are structured as organizations, while others are operated by individuals. They can supplement or replace governmental functions, be collaborative or contentious in their interactions with the formal institutions, or not at all engaged (or deliberately avoid any interaction) with the government. How can these various civic entities be categorized and, subsequently studied in a more systematic way? The next section attempts to tackle this question.

The Dimensions of Informal Civil Society

Hungarian economist, Böröcz (2000b), précised the following key characteristics shared by informal economic entities: “they escape taxation, registration, regulation, and many other forms of public scrutiny in a context where similar activities are supposed to be and, to a certain extent, are taxed, registered, regulated, and available for public scrutiny” (p. 354). This description of informality helps delineate two principal dimensions of informal action exhibited by Ukraine’s civil society. First, informality is expressed by the lack of governmental registration – a key form of public recognition and scrutiny. Registered organizations have a status of either a civic association or a charitable foundation, with the latter having greater tax-exemption privileges. Unregistered organizations, however, are freed from most forms of formal observation.

The second key dimension of informality is the level of financial reporting to the government. Every legal entity, according to Ukraine’s legislation, is required to submit regular financial statements to the tax authorities, as well as to multiple other governmental bodies, as appropriate, such as, for instance, the pension fund. Registered organizations that were included in this study’s sample, however, reported having varied levels of noncompliance with this reporting requirement: from underreporting certain financial activity to not reporting any financial activity at all. Many of these organizations reported to be conducting dual accounting: with one set of inputs and outputs reported to the constituents informally, and a completely different financial report submitted to governmental agencies.

Figure 2 provides a simple illustration of these two key dimensions of informality within Ukraine’s third sector. As shown here, registered organizations exhibit a range of

reporting and non-reporting of the financial activity to the government, whereas the unregistered organizations conduct chiefly cash-based and in-kind operations. In exceptional cases, certain unregistered organizations' outputs end up being reported to the government through various ingenious methods; these can include supplies delivered to the military battalions at the front lines (for instance, major pieces of equipment which get registered with the government once accepted by the military unit commanders), or PTA donations (for instance, computers purchased by the parents which officially become property of the public school), for example. However, with the exception of these cases, all activity conducted by unofficial organizations and initiatives remains below the official radars.

Reporting of financial activity	<i>Full reporting to government</i>	X	
	<i>Partial reporting to government</i>	X	X
	<i>Cash financing, no reporting to government</i>	X	X
		<i>Registered (charitable foundation, or civic organization)</i>	<i>Unregistered (organization, association, group, individual initiative)</i>

Official status / Governmental registration

Figure 2. Key dimensions of informal civil society activities.

It is important to emphasize that, while the description of these groups and initiatives is organized by placing them in one of the two key dimensions – entities with no official registration, and registered organizations with different degrees of informal

activity – these categories are not rigidly distinguished in practice. For instance, an unregistered organization may one day decide to register a legal entity with the government, or an inherently informal organization may attain an official status for a specific purpose and, once it is fulfilled, the group may have no use of the official status and let the registration be unutilized.

Furthermore, each of these two “categories” of entities may have different and also shifting organizational, relational and temporal manifestations. For instance, the activity may have a service or advocacy (or a mix of service and advocacy) focus; it can have an ongoing or temporary character; it can be structured as a group/organization or take place on an individual level; finally, it can be completely voluntary or implicitly involuntary, and at least partially reside in another sector of society (i.e. business or government). As with the official status of a legal entity, an organization or initiative can morph from one type into another fairly effortlessly in response to the changing environment or emerging needs because of its inherently informal nature.

The organizations, groups and initiatives discussed by study participants, are described in greater detail below, with the particular focus on the expressions of informality in their voluntary activities. First, the next section focuses on organizations, groups and initiatives that have no registration with the government and are, thus, completely outside official statistics. It then describes the particular ways in which informality is expressed within officially registered organizations.

Below the Radar: Unregistered, Cash-based, and In-kind Operations

Approximately two-thirds of organizations, groups, and initiatives in the study’s sample had no official registration with the government at the time of the field research in

2016. Some of the respondents reported that they considered registering an official organization at some point in the future, while others, for various reasons, reported having had no interest or intention of registering their activities with the government. These unregistered entities can be organized as groups or informal organizations, or they can operate on an individual level. Finally, they can be organized as short-term or temporary projects, or encompass ongoing long-term operations, as described further below. The key dimensions exhibited by unregistered entities are illustrated in Figure 3.

Temporal	<i>Temporary purposes</i>	X	X
	<i>Ongoing operations</i>	X	X
		<i>Groups and organizations</i>	<i>Individual initiatives</i>
Structural			

Figure 3. Dimensions of unregistered organizations, groups, and initiatives.

Groups with temporary purposes. There is a plethora of civic initiatives taking place in Ukraine that are formed for a particular purpose, and once that purpose is fulfilled, the initiative ceases to be. These unregistered, grassroots associations of citizens were observed both in rural and urban settings in the sample. Having no legal entity, and thus, no official bank account, financial activities within these initiatives were cashed-based, or supported with in-kind donations of goods and services, or both.

Such temporary, project-specific initiatives often take form of grassroots associations of citizens organized for some common purpose, such as, for instance, improving quality of life in a community or safeguarding public property rights. These can be both service- and advocacy-oriented, involve a whole village (such as pond

expansion or church building projects) or just a few active members (such as targeted advocacy campaigns, or playground development projects), and last anywhere from just a few weeks to over a decade. A respondent conveyed about his temporary organization:

R46: If you have an organization, the most important thing in it is people who share your goals. ... The official registration? We did not need it – we did not plan to open bank accounts or work with any donors. ... The culmination and the main goal was re-election of the parliament and president, that is why, essentially, [the organization] fulfilled its objectives in 2014. So, we never registered it.

Respondents reported an array of linkages, relationships, and informal collaboration with other organizations and individuals representing different sectors of society that enabled their initiatives' implementation. These inter-organizational and inter-sectoral linkages were possible because of the inherently informal and cash-based (in-kind and/or barter exchange) transactions taking place in the course of initiatives' implementation.

Organizations and groups with ongoing operations. Unregistered organizations and groups can have varied forms of ongoing activities that are not tied to a one-time or temporary purpose. These activities can be systematic (e.g., with regular membership meetings and fundraising campaigns), or sporadic (e.g., with activities that occur intermittently, depending on available resources or emerging needs); they can be taking place year-around or seasonally. Two different respondents illustrated:

R1: We [meet regularly], and most parents attend. Some people come, some people do not but, on average, we have about 60-70% of all parents in attendance. [When we meet], we decide what is needed, what is still lacking [in the classroom] ... then we make a list, estimate how much that would cost, and then everybody pitches in, depending on how many parents there are. ... I keep the accounting, with everyone's signatures.

R20: We do not have an annual plan or anything like that. Everyone is busy with their own thing, everyone has some additional occupation. We

may be doing nothing, but then some topic really gets us going, and – boom! – we organized and implemented a project.

These organizations and initiatives can sometimes involve full-time or part-time paid staff (compensated via cash as employees in a business company, or on the basis of projects implemented by a governmental organization), and any number of volunteers. Leaders of these organizations may have aspirations to be registered with the government at a future point depending on emerging needs or circumstances, or have no intention to register at all. Financial activity within these organizations is usually cash-based or involves in-kind contributions of goods and services. Several respondents reported using a registered organization as a fiscal agent, or passing funds through a business company, depending on the needs or donor requirements. Three unregistered organizations reported to have received small project-based grants from foreign foundations in the form of “cash in an envelope.”

Many unregistered organizations have very limited or no financial disbursements, such as, education outreach and cultural initiatives, feminist groups, environmental clean-up or public space advocacy groups, for instance. At the same time, other groups can be collecting and materializing substantial resources through their organizations informally, such as school PTAs or organizations supporting the Ukrainian army. In both of these cases, however, other than the lack of registration with the government, these groups did not exhibit any characteristics that were entirely distinct from registered grassroots CSOs.

Individual initiatives (temporary and ongoing). Out of 42 unregistered civic entities in the sample, 11 represented individual initiatives. These, likewise, could have either temporary or ongoing operations, as with organizations and groups discussed above. To differentiate these activities from an ordinary volunteering and/or donating to

existing organizations or initiatives, these individual activities had their own missions and objectives, but their implementation chiefly involved only one person. Individuals may have engaged friends, colleagues or relatives to help procure resources; however, these entities would have no other organizational forms. Activities such as these potentially make an immense contribution to the sector, while remaining completely below the official radars. These can be either service- or advocacy oriented.

Service-based individual initiatives can take a form of financial or in-kind support to other individuals. Individuals can undertake to support financially or logistically another person, a family, or a number of families, making need-based or recurring financial contributions. Sometimes, a formal or informal organization may serve as a ‘middle-person’ connecting individuals with resources to individuals with needs, even managing the exchange in some way. Notably, such exchanges occur outside of supporters’ immediate or even extended family. Examples of these activities abound and can include support for refugees, support for cancer patients, support for widows of war, support for orphans, and other types of vulnerable populations. Personal connections appear highly important in these exchanges. One respondent, who connected individuals in need with individuals with resources, conveyed:

R63: ...Targeted help is the most effective. Because there is a person who can help and there is a person who needs help, and to connect the two is wonderful. It also creates personal relations between people, and that is important. I know of an elderly couple, he is 91 and she is 87. Grandpa went all the way to Berlin [during WWII]. Their house in [the city located in the warzone] is destroyed, they do not have any children. They share a room with their former co-workers. ... It is not too difficult for me to bring them food and medication once a month. There are also other people who are ready to do it, and I ask them to go and take the stuff to [this elderly couple]. Talk to them, it is important. Or people who are hospitalized, it is important to them that somebody visits. It is important to see the face of the person you help.

Another respondent organized humanitarian aid collection and distribution to individuals in her home town from which she fled because of the war. She collected money through her personal networks of friends and colleagues and arranged for the distribution of aid through a network of religious aid organizations with which she made contact via social media. She expressed:

R25: And then I decided to write an ad on the internet, created a Facebook group and told everyone that I will be collecting humanitarian aid for the population of [a small city in the war zone]. First, my acquaintances started sending money to my individual bank account – I had a lot of contacts from different cities because of my previous civic activities, and many people just started transferring money to me. ... to my personal banking account. It is a huge credit of trust. I was not getting many thousands, but for that time I received about 20-25,000 Hryven. I do not think that that is insignificant because I am just [a human being] and not some foundation.

Initiatives with advocacy focus can take a form of advising specific advocacy campaigns, or public opinion making, and tend to be independent and mission-specific. These individual activities often do not require financial expenditures, but, rather, use the individual's intangible resources, such as skillsets, time, and expertise. Examples include: civic journalism, blogging, civic education, anti-propaganda analytical initiatives, and consulting communities protesting illegal urban development. A respondent reported about her personal mission of consulting small communities in their activism against unlawful urban development:

R58: This has become a sense of my life. You can call it self-organization... You can call it missionary work. My mission is to give people a charge of energy. There are many examples. For instance, the [name of small street], when a bunch of thugs gathered in their yard [for the purposes of criminal takeover of property], [the residents] did not know what to do. I came in the evening and said: "Dear people, we will prevail. I fought for two years [in my own community]. But we will prevail." And they look at me – a common woman, petite and skinny, and she prevailed, and, what, we cannot? I told them what to do: someone takes over the legal part, someone talks to the press, someone joins a rally.

And these people came to me several times, and I connected them with other people. ... Where people listen to me, they win. And it makes me happy, to see these people succeed...

While such initiatives are implemented by individuals, rather than groups, they also exhibited a range of interactions with various stakeholders: from other civil society organizations, to governmental institutions, to business enterprises, and various other individuals and individual initiatives. Furthermore, they produce tangible outcomes for the sector that is currently not being captured in the research.

In sum, there is a plethora of organizations that remain completely below the radars of official statistics because they do not seek or obtain governmental registration as a civic organizations or charitable foundations. These findings suggest a partial divergence with some of the previous third sector research in Ukraine. According to Palyvoda, Vinnikov & Kupriy (2016): “Information relating to informal initiatives and movements is not consistent, and not always available as their activities tend to be short-lived. The study also determined that only 5% of informal initiatives become legalized” (p. 23). It appears, the authors refer to the temporary, outcome-specific groups (discussed at the beginning of this section) in this assessment, discounting groups and initiatives that have ongoing operations which occasionally do become registered with the government. Since this dissertation study did not involve a representative sample of all informal organizations and groups in Ukraine, it is impossible to definitively confirm or disconfirm Palyvoda, Vinnikov & Kupriy’s (2016) conclusion above with the available data; however, even in the sample of several dozen groups in this study, the percentage of informal organizations that eventually obtained governmental registration appeared significantly higher.

This brings up this chapter's next set of questions: What happens when unregistered organizations and initiatives eventually do decide to obtain an official status with the government? How does official registration affect the nature of these civic entities? And how does informality continue manifesting itself within these officially formalized organizations?

Shades of Gray: Registered Organizations, Unreported Activity

A multitude of civil society organizations are registered with the government, yet conduct an array of activities that remain purposefully or unintentionally unreported to the government. While it is not appropriate to provide concrete examples of these activities in order to maintain respondents' confidentiality (after all, they are not complying with formal regulations), it is worth mentioning that these informal activities can occur within any CSO, regardless of its budget size, history, mission, or extent of public visibility. Thus, this section is organized differently from the preceding discussion of unregistered organizations. Rather than focusing on temporal or structural distinctions, it focuses on levels of informality in terms of financial reporting to the government. Although in practical reality, there is a spectrum of informal behavior within registered organizations, for ease of reading, the registered organizations' informal manifestations are described in this section in two ways, in turn: either the organization's financial activity is completely unreported to the government, or official reporting is partial and in varied degrees based on a variety of factors discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter (4) of this dissertation.

Official in name only: all-cash, in-kind operations. Several organizations in the study sample were officially registered as civic organizations or charitable foundations,

yet conducted all of their activities via cash or in-kind contributions, or both, reporting no financial activity to the government. To illustrate, a leader of one organization that distributed millions of dollars' worth of aid to the front lines, reported that none of their disbursements went through organization's official accounts in the past fiscal year. The organization accepted only in-kind contributions and small amounts of cash for coffee or gasoline. Interviewee stated:

R11: We do not accept money. ... On principle. *We do not accept money.* If a person wants to help, it does not mean that she needs to give money. We will tell her where to go and what to buy. We also have a small [donation] box, and we warn people who want to throw in [a modicum donation], because we are talking about very small amounts here. We warn folks that we do not accept money, but if you throw in a few Hryvnias, it will be spent on petrol, or coffee for the soldiers.

Another respondent, who was involved in a smaller organization that regularly reported all of its financial and programmatic activity in a local newspaper (rather than to the tax authorities), conveyed:

R12(2): As for us, for example, nothing goes through our official account. Because all financial assistance is taxed by the government, I think they have changed that but who knows.

Organizations may use the official status of a registered organization for various purposes. Some organizations register with the government for financial (e.g., to be able to receive an official grant from a foundation), functional (e.g., to obtain office space), and even temporary reasons (e.g., one-time participation in a public process). Several respondents reported experiencing no changes in their organizations' operations since they have obtained governmental registration. Thus, formalizing an organization through official process of registration does not necessarily signify a genuine switch from informal to formal – many registered organizations continue operating informally even having obtained an official status of a CSO.

For instance, one respondent spoke on behalf of an organization that registered with the government only a month prior the interview – up to that day, their operations were entirely cash-based and in-kind for several years. Prior to obtaining a registration, two foreign foundations were supporting the initiative via cash. However, the process of obtaining the cash grants was ridden with complications, and the organization's members decided to simplify this process by obtaining an official status of a civic organization. A respondent speaking for this group conveyed:

R39: However, the status of a [registered] civic organization has no influence on our activity, on our relationships; a hierarchy is not really sticking, we continue keeping it horizontal. Although, for communication with different foundations it matters, the status of [registered] civic organization. ... On paper, yes, we seemingly have a hierarchy, but in communication among us, no.

Another respondent commented on the same dynamic:

R60: This piece of paper has no influence on relationships between people. No one is taking on any official titles. We had one boss who has been working like a mad man, and he remained. People, over a year ago, distributed amongst themselves the different districts with which they work: some people go south, some go north, others conduct training.

Some organizations, however, do report parts of their operations to the government for different reasons and at different times, while keeping other activity unreported. How does this occur?

To report or not to report?: A bit of both. Respondents described practicing an array of approaches to reporting and not reporting their expenditures officially. Informal organizations' motivations to report financial activity often were rooted in extrinsic factors, such as donor requirements or having to receive foreign humanitarian aid through customs. However, the prevailing preference for these organizations was unofficial activity, the reasons for which will be discussed at great length in the next chapter. Here,

a spectrum of informal activity pertaining to these organizations is illustrated, based on data obtained from study participants.

For instance, a respondent representing a registered organization, for instance, affirmed that not all of the money is reported to the tax authorities. This is rather illustrative of most organizations included in the sample. She stated:

R12(1): Our activity is in the shadow – let us call things by their proper names. ... In other words, we have a checkbook, at our civic organization, for instance, and we necessarily have to report it to the tax office. There is a form and we report. But we do not show all the money. Sometimes a person would bring ₴20, for instance. Can you imagine depositing these ₴20 [into a bank account], and then cashing it out? But we write in our [unofficial] book that, say, Sidorov gave us ₴20.

Some organizations received financial or in-kind support officially, such as through foreign grants, domestic corporate contributions, shipment of supplies, or financial contributions from diaspora organizations, to name a few. These contributions would be accepted and then formally reported to the tax authorities, as channeling these contributions officially often is the requirement for receiving them; however, all other activity in these organizations would be conducted unofficially. A respondent conveyed about this very dynamic:

R63: We cannot count the real returns. We know for sure the value of material valuables that [officially] came through. Some scary amounts of money. Last year, our official returns constituted 37 million.⁵ But unofficially? Unofficially, more than that.

In some instances, however, participants conveyed that even the official contributions were not realistically reported, such as, for instance, grant expenditures. One respondent, whose organization was a recipient of a foreign grant, conveyed:

⁵ The amount is in local currency Hryvnya, converting roughly to US\$1.5 million at the time of the interview.

R25: For example, an organization needs a new door (respondent joking), but there is no money for that. We have a [grant] budget, with estimated and approved expenses. Organizations find creative solutions. I, for instance, will spend 70% on event catering, or something like that, and the remaining 30%, we will take and install a new door. ... We have a [grant] project, and it just simply does not have an expense line titled 'new door' ... Joking aside, how can we operate without a door?

Of course, the legal loopholes that allow for the existence of such practices, as well as their potential prevalence, are not without their dark side, leaving room for the abuses to occur. The same respondent, when discussing the 'creative' mechanisms of paying salaries necessitated by the incongruence of Ukrainian legislation and donor requirements, conveyed:

R25: In my opinion, there is not a single civic organization working with grants that does everything 100% transparently. ... I am not happy to admit this, but there are many opportunities, so to speak, to 'launder' money. ... There are loopholes for everything everywhere and always, especially with our legislation. It is so lopsided that in certain respects it limits your possibilities, and in other aspects gives too much of them. We do not have some sort of golden middle for people to be comfortable and to feel good about what they do.

Although more formalized organizations receiving foreign grants were not the focus of the study (the majority of organizations in the study sample did not receive grants or have paid staff), several respondents, having had experience with organizations receiving institutional grants attested to such "creative accounting" being a widespread practice. Stated one: [R41] "Yes, it is common practice. It is not official but that is how it functions."

While some organizations may not report their financials to the government at all, as discussed in the previous section, and other organizations may opt to report all of their returns, in reality, there is a spectrum of shadow financial activity in the sector, varying

between, as well as changing within, organizations (levels of informal activity changing from year to year, from project to project), depending on circumstances.

An interviewee conveyed in response to my question: [SK] “If you look at the official account of your organization, what percentage of money goes through that account?” [R12(1)], “Probably about 10 percent.” On the other side of the spectrum, one organization in the study sample reported most of its financial activity officially, at least according to the interviewee who held a leadership position in the organization. This was the most institutionalized organization, and more of an outlier, within the sample, however. Notably, it had operated for two years as an informal initiative until it was registered in 2015. Even in this instance, however, the respondent reported conducting cash-based transactions and implementing projects that were financially supported by the organization’s members. She stated:

R53: Well, of course we have activities that are purely cash-based. Sometimes the activity just does not fit the grant program, or we understand that the donor will not support it. But what comes to our rescue here is our membership dues, we have a bunch of people and, thanks to them, we can conduct such activities.

That being said, one might ask: Does anyone at all fully report financials of their organizations? Surely, there must be organizations in Ukraine that are in full compliance before the tax authorities – those you might hypothetically term as fully ‘formal.’ However, since this study focused on informal groups and initiatives, none of the respondents in the sample spoke on behalf of such organizations.

In sum, when looking at Ukraine’s third sector through the lens of organizations, groups and initiatives, informality is manifested through two key features: absence of governmental registration, and lack of financial reporting. Informally-run organizations represent a variety of missions and purposes. They can operate without any money or

raise vast amounts of cash and in-kind contributions. Similarly, they can have extensive memberships or be implemented by just one person. Finally, these entities can be organized for temporary purposes or have ongoing operations. Levels of financial reporting to the government can vary from no reporting at all (with or without governmental registration as a legal entity) to partial reporting of certain activities (with governmental registration, and even without). Collectively, however, such unreported activity potentially makes a significant contribution to Ukraine's third sector.

What distinguishes informal activity from its formal counterpart is, in essence, its visibility in research and governmental statistics. In most respects, perhaps with the exception of temporary project-specific initiatives, the unregistered entities have virtually no features distinguishing them from officially registered organizations. Moreover, according to the study respondents at least, most (if not all) officially registered organizations conduct informal transactions to varied degrees. How might we study this informal activity in a more systematic way, so that we have a more realistic picture of Ukraine's third sector's extent and impact? What is the nature of the boundaries between formal and informal activity? And how does the nature of sectoral and institutional boundaries affect our understanding of civil society?

Informality and Boundaries

As some of the preceding discussion demonstrated, boundaries can be rather vague between formal and informal activities and organizations, as well as between the three sectors of society (i.e. government, business, and voluntary sectors) in Ukraine. This is in line with the emerging management literature asserting the conventional classification of business enterprises as either formal or informal “does not capture the

nuanced empirical realities of what it means to be an informal business in an emerging economy” (De Castro, Khavul & Bruton 2014, p. 90). Instead of the formal-informal binary distinction, there is, rather, “a multidimensional continuum ... that reflects the multiple levels of engagement of the firm with its environment” (De Castro, Khavul & Bruton 2014, p. 90).

This study provides empirical evidence attesting to the presence of a similar continuum in Ukraine’s civil society, rather than an existence of a separate, informal sector. Civil society initiatives and organizations in Ukraine can escape various forms of public scrutiny at different times and in different situations, exhibiting a range of types and levels of informality even within a single entity. Registration with the government does not always denote a formal organization, as an array of informal activities occurs within the sector’s formal organizations. Conversely, the informal activities can be governed by a complex system of unwritten rules and regulations and, thus, exhibit formal dimensions without an official registration (Krasynska & Martin 2017).

Thus, informality tends to transcend the formal institutional and sectoral boundaries, suggesting that, when studying activities infused with informal practices, organizational and sectoral lenses may not be the most helpful angles through which to assess these activities. Such approaches can provide a rather incomplete picture of the phenomenon. What are the possible alternatives?

Formal and Informal Civil Society

Informality is pervasive and can take place within both registered and unregistered civil society organizations, often making boundaries between formal and informal activity indistinguishable. This renders classification of civil society

organizations as either formal or informal unhelpful; there is not a separate, *informal sector* of civil society. Since the current metrics assessing the extent and nature of civil society are focused largely on the activities of formal organizations, there is a need for different empirical approaches to capturing civil society's complex realities in view of the prevailing informal practices.

Because the informal activity can occur within and outside of formal organizational boundaries, organization-centric approach to research – i.e. quantifying informal organizations and initiatives, as well as ascribing distinct nonprofit classifications to them – can potentially be helpful in terms of providing a more realistic number of active nonprofit entities. However, such an approach would not capture the potentially immense *informal contributions* of the sector. How else can this activity be assessed?

Assessing the resources utilized by civil society in terms of “inputs” and “outputs” is another helpful lens, as suggested by Böröcz (2000a), who questioned the use of the Western-developed constructs focusing predominantly on formal definitions of nonprofit organizations and the “institution-building” approach in the post-socialist countries (p. 138). Using the Hungarian context specifically, Böröcz (2000a) proposed investigating the informal components of civil society in terms of institutional processes of *inputs into* civil society organizations—i.e. how they obtain resources (either financial or in-kind), and *outputs from* organizations—i.e. how they materialize those resources by distributing them to individuals and other organizations, for instance. Assessments also could be made in terms of the quantities of these resources entering the sector, as well as the magnitude of collective formal and informal outputs.

How would this look in practice? Let us use an example of an organization supplying the Ukrainian troops at the front lines. Measuring the amounts of inputs and outputs, such as the monetary value of goods donated and provided, can be fairly straightforward for such organizations, as many of them already conduct meticulous accounting and reporting to their constituents in-person and via social media. Gathering additional information regarding estimated in-kind contributions distributed to the target populations could be added to these reports for a more complete picture of inputs and outputs. Furthermore, while near-impossible to place a realistic monetary value on time contributed by the medical personnel (risking their lives while rescuing the wounded from the battlefields), for instance, a conservative estimation of in-kind medical services provided through such an organization can be calculated per hours spent by these professional and their supporting volunteer personnel (drivers, medical assistants, etc.) at the front lines. These inputs and outputs can then be aggregated with all other initiatives, formal and informal, focused on supporting the Ukrainian army in the ongoing war. Currently, these estimates are absent from the official statistics.

Semi-Formal or Quasi-Voluntary?

Some activities are more difficult to describe, especially those taking place at the intersection of different sectors of society in view of the prevailing informal practices. In some cases, actors conduct activities semi-voluntarily, being enabled, prompted, or either implicitly or explicitly pressured to do so by formal institutions; and such activities are *best excluded* from the purview of civil society indicators, as many of them are at the borderline, if not outright embody, corruption. However, overall these phenomena are indicative of the bigger picture of boundaries between formal and informal activities, as

well as those between the sectors of society, the dynamic that will be discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter. Here, I will provide two examples for a more nuanced understanding of the Ukrainian context.

In the example of parent organizing for the purpose of improving conditions at a public school, the school authorities clearly benefit from and often are grateful for the financial and in-kind support from the parents, and parents' involvement in this case is primarily and largely voluntary. However, instances were reported where school management 'required' each class to contribute to a school's capital campaign, for instance, or to pay for a security guard's salary, leaving little choice for parents but to comply. Technically, the parents may refuse to contribute, but most often they do comply in fear of retaliation. Complex systems of dues and exemptions from essentially voluntary and technically unlawful payments were reported to be informally enforced. One of the respondents, who was both parent and teacher, lamented about these corrupt schemes:

R13: In essence we are all prisoners of this system. I am a prisoner as a teacher, director is prisoner because he reports higher up. We, at each of its steps, are contributors to this black accounting. And, you understand, I have no choice.

Another example of a quasi-voluntary dynamic is the newly emerging home owners' associations. Previously, all apartment buildings were managed by governmental agencies (a remaining legacy of the former Soviet Union, when all property was owned by the government). A recent legislative development requiring privatization of multi-unit properties, in which every building would either have to form an association or outsource property management, is leaving grey areas in terms of implementation and essentially "forcing" neighbors to associate to serve their common

needs. Interestingly, unlike in the example above, these property associations are forced to become formal, although many of them organized informally prior to this new legislative development, for instance, to pull resources to hire a security guard or a custodian for the building (resources often collected by residents and paid in cash to the informal employee); or to make repairs in common areas. Such quasi-voluntary activities are difficult to capture, especially through the conventional lens of three separate sectors of society. As formal boundaries here are ambiguous, informality is the primary vehicle of project implementation.

Sectoral Boundaries

An important finding in this study is the fact that boundaries can be equally porous between all three sectors of Ukraine's society – government, business and voluntary sectors – with informal practices permeating virtually every aspect of everyday life. Thus, because the informal relationships and linkages often act as the driving natural forces in Ukraine's societal landscape, it can be a conundrum to decipher where these relationships actually take place: Where does one sector end and the other begin within a particular informal interaction?

In the context where, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which are the government's staggering levels of corruption and public's mass tax noncompliance, the government is unable to fulfil its proper functions, civil society is compelled to fill these gaps informally. Informality, in these instances, is a necessary mechanism through which civil society provides services essentially required of (and officially declared as accomplished by) the government. This creates a system where society and government espouse dual storylines (what is officially declared versus what is actually happening),

further exacerbating the difficulty in deciphering the intersectoral boundaries: which sector provides the service depends on which storyline is accepted.

Let us revisit the example of school PTAs. In essence, these organizations exist in response to governmental failure to provide basic necessities at schools. PTAs raise money within their informally organized memberships and provide the amenities to the public school, unofficially, via cash and in-kind. Thus, the PTA activity (and funding) originates from parents' informal associations, and the supplies then become property of the public school. As parents are legally prohibited to collect money for the needs of a school, they find creative ways and loopholes through which such contributions can be made. Officially, these contributions do not (and cannot) exist, yet, this practice is commonplace, with staggering amounts of money donated annually by the parents' associations. When employing Böröcz's (2000a) approach of measuring civil society activity in terms of *inputs* and *outputs*, the inputs here clearly take place within civil society, while the outputs belong to (and are officially declared to be produced by) the public school. Similar conundrum is observed with military assistance illustrated above, where the inputs clearly originate within civil society, and the outputs are then (and most often officially) registered with the government. This dynamic makes the sole reliance on the inputs-outputs approach somewhat problematic.

Crossing of the sectoral boundaries also has been vividly exhibited in the wake of the massive protests, popularly termed Euromaidan, which took place in Ukraine in the winter of 2013-14. Immediately after the incumbent president's departure as result of the protests, the country experienced a political and economic near-collapse. In the time of crisis, Ukraine's civil society, as well as the business sector, voluntarily stepped in to

assist the struggling government to perform even its basic functions (D'Anieri 2017; Minakov 2015). One respondent, who informally participated in preserving law and order in one of the eastern cities in the early 2014, spoke about the events:

R19: Without them [governmental forces supported by oligarchic groups], it would have been really hard because we did not have that level of resources. They spent a lot of money to buy all the necessities. We would not have been able to handle that on our own. On the other hand, they would not have been able to manage this in terms of cadre – to organize all those who knew at the time what needed to be done and how.

Here, the boundaries were crossed between all three sectors, and, because there was no legal mechanism to allow for such collaboration, the activity was, and had to be, conducted through personal and professional networks, and largely on an unofficial basis.

Study participants also conveyed that informal relationships and cash-based transactions sustained some civil society initiatives on different levels, including payment of rent and salaries, as well as providing direct logistical support to target populations. One business person, who also launched a nonprofit organization in 2014, conveyed: “I make a donation [from my business] and thus pay the rent, and the salary [to the organization’s staff] that is certainly ‘black cash.’ [I pay my staff] directly into their hands, because they have to live on something.” The same respondent himself recalled being paid by his employer to conduct voluntary activities in the during the Euromaidan protest in 2013-14; as follows:

R20: And when Maidan happened, [it was] still December [of 2013], I immediately requested a vacation and began working for Maidan. The owner of our ... company saw that I requested vacation and wrote to me: “... All of the time that you spend fighting for freedom, I will continue to pay your salary.” Essentially, from that moment on I did not work at all for about half a year, and the next year I probably worked half-time, if not less. ...I had the opportunity to conduct my volunteer activities and not suffer financially, because I kept receiving salary at that company.

Certainly, the blurring of sectoral boundaries is neither new nor unique to any particular context (Edwards 2014, p. 23). Various sector models have been proposed, with conceptualizations ranging between two and five sectors of society (Van Til 2008; Smith 2000). Furthermore, some scholars even purport that the sectorization of society is altogether artificial, and that separate sectors are altogether nonexistent (Abzug 1999).

What does this mean for civil society research in the context where sectoral boundaries are especially blurred in view of predominant informal practices? Because informality is such a significant part of most facets of everyday life in Ukraine (Aliyev 2015; Williams & Onoschenko 2014; Schneider, Buehn & Montenegro 2011; Berenson 2010; Stepanenko 2006), my findings further emphasize the apparent problem with organizations (especially formal ones) as the primary unit of analysis in civil society research. Furthermore, the inputs-outputs approach suggested by Böröcz (2000a), while most certainly helpful, should be augmented by other approaches for a more complete picture of civil society's impact.

Assessing *interactions* and *linkages* among civil society actors, as well as between civil society and other actors of society, could be another helpful angle. Ekiert & Kubik (2014) specifically urge for such a reframing of civil society research in the larger space of post-communist Eastern Europe and Central Asia. They assert, "Instead of measuring civil society's 'strength' by counting the number of organizations per capita or recording what people say in response to survey questions" (commenting on the traditional approach to comparative civil society research), studies ought to focus on the nature and levels of civil society's involvement in political and public life, as well as on the nature

and effectiveness of linkages between civil society and other actors in the polity (Ekiert & Kubik 2014, p. 52).

In sum, the apparent lack of boundaries between formal and informal organizations and their activities, as well as between the sectors of society, suggests that a binary formal-informal approach to studying Ukraine's civil society sector is not useful. Rather, a spectrum of informality should be considered, encompassing the activities, outputs, and interactions of both formally registered organizations and the informal groups and initiatives. Expanded approach to civil society research in this context would consider linkages and relationships, as well as inputs and outputs of civil society's actions, in addition to indicators provided by formal organizations.

Conclusions

Ukraine's civil society exhibits a range of informal activities, practiced by a diverse set of organizations, groups, and individual initiatives. These informal civic activities make substantial contributions to Ukraine's social, economic and political life, yet remain below the radars of empirical research and governmental statistics. While two major dimensions help delineate the informal civil society activities – the absence of governmental registration, and the lack of financial reporting – the empirical realities of the sector illustrate a wide spectrum of informality, thus discounting the binary view of organizations as being either formal or informal. Furthermore, the prevalent informal practices transcend institutional and sectoral boundaries, suggesting some alternative approaches to understanding the extent and impact of civil society in Ukraine. These findings also bring up the following issues pertaining to studying and supporting civil society in contexts where informality pervades.

The first issue is that of the measurement of civic engagement. Comparative scholars studying civil society developments in post-communist contexts (Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2013; Howard 2003) use data derived from the World Values Survey (WVS) as the primary indicator of the levels of civic engagement in various countries. The sweeping conclusion regarding civic participation deficit made by these scholars, however, is based on WVS data concerning *membership in formal organizations*. This study's findings suggest that formal organizational membership does not sufficiently capture civic participation in Ukraine and other post-communist countries where informality is widespread. Taking account of informal activities potentially can change the assessment of the levels of post-communist civic engagement, as well as questions the focus on levels of sector institutionalization.

The second issue then focuses on the subject of institution-building approach to civil society in such contexts. If formalized civil society groups are the only focus of external funders, how would such a strategy account for mobilizing the resources of the informal sector? According to the 'weakness of civil society' school of thought, the informal behavior diverts the resources from the formal organizations, thus weakening civil society in general. While, certainly, informal initiatives often lack sustainability and viable resources due to the lack of institutionalization, this research has shown that informal organizations, groups, and initiatives are capable of achieving tangible results, and, perhaps with the exception of temporary initiatives, demonstrated little distinction from formal organizations. Furthermore, informality also permeates many formal organizations, further blurring the boundary between formalization and informality in the sector. At the more institutionalized side of the sector, formal organizations subsisting

almost entirely off foreign institutional grants may have equal resource and sustainability issues, being dependent on few select donors without the grassroots community support.

Thus, if the goal is not to have an institutionalized sector but to have an *effective* sector (or as effective as possible in the given circumstances), the more important set of questions is, then: What kinds of institutions are appropriate in the given context, so that they reflect the larger systems of its society? What kind of balance between institutionalization and informality would make for a viable structural model of civil society? How can we make civil society forms reflect the culturally-congruent societal norms? The next chapter begins addressing these questions by examining the roots of informality in Ukraine's voluntary sector.

CHAPTER 4

Institutions, Norms, Choices, and the Magnetic Forces of Trust: The Roots of Ukraine's Informal Civil Society

What drives and enables a substantial faction of Ukraine's civil society to remain in the shadows of the sector? This chapter examines the drivers and mechanisms of informality based on the perspectives of study participants, reinforced by secondary data and extant scholarly literature. The analysis reveals a rather complex mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that come into play both in response to the incongruous formal institutions and in view of civil society actors' innate predispositions. The conceptual framework summarizing these various factors is illustrated in Figure 2.1. It is important to note that the empirical realities resemble a much more organic juxtaposition of drivers and mechanisms of informality than this diagram illustrates, with different factors playing out to different degrees depending on the context of the activity. However, for ease of reading, these various factors are depicted here, and described later in the chapter in greater detail, in distinct sections.

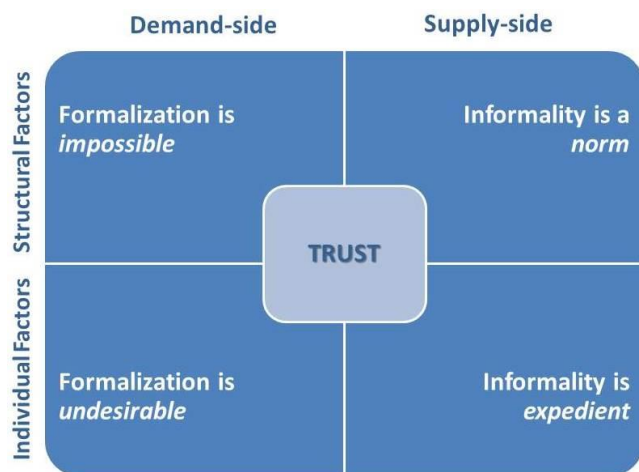


Figure 4. Drivers of informality.

As shown in the top quadrants, informality is driven by compelling structural factors, including, first, an adverse regulatory and political environment that prevents formalization – some civil society actors deem it *impossible* to formalize their activity due to the incompatibility of practical realities and the formal regulation. Informal action is also driven by the prevalent social *norms* that legitimize and foster civil society's circumvention of formal rules and regulations, as depicted in the top right quadrant. Notably, these norms have given rise to informal institutions that fill the vacuum created by the apparent shortages of formal regulation.

The individual factors, illustrated in the bottom two quadrants of Figure 4, drive civil society actors' choices based on the costs-benefit calculations of formalization, on the one hand, and on the perceived advantages inherent in the informal domain, on the other. The former set of factors represents primarily a calculated response to the *undesirable* formal institutions, meaning, the benefits derived from formalization do not outweigh the financial and human resource costs of participating in formal processes. The latter set of factors drives civil society actors' decisions based on the perceived *expediency* of informal action, such as flexibility, cost-effectiveness and independence, which are relatively independent from the direct influence of the dominant formal institutions.

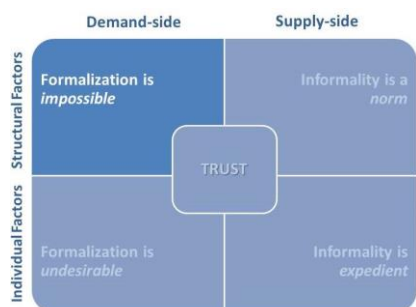
The notions of trust (and distrust), illustrated at the heart of Figure 4, present themselves in the data as the magnetic social forces repelling formalization and attracting informality. Civil society actors seek association with other members of the polity based on trust and cooperation characteristic of personal relationships and such trust can be augmented by activities that espouse effectiveness, independence and transparency. The

formal institutions and processes (those associated with government and, to a certain extent, institutionalized CSOs), on the other hand, are associated with negative, and even destructive, attributes, such as ineffectiveness, unfairness, and malfeasance, fostering the sentiments of distrust and propelling disassociation. The notion of trust thus ties the four quadrants of the conceptual model, pointing to the interconnectedness and the blurred boundaries between these distinctly described factors that play out to different degrees in different situations. The rest of this chapter provides a detailed analysis of each of these quadrants.

Demand-Side: Informality and the Formal Institutions

This section discusses the left side of the conceptual diagram, in which civil society actors circumvent the formal institutions as a response to the *insurmountable* (top quadrant) or *undesirable* (bottom quadrant) aspects of formalization. Tethering study findings to the economics literature (Perry et al. 2007), the top quadrant represents *exclusion* from the formal sector (i.e. no choice available to the actor but to avoid formalization), and the bottom quadrant represents the deliberate *exit* from the formal sector (i.e. choices of optimal levels of compliance based on the perceived costs and benefits of formalization). It is worthy of note, however, that the concepts of *exclusion* and *exit*, as discussed here, as well as by Perry et al. (2007), are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. The boundaries between them are more conceptual than tangible, with participants, at times, discussing both concepts as factors driving their informal behavior – one reinforcing rather than replacing the other. The following discusses, in turn, the structural and the individual factors.

At Odds with Regulations: Formalization is *Impossible*



Twenty-six respondents representing different civic initiatives and organizations reported that certain formal rules and regulations were simply impossible for them to adhere to: either the activity was ‘technically’ illegal, in direct opposition of governmental institutions and their representatives, or the regulatory burden was so high that formalization would render activity virtually unfeasible.

Take the parent associations collecting money and volunteering in support of their children’s public schools, for instance. These activities are technically forbidden by the government, despite governmental officials being fully aware of (and in many cases approving or even implicitly commanding) their outputs. Furthermore, there are no laws regulating such associations in Ukraine – free public education is guaranteed by the Ukrainian constitution, and these associations’ activities ostensibly are belying that guarantee. A respondent who represented a parent-teacher association conveyed:

R1: [The governmental agency] proscribes it, we do not even announce publically that we collect this money. Moreover, if [the governmental agency] found out, or, for instance, someone would decide to complain to them that we are collecting money, our operation would be shut down. Well, they would not really shut it down, but it would then be as follows: we would assemble not at the school but somewhere on a neutral territory. We would be collecting this money no matter what.

Speaking on behalf of other organizations and initiatives, several respondents reported that, with the inherent ambiguity in Ukraine’s legislative system, activists are

vulnerable to excessive and even coercive legal enforcement, such as governmental auditing, fines, and undue taxation, among other repercussions. Keeping operations informal, in some cases, is a way of safeguarding from the corrupt government officials using the ambiguity of the legal system for their private and partisan gains. Two respondents representing quite different initiatives (one – unregistered and operating completely informally, and another – registered and receiving foreign grants, but with a substantial amount of its financial activity unreported to the government) conveyed of this dynamic:

R22: Even the tax authorities do not know how to record this, how to formalize it. There has not been such a definition before. In other words, there is no provision for such revenue and expenses. ... Our mechanism is so complicated for recording this through a non-cash [bank-transfer transaction], and then to cash it out. If we put this into the bank account, the money will get stuck there forever.

R25: I asked several accountants what to do. I am a director, but I want to be an expert in this project, what should I do? Each accountant gives me a different account. Some say categorically that there is no way I can do this, others – that it is a big conflict of interest, others – that I can do it but there would have to be an executive director, yet others say that it does not matter that I am a manager and expert, and that I sign my own checks. ... Where is the truth? Who knows... I would not say all of it is like this, but there are so many unknowns. And if you go to the tax office [and ask what to do], they will tell you to pay all the taxes that ever existed.

A vivid example of this dynamic is the recently emerged sub-sector focused on supplying the regular Ukrainian army at the front lines in Eastern Ukraine. These organizations, while numerous and financed almost entirely by the Ukrainian public, are not fully regulated by the government. Because the crisis unfolded unexpectedly, and the Ukrainian government was not prepared for war when it ensued in 2014, the government relied heavily on civil society to fill the gaps in providing the modicum necessities for the army (including food and shelter supplies, machinery, and even tactical gear and

ammunition). Three years since the onset of the war, and now hostilities being less active and the governmental supply programs improving, these volunteer initiatives, while less numerous and active, still operate largely under the official radars. Technically, the government supplies all the necessities to the front lines and there is no need for the private sector to be involved. Thus, these civil society activities are being curbed, and keeping them informal is often crucial for survival. A volunteer conveyed:

R45: Even our volunteer movements, for a while now, those that supply the front lines, there have been many cases when [the government] tries to shut them down, put them in jail, because, in essence, they are involved in contraband, if you look at the letter of the law.

For some study participants, formalization was impossible as exposure by formal reporting could significantly elevate the risk of governmental retaliation, such as organization closure, confiscation of property, as well as monetary fines or imprisonment on fabricated charges. In one case, according to a respondent, retaliation could even mean physical harm. A leader of an essentially underground organization, whose mission is to conduct investigations that potentially implicate government officials in specific crimes, reported that becoming public in any way posed grave risks not only to the sustainability of the organization's mission, but to the lives and liberty of its participants. This person stated:

R64: Only a handful of people know about us. ... But nobody reveals us publically because it is dangerous. ... Although everyone tries to promote themselves by misappropriating our work.

The process of governmental registration itself can often be an impassable hurdle. For instance, the Law on Civic Associations which, presumably, simplified the registration procedure appears not yet fully operational, further precluding civil society actors from crossing the formalization threshold. While several respondents attested to

the difficulties they faced with registration procedures, some eventually succeeded to register an organization, while others have either put the process on hold, or had to withdraw from it completely due to the impossible requirements. One respondent commented:

R7: Yes, there is a new law in Ukraine, called the Law on Civic Associations. The law itself is not operational, there needs to be a procedure but it is lacking. On the one hand, it has been simplified, but on the other – “please wait, right now we are not registering [organizations], we are very busy.” [The process] took a very long time, later they had some sort of reorganization, then they changed something. Then we had to go to the tax office. Then we had to obtain a status of not-for-profit organization...

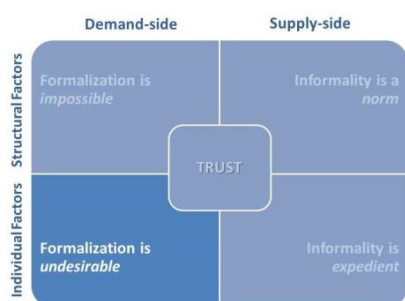
Referring back to the notion of a continuum between the outright impossibility of adherence to formal rules and the relative choice available to the actor to exit from the formal system (Perry et al. 2007), it is not always possible to clearly situate a case in either of the two opposites of the spectrum – most cases are somewhere in between. Several respondents conveyed a perception of the regulatory and tax burden as inequitably high, resulting in actors’ *virtual* exclusion from the formal sector. In theory, these initiatives could participate in the formal sector, but essentially formalization would make their activities nearly, or virtually, impossible. One respondent explained this rather aptly via the following allegory:

R45: [Formalizing activity] does not make sense economically, but also psychologically. It is not the same as having a system, like I see it in civilized countries... There is a path, so to speak, following which you can make, say, \$10. Or, you can deviate from that path, and pave yourself a new one, omitting all the restrictions, laws, and ... authorities. You will be paving a new path, it will be hard, but you will now make \$20 instead of \$10. This is what it means to go into the shadow in a civilized country. But here, the story is as follows. You go along a path, and it is grey, and you make \$10. Or, you start paving a legal path for yourself, and the opposite happens, you pave a new path and, as a result, you end up in the red, instead of making money. ... And our system is built in such a way that everything points in the direction: guys, go into the shadow, do not

tell anyone, bring in contraband; otherwise, you will face such a monumental slew of problems that, at the exit, your price will be so high that not a single client will purchase your goods.

The above metaphor illustrates cases on the margins of *exclusion* and *exit*, having the elements of both explanations. The next section delves in more detail into the *exit* drivers of informality, illustrating cases in which civil society actors have a more pronounced choice of formalizing activity but elect to remain informal.

The Hassle of Bureaucracy: Formalization is *Undesirable*



Twenty-five different respondents, when discussing their reasons for not formalizing civic activity, indicated that it is simply too costly and time-consuming to deal with bureaucratic processes. Thus, registering an organization and reporting its activity to the government is possible in theory; however, the hassle of formalization outweighs its benefits. To illustrate, one interviewee shared a popular Ukrainian maxim: R60 “The strictness of laws is compensated by optionality of their implementation.”

Bureaucracy in Ukraine, indeed, has been described by various respondents as overly burdensome, with systems governing the sector as convoluted, and their implementation – often nonsensical. Adhering to formal rules can require inordinate amounts of time and resources that are difficult to expend, particularly for smaller organizations with no staff. Governmental reporting is predominantly paper-based, and document submission requires in-person visits to multiple governmental agencies’

offices. Most respondents attested to this dynamic in some way. For instance, an interviewee commented:

R4: In general, our people are very tired of all this bureaucracy, because in order to resolve any issue, you have to visit multiple offices, wait for a month, stand in some line, spend your time and emotional energy, and then also hear the discontent of some person whose job it is to do everything quickly and calmly, but instead she will tell you how much you are bothering her and all. So, people are just trying to avoid this. Because the system is imperfect.

To illustrate, there is a student organization at a large public university.

Technically, the group is part of the established governmental institution; it can be registered as a private civic association, but it was not registered as a separate entity at the time of the field research. That being said, the organization appears to operate rather independently from the university when engaging in projects that are not directly funded by it. In fact, such independent projects were reported to be preferred, as they helped avoid the overly burdensome and nonsensical paperwork. Going directly to a business entity and asking them for cash to support a program, for instance, appeared an optimal avenue. The president of this organization attested on two different occasions:

R28: Everybody understands this system. ... You can say that such conditions are created that it is much easier to do things in the shadow. ... and not because you are inherently bad, you can even be of more use this way, if you do an event in two weeks, with all the beauty, with professionally printed materials and good speakers, rather than spend two months signing documents.

R28: That is the worst thing about the government and administration – you need to collect eight signatures on every piece of paper, this bureaucracy.

Some respondents suggested that the scope of their activity simply did not warrant the burden of registration and governmental reporting. Thus, especially for small groups or initiatives with modest resources, informality is an obvious option. The

disproportionate burden of regulation to the level of organization's potential impact was illustrated by a respondent representing an informal advocacy group via the following parallel:

R48: A civic organization is automatically about some money, about cash flow, it is an official status, it is a bank account, and all the related registration of documents, preparing reports, the accounting, the tax office and all that. Unfortunately, it is not on the level that would be accessible and easy for an average resident. While you are still a grassroots initiative, then the level of your influence is at one, out of five hypothetical points; at the same time the level of your responsibility before the government and reporting is at zero. However, when you climb up to the position of two points – for instance, you registered an organization – automatically, the level of your responsibility goes up to three.

The same respondent described a situation in which the local governmental office responsible for registering civil society organizations refused to do so (reportedly, because of the change in legislation to which the officials needed some time to adjust). To be able to receive a foreign grant, which necessitated an official status, the respondent decided to register an organization in a neighboring town. This complicated the situation later, when the respondent could not re-register the organization in his own locale for bureaucratic reasons, and was forced to drive to the neighboring city to submit the required governmental filings for the next six months. While this is a very specific situation, it is illustrative of the bureaucratic environment in general which unduly complicates day-to-day operations especially for all-volunteer organizations with limited resources; in respondent's own words: (R48) "All such aspects, headaches, administrative and bureaucratic nuances, they substantially complicate the life of an organization."

Furthermore, ambiguity inherent in third sector legislation and enforcement mechanisms, as well as the many loopholes available in sometimes contradictory laws, leave room for their selective interpretation by the governmental agencies, among which

are the tax authorities. Respondents conveyed that full reporting to the government can unduly reduce donation amounts due to the imperfect enforcement mechanisms. A leader of an unregistered yet rather visible organization that collaborates with several governmental agencies reported:

R22: Such are our financial relationships in our state. You need to deposit [the money] into a bank account, then cash it out, and for that you need a ton of documents. You need to explain it somehow, the tax authorities will not understand what this money is, and then immediately tax it with some income tax, VAT [value added tax] and all the rest, that [in the end] this amount [of money] will be catastrophically reduced.

This brings up the topic of governmental enforcement issues that further encourage informal practices. Enforcement mechanisms are rather weak and selective in Ukraine: the government can and often does look the other way when the formal rules are being bent by society, and society, in turn, navigates the imperfect systems avoiding the unnecessary hindrances from the government. The dynamic is not without its dark side, however: governmental agencies can pursue certain [“undesirable”] organizations in a retaliatory or punitive fashion, making voluntary activity conducted informally akin to walking on thin ice. Civil society actors are most often aware of the risks, yet choose to carry on with their activities regardless. For example, two respondents representing groups supporting military efforts reported:

R60: In essence, everything that now goes to the army is contraband, and everyone looks the other way, because there is no alternative. It is a forbidden topic in the top echelons of government. On an official level, this simply does not exist.

R63: That is one of the problems for volunteer groups. If the tax authorities want to show up and give us trouble, they will do so. If they want to, they can jail us. Because, formally, there is plenty of evidence to put us in jail. Where is it recorded – what came in and what went out? On the one hand, [officially] nothing happened. But if you want to create trouble, it is not that difficult to do.

In sum, the inadequacy of formal regulations governing the activities of civil society is one of the key drivers of informal practices in Ukraine's third sector. Thießen's (2003) longitudinal study examining correlations between regulatory change and levels of informal economic activity appears to support such a claim, concluding: "In the case of Ukraine, regulatory burden appears to be the prime moving force [of informal economic activity]. Despite efforts to reduce the regulatory burden, there is no evidence of success [in reducing levels of informal economy]" (p. 309). Within the voluntary sector more specifically, as this study's findings reveal, some civil society actors deem it impossible to formalize their activity in view of the incongruence between practical realities and the formal regulation, while others make a calculated choice of not participating in the formal domain in view of the difficulties inherent in formalization. Informality, however, is not exclusively driven by the demand for circumventing the formal institutions; it is also shaped by the factors innate to society.

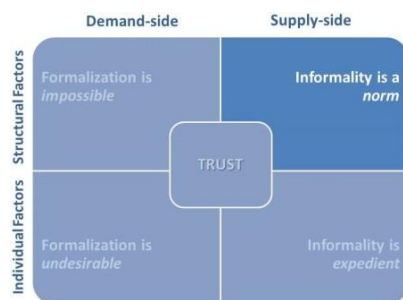
Supply-Side: Informality and the Informal Institutions

This section tackles the right side of the conceptual diagram introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the side in which the top quadrant encompasses informal practices driven by the established social norms, and the bottom quadrant discusses informal civil society action driven by individual choices. It is important to note that, much like with the concepts of *exit* and *exclusion* discussed in the previous section, the *normative* and *rational-choice* factors ought to be treated as complementary, rather than mutually-exclusive; states Elster (1989): "To accept social norms as a motivational mechanism is not to deny the importance of rational choice. One eclectic view is that some actions are rational, others are norm-guided. A more general and more adequate

formulation would be that actions typically are influenced both by rationality and by norms” (p. 102).

This section is dedicated to both of these concepts; however, in contrast to the factors described in the previous section, the formal institutions play an indirect role in these dynamics. Thus, I first discuss the dominant “culture of informality” grounded in the prevalent public perception of the Ukrainian formal institutions’ ineffectiveness, unfairness and illegitimacy, as well as the sector’s emergent informal institutions of self-regulation. Further on, I discuss civil society actors’ pragmatic choices of informal action based on the flexibility, cost-efficiency, and independence perceived to be present in the informal domain.

The Fish and Its Water: Informality is a *Norm*



While respondents would rationalize their choice of informal behavior by lamenting about the regulatory burden, the more symbolic or perceived resistance of formalization often would come through between the lines in conversations, with one respondent verbalizing it rather explicitly:

R20: I think [formalizing our organization] would just add an additional documentation burden. Perhaps there will not be that much of it, but this is something we are not willing to take upon ourselves. I am deeply convinced that our resistance to all this formalization is more symbolic than real. For some reason, it has always been important for us to remain connected by these invisible human links and by nothing else.

Civil society actors operate in a larger system of social norms and informal institutions. This is manifested by the proliferation of informal practices in most spheres of Ukraine's everyday life (Williams & Onoschenko 2014; Kuzio 2012; Berenson 2010; Stepanenko 2006). The following discusses the social norms that legitimize and foster informal behavior. Social norms, as will be discussed further in this chapter, not only dictate avoidance of formalization but also create alternative institutions to those in the formal domain. Informal institutions are "*socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels*" (Helmke & Levitsky 2004, p. 727, emphasis in original). How do societal norms play out for Ukraine's informal civil society?

The culture of informality. Perry et al. (2007) suggested avoidance of formal institutions, to a great extent, stems from a "a collective perception of ineffectiveness, unfairness, and illegitimacy of the state's actions ... [that] can give rise to a *social norm* of noncompliance with taxes and regulations (a 'culture of informality')" (p. 215). Study respondents spoke in various ways to the collective perception of the Ukrainian state's ineffectiveness, unfairness, and illegitimacy that, in their view, commanded the bending and sometimes outright breaking of the formal rules and regulations. Before discussing these cultural factors, however, one important remark is in order. Culture, as the driver of informality described here, is different from the respondents' rational explanation of avoidance of the actual regulations in view of their incongruity with civic activity, as discussed in the previous section. Here, actions are grounded in an overarching public perception of governmental failure to fulfill its duties that creates a general culture of

avoidance of regulation, how ever fair or constructive the regulations might be in principle.

First, a general perception of the government's *ineffectiveness* in delivering on basic social guarantees was reported as major factor driving informal behavior. In Ukraine, people generally tend to strive for limited contact with state institutions and pay as few taxes as possible to a government that provides inadequate protection (Kuzio 2012, p. 430; Berenson 2010). Civil society actors are not an exception. Generally, Ukrainians feel unprotected by its government, having to rely solely upon themselves and their familiar networks in times of need. A respondent summed the prevailing ethos stemming from the lack of a modicum of public accommodations guaranteed but failed by the government in Ukraine, including public roads, schools, hospitals, and other amenities; he conveyed: (R70) "Everyone understands it, but this way, in envelopes, it is a norm. ... Why should I pay taxes if nothing ever changes?" Laws appear largely irrelevant, especially in situations where there is no protection in exchange to their adherence. A respondent, who regularly risks his life when distributing aid and services to the frontlines, illustrated this rather dramatically:

R11: If [the law] contradicts our guys' moral principles, then nobody will be taking it into account, and they [the government] can do whatever they want. ... Anyway, we are not protected from anything there. If, God forbid, we [get killed] there, nobody takes responsibility for our lives. They will just bring back an unidentified body.

The government not only is perceived to be ineffective but is also often seen as outright *unfair*, with politicians being concerned mainly with personal gain and favoring those within their immediate circles at the expense of the public good. This further reinforces the socially-accepted informal practices. Secondary empirical evidence supports the notion, asserting "Not only is there a culture of resistance to immersion in

the formal economy amongst a relatively large swathe of subsistence households, but the extensive ‘hidden enterprise culture’ is shown to be predominantly a resistance practice to over-excessive regulation and state corruption” (William & Round 2007, p. 438).

Unfairness of governmental actions was described in rather drastic terms by several participants in the study. Activists conveyed stories of being intimidated and coerced by governmental agencies, including implicating activists on fabricated charges, government’s planting agents inside organizations to cause friction, and even inflicting physical harm to and confiscating private property of civil society actors and their families.

Government officials’ staggering corruption, among other abuses, tarnishes the Ukrainian state’s perceived *legitimacy*. In essence, this condones behavior that “cheats” the very government whose key objective is to cheat you. The Corruption Perception Index situated Ukraine in a woeful 131st place out of 176 countries that were rated in the 2016 poll (Transparency International 2016). It is generally perceived that politicians explicitly pursue political careers for the purpose of personal financial gain (through corruption and embezzlement of public funds), and the formal regulation is especially designed in the way as to promote corruption and increase illegal revenues for the politicians in charge. Thus, state the respondents, had the government been legitimate in its actions, there would have been enough money to pay for all the essential social services, many of which are currently being provided through informal self-organization and cooperation within civil society. The informal action provides more assurances than the contributions to the government officials’ embezzling habits via paying taxes. A respondent explained:

R4: And I will tell you that nothing has changed, and sometimes it feels like maybe it even got worse than it used to be [after the 2013-14 Maidan revolution]. Because what they are saying, and then how they live and for what money they buy their cars, and go on vacations, and all their children are studying abroad... On MP's salary it is unreal. In other words, there are abuses [of power]. In an ideal world, there would be enough money for everything.

Two revolutions in a span of one decade, attempting to break through the cycle of corruption and, ostensibly, failing in that objective, leave citizens feeling particularly disgruntled and helpless. Public perceptions foment apathy and the perception of the impossibility of constructive change, driving the state and society further apart and exacerbating the cycle of circumvention of formal processes. A respondent conveyed:

R45: This is our tragedy. And what do we do with it? As I said, our society, for some reason, does not voice this, this is how much we have become used to it in these 25 years, that we are going nowhere, that people seek power [i.e. positions in government] and begin to protect their own interests. ... this has become a norm for people. A norm. They are not happy with it, but they are no longer outraged. This is the biggest problem, people do not even notice it anymore.

Respondents, while understanding that conducting their activities informally is not ideal, and often is associated with considerable risks, still perceived it as a necessary evil. While some of the initiatives (and/or methods used to implement them) described by the participants as 'technically' illegal, they appear to be legitimized by the established social norms. As long as the method worked to accomplish a public-benefit mission, it largely did not matter whether the transaction was officially lawful. A respondent summed up via the following example:

P19: Surely, not everyone reflects upon it, but everyone makes their own decisions: are they okay with it or not, and do we have any alternatives? If it is a government-related organization and it provides supplies that not one of us can procure and, surprise-surprise [facetiously], their reporting is not perfect. In other words, they are obviously doing it through some grey schemes. But we cannot do what they are doing. ... And they can do it

many times cheaper. Nobody is going to ask them how exactly they are going to do it.

While informal practices are generally understood as not an ideal arrangement, many respondents conveyed a glimpse of optimism, however bleak, emphasizing that the situation should and will change with time. A respondent reflected: “This is not normal, but this is our sad reality. We all need it to be ‘cool.’ But ‘cool’ is a process. ... We do not have reforms yet. It is really a process that takes time.” That being said, few governmental reforms, according to participants, have brought about positive results in the last 25 years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, when change is instituted in a top-down fashion, its implementation is likely to be imitated on the ground, adding an additional layer of complexity to the proliferation of informal practices. This is a particularly important factor in considering future policy change in such contexts. A respondent researching citizen self-organization reflected:

R26: And right away people assume [the new order] will be bad, plus we will have to learn to adapt to it all over again. That is why for our country’s top reform, decentralization, the main risk is that the system will simply adapt. Meaning, the form will change, but the substance will not. ... Local populations will find forms for imitation [of change]. Right now she is called a village mayor [*holova*], later it will be called chief [*starosta*]. According to the protocol, their authority would have to change fundamentally, but most likely, only the name will change, but in reality nothing will change.

This is in parallel with governmental institutions’ own tradition of imitation, which is another factor to be considered when dictating reform externally, via international financial and political institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the European Union (EU). One respondent, aware of processes prevalent in both governmental and non-governmental sectors, attested:

R46: Of course, imitation is a thing we have here, when there is a demand to do something and you do not want to do it, whoever is responsible for making that decision about reforms, or for the Western partners, we imitate it. We will do it, for instance, but will not create an appropriate procedure for it, or will adopt some nonsense, and on the surface of it, it exists, but it is not functional. In all honesty, this is our classic case, it really works that way and we do it consciously.

How far back in history do these norms of behavior go? Are they the result of the turbulent post-Soviet developments? Are they the symptoms of the debated ‘communist legacies’? Or are they embedded in something even more deeply rooted, predating and transcending the events of the previous century? Those are the questions for future research. In this seeming chaos, however, where formal rules are largely disregarded, how does civil society seek to establish legitimacy and fairness within its own activities? How are these groups and initiatives governed in the absence or inaptness of formal regulation?

The informal institutions of self-regulation. Unlike in many Western contexts, official status does not necessarily boost an organization’s legitimacy in Ukraine. On the contrary, in certain situations, informal civil society institutions potentially carry greater legitimacy in the eye of the Ukrainian public than the formal ones (Krasynska & Martin 2017). Because the formal rules do not always apply to the activities on the ground, people are governed by the unspoken rules that make sense to them according to the socially-accepted norms. A key finding that emerged from the data is the meticulous *informal* accounting and reporting principles to which informal organizations adhere, as mentioned by 30 different respondents at least 84 times in the course of the interviews. One interviewee emphasized:

R19: In order for this process to keep working, you need reporting. Everyone trusts everyone, but even psychologically it is easier when you can see and understand where your money goes. Of course, the money

goes to some Vasya. But, really, psychologically, with time, it is absolutely necessary.

Respondents conveyed that organizations and initiatives, especially those that do not report their financial activity to the government, often conduct extensive parallel informal accounting for the resources received and disbursed in the course of their programming. A respondent leading an unregistered organization described this phenomenon:

R1: I have been personally conducting all accounting for two years. ... I receive all donations with signatures [in an accounting book]. They give me the money, I store it, and then we buy what is needed. ... I have a list of all receipts and at every meeting I come with the financial report and all the receipts. I report how the money was spent. Sometimes there are no receipts [items purchased for cash] ... The [members], for the most part, understand how much these things should cost. ... Besides, I never do this alone—we have two-three-four people who were elected, and everyone essentially trusts us. We, on our part, if there are no receipts, do the best we can not to make these purchases alone, so there are witnesses of how we spent the money. Then we make a report, and everyone is given the report to stay informed.

Registered organizations that conduct at least some of their activities informally may have alternative accounting and reporting systems that are not revealed to the government. A respondent who spoke on behalf of a registered organization that conducted the vast majority of its activity unofficially, conveyed:

R12: For ourselves, we have special notebooks. ... Ivanov Ivan Ivanovich gave us €1,000, and we write down how this money was spent, for instance, on petrol. And then we attach the receipt, for ourselves. [SK: So, this is your own accounting and you do not declare this officially? ... and, officially, this contribution does not exist?] –No, it does not. This is my individual initiative.

The programmatic activity is also being meticulously reported to the constituents, mainly via the channels of social media (one respondent spoke of reporting informal activity in the local newspaper). Lists of donation amounts and photographs of in-kind

contributions are regularly posted on Facebook and other similar online outlets. Then, photographs of supplies purchased and later received by the intended recipients are subsequently posted on social media as proof that the resources were properly disbursed. This practice was reported as being implicitly required among the participants in the sector. A respondent involved in several self-driven initiatives reported:

R19: I have my criteria upon which I decide whether I should trust this group of people or this organization. [SK: Which is?..] Reporting. Right now it has become absolutely essential.

While transparency and public reporting on social media appears a prevalent unwritten law, it can also come with a price for organizations adhering to it. Providing reports to the public that are different than those submitted with tax authorities can make organizations vulnerable to a potential crack-down by the government. A respondent conveyed:

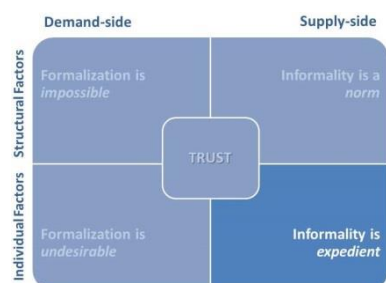
R63: Publically, we fully report our activities on Facebook. But anyone can come and see all of our reports, as though they were prepared for the tax office. [SK: And before you registered the organization, was all this done via ‘unofficial’ cash?] Yes, you can say that. That is one of the problems for the volunteer groups. ... Everything is on video [on social media]. Obviously, huge amounts of goods went through this place, but why is there no [official] reporting? Everyone has that problem.

Finally, some organizations act as watch-dogs in the sector by monitoring and, based on previous experience, compiling ‘black lists’ of unsavory activists and organizations. As reported by a respondent, one group even publishes such black lists on their website: [R53] “There are many organizations, especially after Maidan, that are involved in bad things, that are very immoral. We face this from time to time, if you go on our website, we have a black list of people.”

Despite the apparent risks associated with dual accounting and reporting, civil society actors’ clear conscience before their constituents and donors takes priority,

outweighing the benefits of formal reporting before the governmental institutions. This is in line with the management literature which makes a distinction between *legal* and *legitimate* activity of informal business enterprises, emphasizing that the informal economic activities are those “that are outside of formal institutional boundaries (i.e., illegal) yet fall within informal institutional boundaries (i.e., legitimate)” (Webb et al. 2013, p. 600). Thus, informality does not always, or necessarily, translate into reduced or absent transparency in the sector, as is conventionally understood. The present findings reveal that informal practices can promote transparency and accountability both of which, reportedly, are lacking in Ukraine’s formal, especially governmental, institutions.

The Pragmatic Choice: Informality is *Expedient*



Informal activity within familiar networks “provides a sense of stability and predictability in an environment characterized by high levels of uncertainty—clearly a shared feature of post-state-socialist societies” (Böröcz 2000a, p. 136). With over a dozen governments, three civil revolutions, annexed territories, ongoing armed conflict, and a frequently changing political and legal environment, Ukraine presents a particular case of instability and uncertainty. In such volatile environments, informal connections are seen far more reliable than what formal organizations and the government can offer. The fluidity and flexibility offered by informal action, as well as the relative “freedom

available to an actor” inherent in the informal domain (Misztal 2000, p. 230), are the pragmatic drivers of informality in Ukraine’s civil society.

The key to achieving the desired level of flexibility, mobility and independence, often lies in the scale of these initiatives: they tend to be small, maneuverable, and grounded in personal networks. Within small memberships, it is also easier to gain, build, and maintain trust and dependability than in larger-scale organizations; this strategy is aimed at reducing the time and resources necessary for management and governance, as well as curb potential abuses. While there are often costs associated with informality, including restricted growth, sustainability, and ability to pressure the government, the benefits can frequently outweigh them. Respondents attested:

R45: This mass mobilization history which was 2 years ago, broke up into microhistories. It is much more convenient for one battalion to work with one volunteer group...

R20: And this is what obviously is impossible with a larger number of participants. The more participants, the more the boundaries of trust are blurred.

This section addresses factors driving the *individual choices* of informal action most commonly discussed by interviewees, such as flexibility, independence, and efficiency.

Flexibility and mobility. Twenty four different respondents discussed the flexibility and mobility inherent in informal domain as important motivators of informal action. Groups that are flexible, mobile and easily maneuverable better adapt to the generally volatile environment. Various respondents attested, had they gone through the official channels in implementing their projects, processes would not only have been unnecessarily delayed, but perhaps even not have happened at all. In other words, by the time a centralized organization would get around providing a service, the service would

no longer be needed, negatively affecting the lives of constituents. This is especially evident for organizations dealing with crisis situations, such as, for instance, organizations providing disaster relief in war-affected Eastern Ukraine or aiding IDPs. A respondent speaking on behalf of a refugee crisis center conveyed:

R63: We cannot work according to such a scheme: if A, B then C [referring to an example of a formal organization allocating medicine to economically disadvantaged individuals]. ... When a person comes without a place to live, without work, with no ID, with children who have no clothes, there is no built-in algorithm. I have a woman with a child who lives in my vacation home, because there was no other option. ... Theoretically, I can go from agency to agency, demand [that they provide her a place to live], or I can just let her live there.

Even outside of crisis situations, immediate action via informal channels is often preferable to the seemingly over-bureaucratized processes – informal volunteers can get things done faster than paid staff. A leader of a parent association conveyed:

R1: Our organization, for all intents and purposes, has 34 unregistered members. So, if somebody cannot [get something done], then someone else would come in his place. But in a [formal] organization, staff is staff. A person can get sick, leave town, be busy. So, she cannot do things flexibly and quickly.

For the majority of respondents, their civic activity was secondary to their regular jobs that provided a living. Flexibility in schedule is especially important for the all-volunteer grassroots initiatives and groups, members of which struggle on the daily basis just to make ends meet. Being able to conduct activity sporadically, when the opportunities and resources present themselves is thus another motivating factor. A leader of a small feminist group reflected:

R20: And that is another advantage of informal organizations. If we do not want to, we do not do it; if we want to, we do it. We do not have an annual plan or anything like that. Everyone is busy with their own things, everyone has some additional burdens. We do not do anything, but then some topic got us excited and we immediately got organized and implemented [a project].

This leads to the topic of independence and freedom of action that was reported to be of great importance to the interviewees, especially in the context where many formal organizations were perceived to be greatly dependent on their major donors.

Independence and freedom of action. One of the inherent risks of formalization, as discussed by at least 20 respondents, is becoming dependent on funding institutions and other underwriting sources. Examples of dependence are abound, according to study participants: the pro-governmental groups are but the marionettes of the party officials financing them through official and unofficial channels; trade unions are dependent on the oligarchs owning the industrial enterprises with which they are associated; and the ‘grant-eating’ CSOs are heavily reliant on and influenced by their funding institutions. Informality, on the other hand, provides a tremendous degree of independence that allows civil society actors to stay true to their missions and be more effective in achieving them. A respondent reflected:

R62: And when we are independent, we have a colossal luxury – we can speak the truth. And not because we are so wise, not because we are heroes, but because we do not have obligations and we do not owe anything to anyone. That is why we are feared. We are like a bone stuck in their throats.

There is a pervading perception that once an organization receives a substantial amount of money from a donor, it automatically becomes a loudspeaker for that donor’s agenda. A respondent reported his organization’s resistance to being “consumed” by a large donor. This, in their industry of public broadcasting, appeared especially vital:

R21: By the end of 2014, the end of Maidan and the beginning of war, our honeymoon with the [name of oligarch-politician] team was over, and there were many opportunities to receive certain resources to cover our technical needs. I am very happy that I did not go for it. Undoubtedly, it would complicate the situation. [SK: There would be dependence?] Absolutely. No matter what anyone would say to the effect that they are not obliged to anything [i.e. donors’ wishes], etc., but the dependence

would undoubtedly exist. I do not know how this works in the United States, but in Ukraine, in reality, to receive a large donation from one source and to not end up in dependence of that source is extremely difficult.

In other situations, the extent of dependence may not be quite as drastic but, nevertheless, no less explicit. One respondent conveyed being approached by a government official (during the pre-2013 revolution period) with the following proposed arrangement:

R46: They come up and say: ‘Let us work together – we can sponsor you financially a bit, or help with mass media.’ [Interviewee responds] –What do you want from me? [Politician] ‘We understand that you have a certain position and that it does not always correspond with ours... You will speak what you think 95% of the time, but on certain points, and it will not necessarily be against your general position or image, we will ask you to voice certain issues.’ And that is the level on which things were happening.

Independence was noted as an essential ingredient for advocacy initiatives, and certain groups would go to great length not only to stay independent from funding sources or political patronage, but to also ensure the visibility of such independence – as a tactic in increasing effectiveness of their actions. Two respondents conveyed:

R38: It was very important for us to show that we were completely independent from the city administration, from any financial streams, groups, even when you talk about foundations against which we had nothing, but simply so that people understand that we are mere citizens and what we are doing, we are doing not for money and not for the sake of money. This was our tactic – to remain maximally horizontal, maximally informal. The biggest level of formalization that we reached was a Facebook page.

R44: We are not grant-eaters, we are activists, people. We cannot resist speaking the truth into decision-makers’ faces. ... Not a single foundation would want to deal with such scandalous people as us. ‘You must be politically correct above all, never point fingers, institutions must be objective,’ and similar [‘nonsense’]...

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Finally, informality simply makes economic sense, as it speeds up the implementation process and makes the outputs cost significantly

less. This was explicitly mentioned by at least 18 different respondents. Compared to dealing with meaningless paperwork associated with formal processes, informal methods are more efficient and cost-effective. A representative of a parent association conveyed:

R4: People at our [central] market can make anything you want for you but without these intermediaries. You came, you brought the money, and in a week you have your order completed. No extra papers, no problems, you just need to know to whom to bring this money. And you get this information through people: 'I used these folks, happy with results, everything works, nothing breaks,' and then we go there, and also look who can make it cheaper.

Even the officially registered organizations receiving foreign grants attested to the informal implementation of projects being more cost-effective than going through official organizations. Instead of transferring money to subcontractors through official accounts of a formal organization, grant money often is being cashed out and subcontractor fees paid in cash to an individual "expert." A respondent described such a situation and explained her decision of conducting the transaction informally:

R26: And, this way [via cash], it will be much cheaper. And better. If I go through an official organization, I would spend 1½-2 times more money. ... Even considering these extra percentages [associated with cashing out money], it is much more cost-efficient for me than to do it through an official organization. Because of these nuances, really many organizations work exactly this way. Meaning, there are contracts, there is transferred money, but in reality the work is being done by different people, because it is cheaper.

Efficiency appears especially crucial for army volunteers. If their aid is not delivered on time, people may perish. A respondent leading one such organization conveyed:

R11: What was the difference when you were bringing in tires needed to evacuate people from the terminal, and those people were about to die there? But at that time, if you did it the legal way, to bring those tires in, you would need to spend months to get them. This way is quicker and less expensive.

In sum, informality, while being driven by the shortcomings of formal institutions, is also the product of the prevalent social norms that legitimize civil society's circumventing of the formal rules and give rise to certain informal institutions that substitute and replace the formal ones (e.g., informal accounting and reporting). These social norms of incomppliance with government regulation are also complemented by civil society actors' pragmatic choices based on the flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and independence inherent in informal domain.

Crossing Over: Why Register an Organization?

What kinds of factors encourage some of these organizations to eventually register their activity with the government? And, when this occurs, how does having a governmental registration affect their operations? Two key reasons to formalize activity were explicitly expressed in the course of the interviews: to officially deal with or have influence on the government, and to be able to obtain resources in substantial amounts. Several other reasons for registering organizations were noted, such as: sustainability, transparency, growth, and social protection; however, they were not as frequently mentioned in the discussions.

Official Communication

A status of a civic association or a public charity increases access to public hearings and memberships in governmental committees and civic councils. There are exceptions, however; one unregistered initiative specifically stated that their members deliberately did not register an organization to see what may happen when ordinary citizens approach their government directly, without an intermediary organization (the

strategy proved rather effective in their case). Overall, however, official registration appeared to be an implicit requirement for advocacy. Respondents attested:

R67: Because, for instance, take the appeals to the governmental institutions, the official letters, etc. When you write as an individual, that is one thing. But when you write on behalf of a civic organization – it does not matter if it consists of 1-2-3 persons – it has great weight. They listen and pay greater attention, then if it would have come from some individual.

R60: There was a moment when we really needed to pressure the government, because it does not understand when citizens want something from it. And, if you want to be noticed, you need a piece of paper signifying your registration. ... [SK: And how did things change since registration?] We now have the ability to send representatives to city administration meetings, to be present at different events as representatives of a civic organization. And while your voice is not really taken into an account, they have no right to chase you away. In a big picture, nothing else has changed.

Building on the above comment, aside from advocacy participation, a registered status appeared to have limited functionality for some of the respondents' activity – many continued their activities in the same informal fashion as before obtaining the registration. At the same time, while several respondents contemplated that they likely would not have registered an organization had they not had a very specific advocacy-related reason for it, for some – there was an understanding that formalization is a positive evolutionary process, at least in theory. Two respondents, representing registered organizations conducting their activities predominantly on an informal basis, reflected:

R12: I, for instance, if we did not need to write these official letters, probably would not register this civic organization at all. But, on the other hand, it is good that there is an organization, because this is a mechanism to participate in different committees that make decisions on the local level, on the county level, even on the national level. This is the [process of] building civil society.

R51: I believe that [registering an organization] is akin to formalizing a relationship as husband and wife. Because this informality leads to serious informal consequences. From the time when an organization is registered, when it starts looking at itself as at a structure, this is a new level of [civic] activity, a level that can accomplish much more. But, in reality, if you have desire, with an absolutely informal status you can accomplish great things.

Resource Acquisition

Virtually every respondent representing registered organizations in the sample attested in some way to have obtained an official status, at least in part, with the purpose, or aspiration, of resource acquisition. This included the ability to receive foreign grants, accepting substantial individual or corporate contributions through bank transfers, or to be able to clear substantial amounts of humanitarian aid from abroad through the Ukrainian customs.

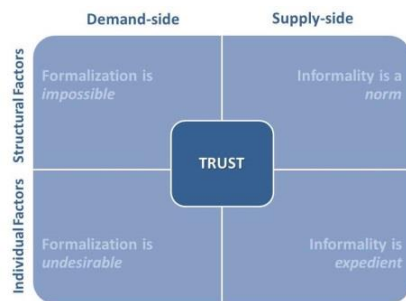
For instance, according to one respondent, in order to receive cargoes from abroad in excess of 500 kilograms without paying customs duties, such cargoes must be received as humanitarian aid and only by an officially registered charitable foundation. Several respondents reported that they registered an official organization either hoping to receive foundation grants (especially from foreign sources) in the future, or already have been awarded a grant and had to register an organization quickly in order to be able to accept it. Respondents conveyed:

R48: In all honesty, first of all, I registered because we were awarded a grant and, without an official status of an organization, we could not receive the money.

R63: Yes, this is just a formality. ... In order to be able to receive cargos, to get them passed through customs, to receive financial assistance, we needed an official status of an organization, and this must be a status of a charitable organization.

In sum, the ability to exert influence on the government, and the possibility of obtaining greater resources, were reported as the two key reasons for the informal groups to eventually obtain governmental registration. That being said, as discussed on several occasions throughout this dissertation, all of the respondents representing registered organizations in the sample, continued in some way (and to varied degrees) conducting informal activity and, for many, registration was a mere piece of paper obtained for a specific and limited purpose.

The Magnetic Forces of Trust



All throughout this chapter, whether discussing civil society's avoiding governmental institutions, adhering to social norms, making pragmatic choices, or seeking a semblance of certainty in the informal domain, the notions of trust and distrust emerge in the data as magnetic forces in civil society. These magnetic forces are responsible for either repelling association with formal processes through distrust of governmental institutions and dubious CSOs, or attracting informal connections and cooperation based on trust in familiar networks and prior experience with like-minded individuals or groups.

Table 1 summarizes the perceived attributes of formal and informal institutions, and the notions of trust and distrust associated with them, as reported by study participants. In essence, the left side of the table depicts distrust largely driven by

transactional interactions and dependence on resources, whereas the right side is driven by personal relationships, interdependence and effectiveness. This framework can be potentially helpful for systematic approaches to addressing the issues of distrust in institutions by capitalizing on and amplifying those attributes that tend to increase trust for civil society.

Table 1

Trust/Distrust Perceptions Associated with Formal and Informal Institutions

DISTRUST	TRUST
Government / CSOs	Personal Networks / Informal Reputations
Them vs. us	<i>‘Vsi svoi’ (all our people)</i>
Corruption, misuse of public funds	Person-to-person, no intermediary
Low effectiveness	Efficient, resilient
Opulent, inequitable	Parsimonious, relational
Antagonistic, avaricious	Cooperative, distributive
Dependent on donors/oligarchs	Freedom of action, independence
Abstract, distant	Tangible, proximate
Rigid boundaries	Transcending boundaries
Dissociation	Association

The rest of this section focuses on data that provide deeper contextual understanding of the mechanisms enabling informality in the voluntary sector by revealing study participants’ perceived underpinnings of distrust of formal institutions, and the trust within informal relationships.

Out to Get You: Distrust of the Government

One of the most frequently discussed topics during the interviews was the predominant public distrust of governmental institutions (with 43 respondents mentioning it at least 140 times). Secondary data confirms that public trust in governmental institutions has been persistently low in Ukraine in the last two and a half decades

(Transparency International 2016; Zmerli 2012, p. 120). Particularly, Ukraine's President, the National Government, and the Parliament, generated the lowest levels of trust and the highest levels of distrust in the Ukrainian polity, according to a 2017 public poll, with as few as between 5 and 13 percent of Ukrainians reporting to trust these institutions, and between 69 and 82 percent – reporting to distrust them (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2017).

According to study participants, Ukrainian society's sense of vulnerability in the face of enduring economic hardships and political volatility is exacerbated by the generally corrupt government that not only fails at providing the essential social guarantees but also is seen as antagonistic and oppressive, if not directly responsible for the society's many woes. Being able to navigate the oppressive systems via informal methods, on the other hand, promotes a sense of agency and a modicum of control in the precariousness of the external environment. Stepanenko (2006) contended, “the persistence of numerous informal connections between the people in post-Soviet countries, particularly in Ukraine, was (and still is) often the only rational strategy of adaptation and even of survival for many peoples and families during the transformation period” (p. 584).

Social guarantees are not upheld in Ukraine's courts, heightening a sense of vulnerability and insecurity. Public trust in the judiciary and the prosecutor's office is particularly low in Ukraine – with just over 10 percent trusting and 83 percent distrusting the former, and less than 10 percent trusting and 84 percent distrusting the latter (Razumkov Centre 2016, p. 2). The perceived corruption within the judiciary and the

selective justice methods were mentioned as posing direct threat to army volunteers particularly. A respondent conveyed:

R12 (2): And what happens in courts is a calamity. Even how they were prosecuting that volunteer. The same judge who was prosecuting the Maidan activists, the same judge was prosecuting [the volunteer], you understand? That is the biggest problem that there was no judiciary reform, the law enforcement system presumably changed, but nothing really changed, money did and does decide.

Money was discussed as a central driver in the governmental relations and the major source of distrust for the public. Where money enters, shady deals abound, and the public distrust follows. Business and government are inextricably and explicitly intertwined in Ukraine. When discussing the Ukrainian government, the interviewees often talked about the government and the oligarchs as one and the same. A respondent illustrated:

R11: This is our transparency. Nothing changed in essence, the oligarchs are in power, they do everything to preserve their positions, they got into power the same way as their predecessors. And they, all together, are stealing and lying.

The oligarchs' money is often used to curb and control the activities of civil society in a variety of ways. Since the 2013-14 Euromaidan, for instance, most political powers backed by the oligarchs have adopted an unspoken requisite of having informal volunteers in their party lists to boost legitimacy, thus further blurring the boundaries between the government, business, and civil society (Minakov 2015). This dynamic, while purportedly having a more positive, trust-boosting effect on the political parties, also had a negative effect on the general trust in civil society, portraying activists as sell-outs and no longer independent actors. One respondent conveyed this illustratively:

R20: You are omitting an important aspect. The [Name of Oligarch]'s team made a big mistake. After a few months of working with 'wild' volunteers, they got tired of volunteers kicking down their doors, they

wanted greater loyalty. And what do you need to get more loyalty from people? Give them a salary. That is when the volunteer environment became segmented. Those who were ready to receive salary, separated and, all in all, these were the people of weaker professional and moral qualities. Thus, this resource that we had before then, made a step backwards. When specific people begin receiving salary, then the trust is ruined, and a lot more. ... Essentially, they have destroyed the movement. People split up to do their own projects. The quality fell, where the activists worked and forethought everything and organized before, people with salaries began doing it worse. ... (2) When an individual is looking at this as a means of getting richer, then of course she will not say [to the boss]: you are wrong. She will not defend her position. Before, everyone could take part in deliberation, and at one point it worked powerfully and very well.

The distrust of the governmental institutions based on the perceived institutionalized misuse of public funds was described in a variety of settings: from local governmental bodies in rural communities to the national government. A respondent leading a registered, but largely informally-run, organization expressed her dismay at dealing with the government after applying for a small grant with the local government and later being requested to give back part of that grant to the governmental official in cash: (R9) “To be honest, we cannot hope for any help from the government. There was an incident when they said: we will help you with X amount, but you have to give 30% of it back in cash.” The respondent, understandably, refused such a “grant,” refraining from further contact with governmental agencies.

Government’s staggering corruption and civil society actors’ perceived inability to implement change often lead to pessimistic outlooks and desire not only to exit from the formal civil society sector, but from the civic activity in general, if not emigration from Ukraine altogether. Such views were expressed by very active and productive activists. A respondent expressed:

R45: [As an activist/volunteer] you constantly [swim] against the current; the system is designed in such a way that it is not sensible to be a patriot,

to do something, you just have to stand in line and bend over backwards within the frame of what the government thinks of you. But the government is only thinking how to squeeze more money out of you, how to gut you out to the fullest. ... I sometimes look at people, at my friends, constantly exhausted, there are no opportunities, no desire to fight. You think at that moment: When will this end? Many people [have lost hope].

While the outcomes of the 2013-14 Maidan revolution have generated a modicum of optimism that change was possible, post-Maidan developments have seemingly reversed those trends. Activists who have joined the governmental agencies with the hopes of instituting change from within the formal systems are stark examples. A respondent residing in a city where many revolution activists have joined local governmental agencies, reported:

R18: In [our city] things were not always so peaceful, things were actually rather brutal. Later, when they [politicians in power before the revolution] were removed and the same functionaries remained at the helm, ... the fat cats, the same old party establishment, people seeing all this, and there was a big disappointment factor. ... And many volunteers, those who got in, people who were actually doing something... Many people became corrupt, those whom this system chewed up and spat out, and many left because they just lost hope.

Thus, governmental systems appear to remain generally impenetrable for civil society, according to the participants, despite the momentary gains of the most recent revolution, as reported by multiple study respondents. A respondent illustrated this dynamic:

R60: There is such a dead end there [inside the government], everything is so divvied up, that I do not even know how to move that mountain. You really need to bang your head against the wall, and the most important thing is for the people who are truly ready to deal with it, to have enough enthusiasm. A person comes in there and understands that he will be forced out of there, up to the actual physical annihilation, or he has to live by their laws, by the laws of our city administration.

A slew of reforms were introduced in Ukraine after the revolution, with many being initiated as the result of external pressure in exchange for fiscal assistance.

However, the implementation of these reforms has been slow in coming, with some of these reforms reported to have been imitated in implementation, as is customary in the Ukrainian political context. This exacerbates distrust and the lack of will to deal with governmental institutions. Thus, while there are minute improvements, if any, the propensity of distrust of governmental institutions persist and informality will, for the foreseeable future, remain a popular choice, as expressed by a respondent:

R28: Generally, I see by our guys and by other acquaintances that right now all this informal activity is very popular. Because to deal with the government... In general, it is getting better, but there are still problems. Because the government, no matter what, looks at the civic sector with arrogance, tries to control it, when there are joint projects.

Grants and Omar Lobsters: Distrust of Formal CSOs

While public trust compromised by scandals in the nonprofit sector is not unique to the Ukrainian context, it was perceived by the respondents as an especially widespread phenomenon, significantly compromising the public perception and the reputation of formal CSOs. The majority of respondents expressed their distrust in at least some types of official CSOs (44 interviewees mentioning this dynamic at least 146 times). The distrust stemmed predominantly from three types of problematic CSO behavior conveyed by the respondents: abuse of foreign grants systems, dependence to the point of fusion with governmental institutions, and fraudulent fiscal practices. These trends mean that CSOs will continue struggling to attract public financial and volunteer support if the issues of trust in them are not alleviated.

Levels of public trust in civic organizations (associated usually with formally registered groups) fared much better in terms of public trust than most governmental institutions in a national representative survey (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2017). Still, they were trusted far less than the ‘volunteers’ (a concept associated with

predominantly informal, horizontal and participatory groups and initiatives that aid the army and victims of war in Eastern Ukraine). The very notion that ‘volunteers’ and ‘civic organizations’ appeared separately in this survey speaks volumes about public perceptions of the difference between the two types of structures. The balance of trust versus distrust is also decidedly different between the ‘volunteers’ (predominantly informal) and the civic organizations (predominantly formal) in this recent national poll: with 54 percent of population reporting to trust volunteers and 20 percent reporting to distrust them (for a balance of 34 percent); and 37 percent trusting civic associations and 25 distrusting them (for a balance of 13 percent) (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2017).

While many organizations receiving foreign grants in Ukraine conduct their activities transparently, contributing to the society in a variety of meaningful ways, the disreputable organizations were reported as the “rotting apples spoiling the bunch.” Aside from reportedly misusing the grant funds, such organizations also were reported to create an undue competition for grant resources, especially for the newcomer organizations that were less familiar with the system. A respondent spoke from experience:

R17: There are organizations that make a living from grants. They receive a grant, cash it out, provide some sort of papers that they carried out activity and then the money disappears. In other words, in effect, they do nothing. ... Sometimes a new civic association attempts to get in on the grant process, and it is literally being forced out by all means possible because it is a very lucrative field. So, from the point of view of a regular person, if you need a stamp of approval that you are a member of some civic association, you can find an already existing organization founded by your acquaintances earlier and join it. But if you want to receive grants, then you have to prepare yourself for battles with these old organizations, and to go through [hell and back] doing that. However, if you lead a

sufficiently transparent accounting, and provide adequate reporting, then you can effectively collect charitable donations [without an official CSO].

The majority, if not all, of the activists participating in this study conveyed rather self-sacrificing attitudes, expending their limited resources towards achieving their missions. One community leader expressed: “I have been living on the verge of [begging on streets] for years, but I cannot stop. I live and breathe by this work.” On this backdrop, reports of lavish life-styles exhibited by some of the “grant-eating” organizations’ staff were reported to be especially disheartening for the grassroots activists. An activist posted on Facebook: “It is sickening to me to hear of civic activists in Ukraine ordering Omar lobsters for the grant money, while we are trying to save money on paper.” This dynamic tends to ruin the perception of the formal side of the sector, compelling civil society actors to dissociate from it. A respondent whose charitable activity has been completely under the official radars confirmed:

R60: I do not believe in [official] charitable foundations, honestly. If they get money from somewhere then they [are not independent]. Maybe that is just my personal misanthropic attitude, but that is how I think. I do not believe in the independence of charitable foundations. In this case, there was nothing that would [make them look good outwardly]. I looked at their program reports and they left a very unpleasant residue. ... When I see their report about a [Christmas] party they organized in an orphanage and then a party for their employees, and it was such dramatic contrast that you cannot help but have questions.

The perception of an allegedly ineffective use of public funds is exacerbated by the idea that these official, grant-receiving organizations often demonstrate insignificant results of their activity, if any at all. This may be at least partially due to their lack of transparent reporting. A respondent who is an informal leader in her small community, reported:

R35: And then [the city administration] reports that they gave grants to 10 organizations. But I will tell you that these are the organizations that just

receive money for whatever they are doing already [instead of specific projects for which these grants are designed]. What specifically they are doing I do not even know. ... Their effectiveness is dismal.

Thus, much like with the relationship trends with the government, the use of public funds, again, is essential to the issue of public trust. While some activists, especially those familiar with the formal third sector environment, understand the role of institutionalization in sustainability, a perception that a paid salary is an indicator of inauthentic civic activity was rather pervasive among the grassroots activists. A respondent stated: [R12] “These charitable foundations that walk around with donation boxes, they receive salaries. Even those who walk around collecting this money, and those who sit in offices, they also get salaries from this very money. What kind of charitable organization is it if he walks around with a box and receives money for it?”

Another problematic trend for the reputation of the official CSO sector reported by the study participants is the preponderance of organizations that are inextricably tied to the governmental institutions or officials. These linkages to the government may take a form of official governmental grants, as well as the informal distribution of resources based on familiar connections. Such organizations are not considered independent and are treated with high levels of distrust and apprehension.

Finally, certain CSOs are engaged in outright illegal activity, including dubious missions and embezzlement of public donations. These actions especially tarnish the public trust in formal civic associational activities. A respondent conveyed:

R1: On top of it all, there are many con artists. On the background [of the war], and the many charitable organizations, a lot of money is being collected and they go nowhere. ... By the way, there is much more trust in the unregistered organizations. I know personally ... there is a bunch of organizations. [For instance,] I walk on the street and volunteers are standing there collecting money. I know that they are officially registered voluntary organizations that collect money for the war effort and for the

sick children. They collect the money but I will give them nothing. I do not trust them, I know that every other one of them can be a con artist.

Because there are few mechanisms available to the sector (and enforced by the government) to counteract the various abuses described above, civic activists tend to rely on alternative institutions that are grounded in maintaining and building public trust, as well as in personal relationships. Leading to the next two subsections of this chapter discussing friendship networks and informal reputations as the key impetus of trust, a respondent expressed:

R65: Generally, however, for the most part, everything is based on personal relationships. ... I know that, as a mother or a wife of a soldier, I will never take a penny for myself. Otherwise, the level of trust to charitable organizations is very low. But if people know personally either the leaders, or activists and volunteers of this organization, and they see exactly where the money goes, they have transparent accounting, transparent reporting, then everything is okay and works like a clock.

‘*Vsi Svoi*’: Trust in Familiar Networks

Networks of friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and neighbors – as expressed by a popular Ukrainian expression ‘*vsi svoi*’ (translated loosely as “everyone is ours” and signifying, when stated, that people in the present company can be generally trusted) – are pivotal for the informal activity of civil society in Ukraine (28 respondents explicitly discussed this over 60 times, and implicitly connoted many times over, in the course of the interviews). These networks can be small and intimate, as well as large and extended, and are often amplified with the help of social media. The lack of trust in governmental institutions and formal CSOs is mitigated by the prevailing trust in personal relations.

Such particularized trust (trust of colleagues, friends, and family), understandably, is much higher in Ukraine’s society than the generalized trust (trust of people in general and of strangers). Whereas trust of people in general fared just above six points (on a 10-

point scale) in a 2012 national survey, and trust of strangers – just above three percent, the particularized trust fared much higher, with almost a perfect score (9.5 points out of 10) in trust of family members, and just over 8 percent – of friends. Interestingly, trust in colleagues was close to trust of people in general – 6.6 percent (Paniotto & Kharchenko 2017).

Trust of familiar relations serves as a substitute for formalization in many initiatives that are organized, funded and operated within familiar networks. Since formalization is often associated with regulation and institutional funding, grassroots groups based on personal networks with no aspiration for foundation or government grants do not see a need for an official status. A respondent illustrated:

[R6] [SK: So, to paraphrase, having an official organization would not provide any benefits? Even in terms of money or volunteers?] No, absolutely not. Because our donations come only from our close relations, acquaintances, companies where we work, and everything is based exclusively on trust.

Trust in familiar connections is important not only for soliciting supporters and volunteers, but also for selecting recipients of services and charitable aid, as this respondent conveyed: [R12] “How did this volunteer movement emerge? To help your friends, friends of friends. ... It is all on the level of: I know Ivan, Ivan knows Stepan...” Since the resources are often exceedingly limited, and the economic conditions in the country – particularly harsh, personally knowing those who participate and donate is of similar importance as personally knowing those for whom the help is intended. A respondent reported on how his initiative supplying the army in the Eastern Ukraine has gained its donor and volunteer base:

R19: We decided right away that it will be a targeted help to our acquaintances, because there were quite a few of them and these are the

people whom we trusted. We knew that if they said they needed it, then it is essential and it will be distributed properly.

As relationships develop overtime, however, the personalized trust extends farther out, to include those individuals of whom there was no personal knowledge originally. How do civil society actors expand the radius of trust within their networks (in cases where such an expansion is desirable)?

Actions and Words: Expanding the Radius of Trust

Networks and alliances are not static, they emerge and transform in the course of various civic activities. Volunteering for common goals – either jointly, or in parallel with others – also builds informal reputations in the sector, expanding the radius of trust necessary for engaging greater constituencies. While respondents did not communicate clearly developed trust-building plans, several strategies, whether intentional or fortuitous, have emerged in the interviews. These revolved largely around producing quality results, and then reporting them transparently to the constituents.

Various respondents have expressed that trust in their initiatives primarily rested on their ability to get the job done well and on time. This was often contrasted with the stories of public relations campaigns of “well-to-do” CSOs and political establishments that, reportedly, generated publicity but had few outcomes with which to back their campaign slogans. For informal civil society groups, it is actions – not words – that propel reputations. Either in small communities, where activities are inherently visible to all of their members, or with the emergence of social media, where information spreads quickly, earned reputations are vital for the activity’s survival. A respondent attested:

R53: And here things are obvious, we always appealed to judgement/decisions based on actions not words. If an organization organizes for legitimate purposes, addressing apparent issues, and really is combating corruption and evil, that is an indicator and that is how it builds

people's trust. But when an organization begins engaging in some dubious activity, begins doing questionable things, then it indicates that somebody paid them to do it. Then it does not matter how much they try to assert that they are a cool organization – people see [their actions].

Informal reputations are especially dependent on honest fiscal practices and transparency. Twenty three different respondents discussed this dynamic in the course of the interviews, as illustrated by a volunteer who ran a small operation supporting refugees from Eastern Ukraine: [R19] “And, after all, reporting [is key] – whether it is present or not, and how regularly it is being posted.” Once the reputation is cemented, however, and trust is established, constituents then begin relating similarly as to those within the familiar networks. Stated one respondent:

R29: There were several people, local businessmen, telling me: ‘Oksana, I can send you 5,000 Hryven a month, if you need.’ And all of that was based on trust, yes. They checked me for a while, but now: ‘If you need anything, just call.’

Trust in third party organizations is often established, at least in part, through informal endorsements from friends and acquaintances who either have a direct connection to the organization or have an acquaintance associated with it in some way. This type of extended trust was especially evident during the arrangement and execution of this study's interviews. Several respondents stated that they knew they could speak with me earnestly because their friend (our point of contact) ensured them I could be trusted. When such connections or endorsements were not as strong, the dynamics of interviews were negatively affected. One respondent illustrated this kind of prerequisite when deciding whether to support an existing organization in its activities:

R17: I did it this way to begin [helping friends and acquaintances], but then some organizations whom I did not know personally, I knew nobody, but they constantly reported, showed evidence [of their activity]. Then, again, through some acquaintances ... who could verify whether [what

these organizations post] is true. And, if it looks good, then you could cooperate with them.

Finally, going through situations of crisis was reported as a tremendous trust-building experience with lasting consequences. Many of the study respondents took an active part in the 2013-14 Euromaidan, at times risking their safety and lives in the course of the protests. Alliances built during the revolution, expanded many of the existing networks and subsequently planted the seeds of further association in other civic pursuits.

A respondent attested:

R20: And this is the thing that, clearly, is impossible with a larger number of participants. The more participants, the more the boundaries of trust are blurred. Because we went through some very difficult things together, like during Maidan, and we trust each other like we would trust ourselves. This is probably like veterans of some wars.

In sum, trust and distrust, as expressed by study participants, appear as a magnetic social force for the activities of civil society, the force that repels formalization and attracts informality. Through informal connections, civil society actors associate with others based on trust-generating activities that have relational undercurrents and characteristics, such as person-to-person connections, self-sacrifice, integrity, friendship and resiliency. Furthermore, trust is fostered by activities that espouse independence, effectiveness and transparency. The formal institutions and processes, on the other hand, are often associated with negative attributes, such as inefficiency, dependency on resources, mercantilism, corruption and inequity, propelling the sentiments of distrust and dissociation. These notions of trust and distrust further serve as mechanisms of informality, thus tying the four conceptual quadrants of the roots of informality.

Conclusions

Informality is driven by some compelling structural factors, such as an incongruous regulatory and political environment that deters formalization, and the prevalent social norms that both condone and promote the informal behavior. At the same time, there are pronounced individual factors representing civil society actors' choices based on the calculated costs and benefits of formalization, thus, stemming directly from the inefficacy of formal institutions, as well as considering the perceived benefits of informality, thus, being relatively independent from the government and formal organizations. The notions of trust and distrust – trust in familiar networks and informal reputations, and the distrust of governmental institutions and formal CSOs – present themselves as informality-enabling and formalization-inhibiting mechanisms binding the various drivers of informality. The roots of informality and the notions of trust are inextricably intertwined in the context of civil society in Ukraine. These findings, collectively, further suggest the following conclusions and questions for future research.

First, despite its obvious drawbacks, informality in Ukraine's civil society is expressed as a space of relative *autonomy* from its external environment characterized by adverse legislative, political and economic conditions. Civil society actors, find practical ways to pursue their missions informally, instead of disengaging or facing the risks of cooptation and repression. While resisting and at times combating the incongruous formal institutions, activists also find ways to work in parallel with them, adapting, adjusting, compromising, and finding spaces on the formal-informal spectrum, all the while reducing transaction costs, and increasing independence and maneuverability.

Informality provides greater choices in steering the desired change, instead of expecting it from the government or the formal CSOs.

Furthermore, informality is the method for the Ukrainian society for attaining and expanding their *civic agency*, defined by Fowler (2010) as “a predisposition toward, and a capability for, leading life together with others in a society and being concerned for the whole” (p. 150). It is a muddled and imperfect, yet viable, way to co-create civic identity that reflects the grassroots activists’ values and norms, which these actors are not always able to find in the formal domain. The definition of *civicness* is thus contextually redefined to encompass cooperation with the state in its legitimate actions, while avoiding or pushing back on those actions that are perceived as outright illegitimate and undemocratic. There is an understanding that Ukraine’s state-building is still very much in progress, and this is the time to define and redefine the relationships between the state and society.

At the same time, there are tremendous limits to what the informal action can do; and it can also exhibit destructive characteristics and outcomes. The limitations of informality drive even the small grassroots organizations to make nominal attempts to formalize (sometimes in name only) by obtaining official registration with the state. Furthermore, the informal nature of Ukraine’s civil society is replete with challenges, not only in terms of the restricted room for long-term growth and sustainability, but also for the potential lack of consolidation in the sector. Arguably, it can also create room for radical agendas to surface and thrive, especially in the context of war and illegal occupation of the country’s territories. Informality also opens doors for corruption and malfeasant fiscal practices. However, if “[i]nformality is here to stay” (Morris & Polese

2014, p. 1), then the important question is: Where do we draw the line between *good* and *bad* informality? How can we amplify its positives to alleviate its negatives? Must one inherently contain the other?

As this research suggests, the proponents of the ‘formalization must prevail’ school of thought – claiming that informal entities and institutions ought to eventually become formal or continue undermining formal institutions and processes – are perhaps looking at informality through a binary and absolutist lens. The fact is, in any given context, but especially in volatile settings, such as Ukraine, the effects of informality can offer a mixed bag of outcomes. Consequently, addressing informality ought to be grounded in a nuanced contextual knowledge of its positive and negative effects. Thus, instead of treating informal civil society as a residual concept (Misztal 2000), or, worse, as a hindrance to formal processes and as a detractor from citizens’ association with formal CSOs (Howard 2003), how might we capitalize on this prevalent phenomenon in order to build a third sector that reflects the values and norms of its indigenous society and responds to its realistic needs? In attempting to at least partially address this question, let us examine what informality does for civil society, constructively and destructively, in this context.

CHAPTER 5

Between Family and Public Sphere: The Role and Impact of Ukraine's Informal Associations, Norms, and Publics

What is the significance of informal civil society in Ukraine, and how can we consider its impact? This chapter ponders the role of informal voluntary action in Ukraine by applying three major lenses of contemporary scholarly discourse of civil society (Edwards 2014). These three viewpoints consider civil society as, first, a *part* of society, emphasizing citizens' associational life, characterized by civic organizations, groups and initiatives; second, a *kind* of society, depicted as the "good society," fortified by positive norms and values and ability to achieve common goals; and, third, a *public sphere*, or the space for deliberation, debate, public association and institutional collaboration (Edwards 2014). Instead of choosing one of these models, as is conventionally done in civil society scholarship, I follow Edwards' advice and engage all three schools of thought for a more comprehensive understanding of informality and its effects on Ukraine's civil society dynamics. Specifically, I pose the following interconnected questions. What are the forms and functions of Ukraine's informal civil society and how, if at all, does informal civil society contribute to democracy? What kinds of norms and values are embodied by the informal civil society, and do these norms enhance Ukrainian society's capacity to solve common problems? And, finally, does informality promote constructive civic deliberation and the creation the new publics?

First, this chapter reveals the informal associational life's complex role in democracy building in Ukraine. On the positive side, informality offers vital tools in the provision of services that are not delivered by either the governmental, business, or even the formal civil society institutions; it also provides citizens with an outlet for more

relational associational activity, potentially counterbalancing the negative effects of formal sector's professionalization. On the negative side, informal initiatives tend to lack long-term strategy and sustainability, often focusing on narrow localized issues rather than collaborating for greater social change. Second, I posit there is tension between the prevalent social norms embodied by the active and altruistic civil society actors who are dedicated to building the "good society" whatever the personal costs, on the one hand, and by the apathetic and unengaged society promulgating the Soviet-style relationship between state and society, on the other. These tensions carry the potential for both fracturing and consolidating society. Finally, the public sphere lens is perhaps the most challenging one through which to analyze the effects of Ukraine's informal civil society, in view of the highly blurred boundaries between the three conceptual sectors of society, as well as between the public and the private spheres. I find that informality has dual effects on Ukraine's public sphere: while helping transcend the formal hurdles of bureaucracy, and opening alternative space for deliberation and collaboration, it also fosters fractured polities, reducing citizens' capacity, and will, to effect sweeping social change through formal political action.

Before delving into each of these three lenses in the following pages, a note of approach to constructing this chapter is in order. While the previous two chapters' (3 and 4) analysis was primarily grounded in the empirical data gathered in the course of this study, the current chapter interprets the role of informality largely based on impressions emerging throughout the research process. Being tethered to the study's findings whenever possible and appropriate, this chapter takes a bird's eye view of the informal civil society dynamics by drawing on insights gained in the larger literature, as well as in

my extended exploration of the topic as a scholar and practitioner over the past several years. The chapter is organized along the three lenses (Edwards 2014) and concludes with an assessment of the relative value of each lens, as well as how they collectively offer a more complete picture of the role of informality in shaping Ukraine's civil society.

Part of Society: Service, Advocacy, and Schools of Democracy

In a context where informality prevails, a lion's share of voluntary activity will also occur below the official radars. Comparing formal associational activity to the tip of the iceberg – the most visible and the most focused on in the research and institutional funding – the informal activity is viewed by some as the obscured part of the iceberg, comprising a myriad of groups, organizations and initiatives that are predominantly below the waterline of empirical inquiry and external support. Smith (2000, pp. 12-13) compared the grassroots associational activity to the dark matter of the universe, in which the formal organizations with paid staff are the brightly shining stars, and the grassroots associations are invisible yet comprise the bulk of voluntary action in the American society. Both of these metaphors, however, imply there is a distinct line separating both domains. Smith (2000) even proposed a possibility of establishing “a fifth conceptual sector of society” in which grassroots associations would reside separately from the more institutionalized nonprofit sector organizations in view of their distinct characteristics (p. 244). My findings presented in Chapter 3 elaborate on how informal activities pervade the formal sector and are conceptually inseparable from the “bright stars” of institutions.

To forego this distinction, Edwards (2014) proposes “to take a systems view of associational life that looks at the different components of civil society and how they

interact” (p. 29). Such conceptualization appears more useful for understanding Ukraine’s civil society. Informal voluntary action can thus be viewed as a vital component, and a prevalent attribute, of Ukraine’s associational ecosystem. What have we learned about civil society and its informal manifestations in contexts, such as Ukraine? A first answer focuses on services and ways in which informality addresses the needs of Ukrainian citizens.

Getting Things Done: Results First, Formalities Second

Informality is a tactic employed “to get things done” – it is the means to the specific, and often narrowly defined, ends achieved by Ukraine’s civil society. While the lack of institutionalization in the numerous civil society groups and initiatives is, at least partly, the result of cultural factors (e.g., the prevalent norms discussed in the previous chapter), circumventing formal institutions, or even outright breaking of the formal rules, is often overlooked while the focus is on maximizing the returns of voluntary activity in a given situation. While not always or necessarily sustainable (which can be a blessing or a curse depending on a context, as discussed further), informal civil society action is designed to achieve specific outcomes which otherwise would have been impossible (or at the very least highly improbable) to achieve, as neither the formal market, nor the state, nor the formal CSOs can or are willing to tackle certain issues. Thus, informality is an answer to government, market, and voluntary failure (Anheier 2014), which does not consider the ways in which the three sectors are linked by their respective weaknesses.

When special tires are needed to evacuate the wounded from battlefields and the government cannot provide them, the most efficient way to get the right tires to the right place will mobilize volunteers, whatever the method. The goal is to save lives;

formalities come distant second, if at all. When governmental officials are implicated in crimes, and only the informal (virtually underground) voluntary activity that cautiously circumvents public processes can expose them, formal CSOs are not always capable of achieving this through formal methods. Laws do not exist to govern secondary school parent associations, and some formal rules even exist proscribing their activities; however, schoolchildren need desks, functional windows and quality educational materials, and parents will find ways to create adequate learning environments for their children collectively, outside of or, covertly, in synthesis with the formal institutions. Houses of worship, recreational spaces, street lights, playgrounds, equitable urban infrastructures, university events, amateur sports, nature conservancy, support for refugees and veterans, even countering propaganda and corruption – many of these result in activities situated at the intersection of the three societal sectors, sectors that are still being reshaped and redefined 26 years after the collapse of the totalitarian system in which all of these undertakings were provided (or forbidden) by the state. When the activity is outcome-oriented and largely unregulated, sectoral boundaries become irrelevant.

Being characteristically outcome-driven, civil society groups and initiatives use informality as one of the tools available in their often scarcely filled toolkits – tools designed to achieve common goals as efficiently and effectively as possible, given the circumstances. The outcomes achieved by the informal civil society may or may not be sustainable over the long-term, or be far-reaching or even visible to the naked eye; they do, however, create a rich yet largely undetected tapestry in Ukraine's society that is popularly characterized as apathetic, unengaged, and weak by the external observers.

When it is possible and prudent, civil society actors advocate with the government. When direct advocacy appears futile, they roll up their sleeves and pick up the government's slack, collaborating with the state as much as it seems sensible, transcending the various sectoral boundaries by continually fluctuating on the formal-informal spectrum. Many inherently service-focused organizations engage in advocacy, creatively navigating the systems and compelling the formal institutions to cooperate using informal levers. Others create alternative, community-based informal institutions counterbalancing the formal civic councils, thus intentionally undermining the state's authority when it is perceived as corrupt and counterproductive. This leads us to the next important conceptual intersection: informality and democracy.

Schools of Democracy?

Apart from basic service delivery, how does informal civil society shape Ukraine's democracy? More specifically, does informality-infused associational life, overall, have some positive effects on cultivating democratic institutions in Ukraine – building trust and social capital, and fostering citizen engagement in political life – in the traditions of Alexis de Tocqueville (1945) and, subsequently, of the 'social capital' theorists (e.g., Putnam 1993)? Or, on the contrary, does informal engagement have the opposite effect on political engagement by inducing citizens to focus on narrow and localized issues within small familiar networks, thus effectively precluding them from meaningful political deliberation (Eliasoph 1996)?

The answers to these questions are, understandably, complex, yet give room for a modicum of optimism. Certain types of organizations and initiatives do indeed task themselves with promoting a sense of civic duty, public engagement, and patriotism

through their activities. Some activists report building democratic institutions and civicism as being implicitly part of their core missions. Respondents in this study proposed:

R67: ...perhaps this would sound bold, but right now we are working on forming the kind of society that should be and that will be in the future. We are beginning, little by little, to pull people out, and people become interested, people begin entering the civic life of our town, people become interested in processes transpiring in this town, how this town works, what kinds of problems it has, how we can help the town, how we can improve our immediate surroundings. People begin associating and the very civil society is emerging, the one that everyone is talking much about but nobody knows where this society is and of what it consists.

R5: This is the main task for the volunteers. Not only to help, clothe, feed, cure. Certainly, this is also accomplished through volunteerism, but in order to have more volunteers, we need to develop this direction [of fostering patriotism] as well. This is a very long process and someone has to start it, and the sooner the better.

At the same time, certain informal associational activity, especially carried out by the self-organized local community groups, tend to work in parallel with the government – intentionally circumventing the governmental institutions tasked with providing the very commodities delivered by these informal groups – ostensibly exacerbating distrust and disengagement from political life. While attitudes towards the government and its formal institutions within those initiatives tend to be rather negative and distrusting, the informal groups often collaborate extensively with governmental institutions in those aspects of their projects that renders them more effective. The villagers, for instance, take it upon themselves to expand their community pond, distrusting the government's ability and will to do so timely and effectively; however, they need official permits to conduct a project that technically must be (and officially is recorded as) accomplished by the government. A fair amount of social capital must exist between civil society actors and governmental representatives, as well as reliable and mutually enforced informal

institutions, in order to allow for such a project to take place. Subsequently, there is collaboration and cooperation, as well as contention, with the village *holova* (mayor) on multiple levels, aimed at increasing the quality of intended outcomes. How it is accomplished and what rules have been bent is secondary to having a pond by which they can fish and recuperate after a hard week's work.

While the informal activity can steer citizens away from participating with governmental institutions in formal ways, it promotes communication and cooperation with the government informally, to achieve common goals identified by the communities themselves. Going through formal means, the villagers could petition and demand the village's official representatives to accomplish the project; however, having no faith in the efficacy of such approach, citizens go around the government in certain respects, and work directly with it (albeit informally) – in others. Through informal activity, citizens find capacities and resources internally to solve social problems when formal institutions and processes fail to do so. This enhances economic conditions and provides space for asserting agency and exercising cooperation in general, as well as building camaraderie and extending the ripples of trust.

This brings up the topic of social capital and the role of informal civic engagement in its development. Personal relationships that exhibit high levels of particularized trust and in which informal civil society resides, indicate the prevalence of the bonding social capital (signifying trust and cooperation within groups) in the Ukrainian society. A heavy reliance on the bonding social capital presents certain challenges to the development of the bridging (relationships between groups) and linking capitals (cooperation with other sectors of society). Preponderance of the bonding social

capital (at the expense of the other two), for instance, is exemplified by Ukraine's political environment, which is driven (if not overtaken) by business interests, resulting in clientelistic, oligarchic, and largely impenetrable governmental institutions. Certain formal CSOs likewise exhibit these tendencies, as suggested by the study respondents, albeit to significantly lesser degrees. While the Euromaidan revolution has demonstrated Ukrainian citizens' potential and capacity for creating and utilizing bridging and linking capitals, these dynamics were not sustained after the revolution, at least not on the massive scale, when the preponderance of the bonding capital once again took hold. While the informal relationships between actors of different groups, as well as between representatives of different sectors, suggest bridging and linking is possible within common objectives that can transcend institutional and sectoral boundaries, these dynamics do not usually translate into bridging and linking in general.

Importantly, the role of informality in advancing democratic values and trust is dependent on the relative independence of these activities from external influences. As Edwards (2014) argued, "associational life [it was found] does contribute to democracy and state accountability, but not as much as was thought, and only when certain conditions are met"; these conditions include, among other things, a predominance of domestic funding to CSOs (p. 102). Informality can play an important role in advancing basic democratic norms, and in doing so it can become a building block of broader mobilization: "From an institutionalist perspective, voluntary associations matter as sources of popular leverage, not just as facilitators of individual participation and generalized social trust" (Skocpol & Fiorina 1999, p. 15).

The Pros and Cons of Informality

While evidence shows that informal activities can deliver services and even enhance democratic norms, study findings also suggest that such gains can be short-lived and unsustainable. The absence of viable resources stemming from the lack of institutionalization is one of the key risks to the continuity and sustainability of informal associational life. Once certain projects are implemented and the outcomes are reached, groups tend to fall apart lacking long-term common goals and resources to continue the association. At the same time, it is the presence of the tangible, short-term, and reasonably attainable goals, and not overarching and abstract visions of social change, that drives the majority of these groups to coalesce in the first place. Although many informal organizations cease to exist once their situational missions are accomplished (or until the next time a common issue arises), there is also evidence that, at least for some, these activities signify the beginning of a more sustained, “thicker” civic engagement, within or outside of formal and institutionalized organizations. For several respondents of this study, participating in informal community projects served as a way to get more involved, to understand and acknowledge their role in creating publics, counterbalancing the invasive, as well as negligent, state. A respondent conveyed:

R52: Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the ecological issue is really a kind of an excuse essentially to gather people who care about the city where they live, care about Ukraine where they live, and to experience the very civil society.

Beginning to count the often uncontrollable, transient, situational, and inherently relationship-based civic activities as “civil society” is not an easy development, especially for the Western scholars who habitually associate civil society and associational life with formal CSOs (positing, the more institutionalized are the country’s

CSOs the stronger its civil society). When formal institutions are not necessarily congruent with the local context-based informal institutions, as Ukraine's case may suggest, however, the former will not be supported *en masse*. This is certainly not to suggest that the preponderance of the informal civil society signifies the strength of Ukraine's civil society, but to, perhaps, question the utility of a rather Western-centric and subjective "strength-weakness" binary designation. Rather, what are the particular strengths and what are the particular weaknesses of a civil society in a given context? And what can be done towards amplifying the positives while alleviating the negatives?

The lack of institutionalization can certainly be bad for continuity and sustainability, but is all institutionalization necessarily good for civic engagement and democracy? In the United States, Skocpol (1999; 2003) argued that the nonprofit sector became increasingly professionalized and corporatized, losing grassroots engagement by diverse and marginalized populations. Closer to home, in post-Soviet Estonia, Lagerspetz (2008) cautions, the overt professionalization largely dictated by the European Union mandates, detracts grassroots engagement from the country's CSOs, thus posing risks for the long-term development and sustainability of the sector. While replete with issues and challenges due to the lack of institutionalization, the informal associational activity may actually be offsetting the negative side-effects of externally-driven institution-building processes, often associated with corporatization and "bureaucratization" of the nonprofit sector that tend to detract citizens from authentic civic engagement. The informal side of Ukraine's civil society provides a "space" for more familiar and relatable associational institutions. Whereas an array of formal organizations tend to be associated with "undesirable" institutions, fostering distrust and

disassociation, as discussed in Chapter 4, informal institutions can remove barriers for participation in public processes and perhaps even counterbalance the corporatization (and resource dependence) of the formal side of the sector.

In sum, informal associational life has a complex role in the development of democracy in Ukraine. At its core, it is an outcome-driven part of the sector, intent on getting things done, as effectively and efficiently as possible in a highly volatile and resource-deficient environment. In the process of achieving its goals, a vision of building democratic institutions is present, but the efforts are still nascent and unsystematic. While the prevalence of informality presents a mix of positive and negative effects on society, the proliferation of informal activities may be crucial for the survival and efficacy of many groups and organizations in Ukraine's highly unstable and often adverse environment for civil society. With time, and broader social and political changes in Ukraine, levels of informal activity may be reduced to more sustainable levels, while, in the process, striving to counterbalance the negative effects of sector's professionalization and corporatization trends (Dauvergne & LeBaron 2013). Given the precarious nature of the "imported" institutions that propel disassociation, what kinds of institutions may actually work in this context? What norms and values must they embrace to foster participation and civility?

Kind of Society: The Past, the Future, and in Between

Ukraine's civil society is embedded in and mirrors its greater society's customs, values, norms, and prevailing systems. It does not exist in a vacuum and, as practice has shown, it cannot simply and easily be filled with "best practices" imported from another context. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine's civil society has

been greatly influenced by two kinds of dominant institutions: the outgoing yet familiar and lingering Soviet establishments, and the incoming, unfamiliar yet resource-abundant Western institutional models. While contexts certainly have been different with regard to civil liberties and freedoms before and after 1991, Ukraine's civil society has responded to their volatile circumstances in the independence period similarly to the familiar behaviors under the totalitarian regime – by distrusting the culturally-dissonant institutions and engaging in informal activity to achieve common goals. The formal institutions are continuously being defied, ignored, coopted, and replaced by the pervading informal institutions in virtually every sphere of Ukraine's society (Aliyev 2015; Stepanenko 2005; Helmke & Levitsky 2004), and the country's civil society is party to that dynamic.

Attempts to formalize and consolidate civil society using organizational models grounded in Western institutions are not proving entirely effective in Ukraine, as evidenced by citizens' apparent resilience to solving common problems through formal CSOs, and the formal CSO sector chronically lacking grassroots support (Lutsevych 2013; Ghosh 2010; Anheier 2004). At the same time, the lingering Soviet institutions persist in the minds and actions of the larger society, embodied by the outdated trade unions, the proliferation of sham CSOs, and the pervading partisan politics in disguise, all of which, in the "good old Soviet tradition," publicly state one thing and do another. These complex dynamics produce a spectrum of responses from the Ukrainian polity, ranging from widespread apathy and inaction, to fierce commitment by activists who are prepared to pay the ultimate price in the name of breaking the outmoded corrupt systems.

Understandably, also, there are tensions between these different kinds of values and norms, both cultivating deliberation and normative change, as well as fracturing society.

Can Ukraine's civil society emerge from this institutional gridlock by bridging the positive aspects of formal and informal institutions, while alleviating their shortcomings? What kinds of civil society institutions could potentially originate from the ground up, reflecting the 21st century Ukrainians' vision of the "good society"?

Formality and Informality: The Good, the Bad, the Beautiful, and the Ugly

This study's findings, reinforced by secondary data, suggest that formal and informal institutions often trigger contrasting attitudes in society, with the latter – fostering trust and cooperation, and the former – producing the opposite effect. What are the inherently negative characteristics of the formal institutions that can potentially be alleviated, and, conversely, what are the positive features of the informal institutions that can at least hypothetically be capitalized upon in the future process of developing a robust and culturally-appropriate third sector?

First, *formal* institutions are often perceived as transactional, hierarchical and impersonal, grounded in intractable and unresponsive or even antagonistic interactions. These negative perceptions range from seeing formal institutions as those that prioritize profit, promoting elitism, corruption, and inequity to those lacking transparency, integrity and independence, while being highly reliant on external financing. These negative perceptions propel the erosion public trust in formal institutions, inhibiting participation and cooperation, as illustrated in Figure 5.

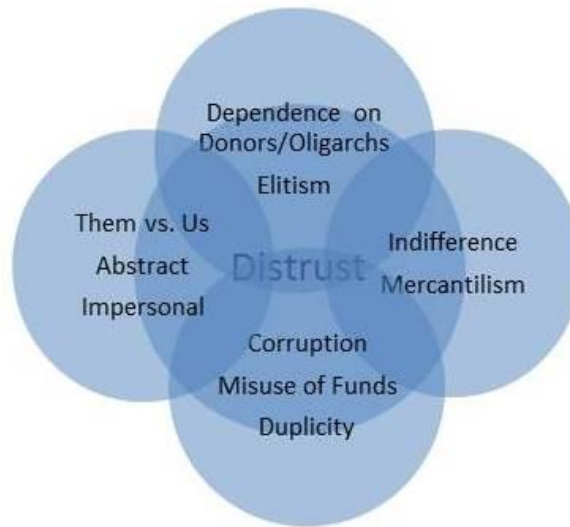


Figure 5. Negative perceptions of formal institutions.

The negative perceptions of formal institutions not only discourage association, but also expose the ugly side of informality, which condones and perpetuates a range of destructive behavior, including financial malfeasance, nepotism, bribery, and corruption. This further complicates and inhibits the building of the “good society” to which many informal civil society stakeholders attest to striving in their work. At times, they elect to work within the corrupt systems to actually fight against them – combatting corruption by using the informal means that give it birth in the first place.

In stark contrast to the formal institutions, the idealized *informal* civil society is perceived as embodying characteristics of an extended family. Informal institutions are often grounded in personal relationships that encourage shared responsibility, mutuality, and candor. Informal structures are more likely to be horizontal and participatory (although some can exhibit strong “parent-founder” figures), where transparency, solidarity, and self-sacrifice are fortified. It is befitting to see family-resembling values superimposed onto the idealized civil society, as trust in family members is reported to be

the highest among Ukrainians, faring 9.5 points out of optimal 10 (Paniotto & Kharchenko 2013, p. 4). The negative perceptions of the formal institutions, on the other hand, are reflected by the Ukrainian public's trust in politicians which is among the lowest (2.1 out of optimal 10), compared to the general trust of others in society, including the generalized trust of other people (6.2 of 10), or friends (8.10) and colleagues (6.6) (Paniotto & Kharchenko 2013, p. 4). The positive perceptions of the idealized civil society values are illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Positive perceptions of informal institutions.

The perceptions of values ascribed to formal and informal institutions as described here, of course, are the distilled versions of “good” and “bad,” and do not accurately reflect the empirical realities of how the actual formal organizations and informal groups operate. The practical reality is far more complex, more muddled, and certainly more realistic, than these figures illustrate. Both formal and informal institutions exhibit a range of positive and negative qualities, as roughly summarized in Figure 7.

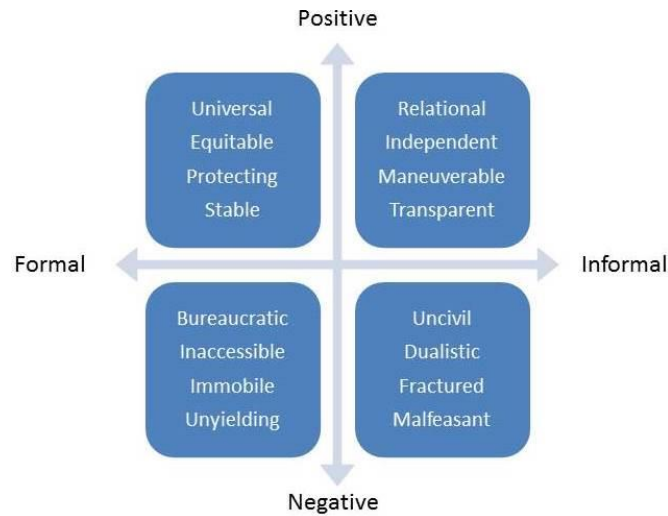


Figure 7. The spectrum of positive and negative institutional characteristics.

These distilled perceptions of the “good of informal” and the “bad of formal” institutions do, however, point out to a stark divergence from, if not direct opposition to, each other, shedding some light on the tensions between the two kinds of institutions and the reactions they tend to produce in society. The contrast of these varied perceptions is illustrated in Figure 8.

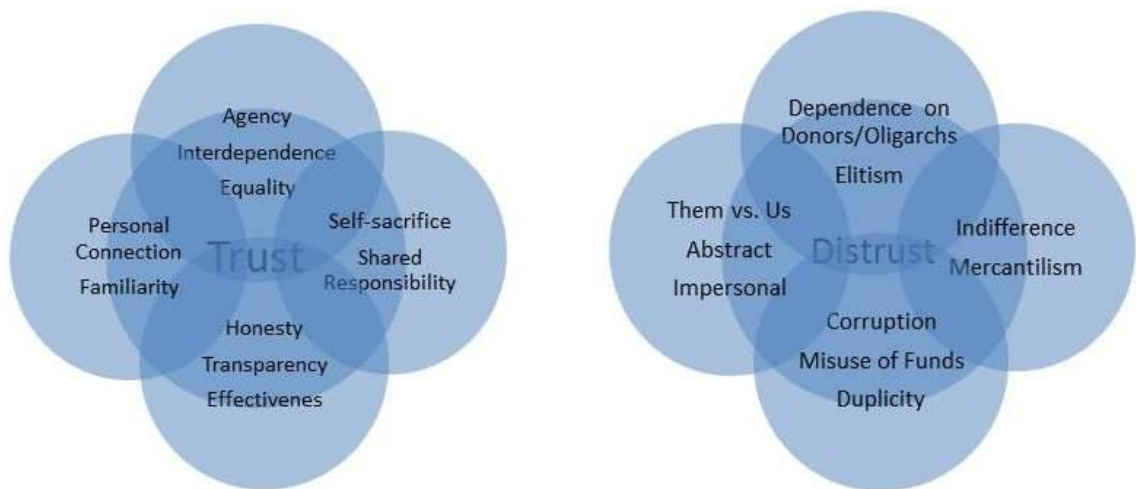


Figure 8. The ‘good’ informal and ‘bad’ formal institutional perceptions contrasted.

Coupled with other environmental factors, such as unceasing political instability and undulating economic crises, these tensions create a precarious environment for civil

society. They either cause the society to civically “implode,” creating a largely apathetic and disengaged polity (“What is the use of even trying, if the government will do its own thing, and we do not really have any effect on the developments?”), or to civically “explode,” via revolutions and mass protests (“This abuse of government is unbearable, we have no choice but to protest and accept the consequences – the future looks no better anyway!”). These tendencies are not necessarily a healthy path to building a stable society that is civil. With the former arrangement silencing the diverse voices and reducing the mass energy necessary to propel social and political change, causing stagnation and deterring progress; and the latter – having both destructive, as well as constructive, outcomes: while holding the government to greater account and momentarily fueling social capital and cooperation, it also opens space for radical voices and fracturing agendas, all the while putting entire systems in shock, even compromising state sovereignty (Minakov 2015), via drastic and sweeping transformations.

Combinations of these forces continually shape the spectrum of attitudes towards civic engagement – oscillating between apathy and outrage – and, currently, the situation surrounding civic engagement in Ukraine is both discouraging and hopeful. On the one hand, there are dedicated idealists, often prepared for ultimate sacrifice in the name of building the “good society” that embodies equality, cooperation, lawlessness, and transparency, and on the other – the antagonistic formal institutions cultivating an apathetic population, and even intentionally hindering the participation of the civically-predisposed active population by curbing dissent. The civic engagement potential in Ukraine, as Euromaidan has yet again demonstrated, is greater than what is being

expressed in everyday practice by ordinary citizens. How is this latent potential disguised and how can it be ultimately realized?

Black Sheep, Gray Herds, and Big Bad Wolves

While civil society activists (both involved in service and advocacy) are not numerous, according to this study's participants' perceptions, they are fiercely committed to their missions, in stark contrast to the unengaged masses who do not understand the value of civic engagement, or even see their ability to instill change. A respondent observed [R56]: "Right now the people became more mobilized, after [2013-14 Maidan]. However, it is still a small faction of society."

The "Soviet-like" paternalistic mindsets persist in society (as demonstrated by individuals accustomed to rely upon government to resolve all social and infrastructural issues), especially among the older population and in the industrial areas of Ukraine where survival is more dependent on the "big boss" than in rural and agricultural regions where individuals can survive off their land. Study respondents, often spoke in frustration about the apathetic, "Soviet" type of individual; two commented illustratively:

R61: For so many years, everything was handled by these people, those appointed [by the government]. In other words, if you are not some big boss, but simply a neighbor, who the heck are you? The same nobody like me. In other words, there is very little faith in the possibility of people joining together and actually getting something accomplished.

R42: Everyone understands that if we remodel the building's entrance and install new plastic windows, everyone will be warmer. But then people start noticing: someone can give money, and the pensioners cannot. We understand [the pensioner] and begin talking to him, offering a deferred payment system, but he says: 'No, if this were a government's responsibility, like during Soviet Union, then this would have been done for free.' And now we have a situation: 'Why do I have to pay for him?...' And it is impossible to come to a common decision. ... People continue wanting for this to be done for them. We do not have experience of having deliberations from the point of compromise.

There is an apparent tension between the two kinds of society – the “Soviet” and the “modern” – often trailed by the lack of understanding and even resentment. Civil society actors find themselves as instigators of that struggle, feeling vastly outnumbered and frequently overwhelmed. The apathy and indifference were particularly discouraging to the interviewees in this study; several attested:

R42: In other words, they are such ‘white crows’ who need more than the others, and all others lament that life is pain, that everything is bad, all is lost.

R23: I have youth here, who are just as crazy as their leader [meaning interviewee herself]. [While other] people need nothing else; they have one problem: eat, [shit,] and die – like a hamster.

R56: I highly respect these people, people who are actually doing something in this life, meaning the organizers of such [voluntary organizations]. ... But there are also people who think differently from us, and perhaps even deride us somewhat. There is a faction of population who are indifferent, and this scares me. I have always feared such position – indifference.

Thus, aside from the contemporary economic and political factors, the Soviet “legacies” hindering the general public’s civic engagement, as represented by this tension, and as discussed by various scholars focusing on post-communist civil society dynamics (Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2016; Howard 2003), rings true in this research. Most of the previous studies, however, tended to focus on the apathetic population and their reasons for not engaging, rather than on the active part of society, and, even more importantly, the tension between the two, that can potentially propel normative and institutional change.

The Soviet “legacies” continue to be reinforced, tacitly and overtly, by various formal institutions (in all sectors of society to different degrees) by upholding the “Soviet-style” relationship dynamic characterized by a “big boss” promising to take care

of all needs and social ills in exchange for conformity (or at least lack of express dissent), and the society either expecting and being disappointed with the actuality of the promised results, or engaging in informal activities, knowing almost certainly that what is being promised will never be delivered. The Ukrainian government, for the most part, has not shown genuine interest in the existence of a robust civil society, despite multiple formal gestures to foster its development (Yanukovich's presidential decree № 212/2012, "On strategy of governmental policies aimed at supporting the development of civil society in Ukraine, initial steps of realization," for instance; the creation of formal civic councils; updating and streamlining formal regulation of CSOs; to name a few), most of which have remained mainly on the level of formality, without genuine engagement or support. Overall, depending on the level of authoritarian tendencies in the past quarter century, the government has been either largely ignoring or actively curbing the activities of various civil society initiatives, organizations, and coalitions (U.S. Department of State 2000-16; Freedom House 2000-16; study data). Despite momentous gains of the various civil revolutions and mass protests against corruption and inequity in Ukraine, and with fragmentary and insignificant exceptions, the general relationship dynamic between Ukraine's state and civil society has been one of mutual distrust and disengagement (Razumkov Centre 2013; Palyvoda & Golota 2010; D'Anieri 2010; Stewart 2009).

Similar dynamics are being played out in the business sector. While cooperation between the business sector and civil society on an informal level has revealed the capacity to yield tangible results (e.g., massive support of Euromaidan protesters by middle-class entrepreneurs), the formal business sector (especially the oligarchs) has

either not been utilizing the cooperation potential with civil society, or has been trying to covertly coopt popular civil society actors for financial and political gain (Minakov 2015; study data). Thus, the relationship dynamic with business sector has not, thus far, resulted in the norms of trust, cooperation, and collaboration in general, with the exception of informal, episodic engagement.

Finally, the philanthropic community, to a certain degree, has also been slow to embrace more liberal forms of relationship with civil society, likewise promulgating rather paternalistic (i.e. providing funding based on the pre-determined funding criteria, rather than co-creating development strategies in conjunction with civil society groups) or even clientelistic (funding the same prominent organizations year after year) approaches to stimulating change. Furthermore, the foreign funding institutions' definitions of effectiveness and accountability do not always reflect the culturally-congruent models of the grassroots civil society. Consequently, either the marginal voices (those that are not represented by established formal CSOs) are not being taken into account for the lack of engagement with the aid community, or civil society actors continue finding ways to circumvent the formal regulations attached to institutional funding in order to address the practical realities of their work on the ground (as discussed in Chapter 3).

The dynamics popularly associated with Soviet "legacies" – formal institutions' paternalistic relationship with society, corruption, apathy, and distrust – may or may not be alleviated simply by waiting out for the generational shift to take place, as conjectured by various post-Soviet civil society scholars (Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2013, Howard 2003), in view of the various environmental factors that continue to persist for Ukraine's

civil society 26 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Concerted efforts across all societal sectors would have to take place to establish and uphold new norms replacing the Soviet-style relationships in order to break this vicious cycle. Civil society actors, at least those participating in this study, see their direct and indirect role in continuing to change these outmoded norms.

Seedlings of Normative Change

Civil society actors in Ukraine attempt to redefine their role in society, testing different strategies and approaches to instilling change. Some persist meeting these challenges head on by attempting to alter the formal institutions, others exit formal processes when those fail, creating alternative institutions in the informal domain. Importantly, today's generation of activists sees their role reaching beyond their immediate missions of service and advocacy. They see themselves as agents of long-term change: advancing shifts in public consciousness and transformation of society, renegotiating public-private relationships, and redefining social contracts. Civil society actors see their direct and indirect role in breaking the cycle of apathy and changing the corrupt outdated systems. Interviewees conveyed:

R54: It is here and now that we are forming the new civil society, it is here and now that the new paradigm of relationship between citizens and government is being formed.

R5: People change but the system remains. We, volunteers, have to do something to help, to change something, to act. Volunteering is that change for the better. With our kindness, with our positive actions we have to charge others and entice them to replicate it. ... If people see what you are doing is right, they will copy you, and, little by little, with this warm current we can warm the whole ocean.

Various respondents conveyed having a sense of a higher mission: aside from providing the necessary services or advocating important issues, they saw their role in

fostering the values of patriotism and social responsibility in society. This is being accomplished either by engaging the adult population who would pass the spirit of volunteering onto their children; visiting secondary schools to convey to the students about the work they are doing; and simply leading by example. While nurturing civic values begins, foremost, *within* families, activists see their potential in contributing to instilling these values from *without*; several interviewees conveyed:

R67: ...perhaps this would sound bold, but right now we are working on forming the kind of society that should be and that will be in the future. We are beginning, little by little, to pull people out, and people become interested, people begin entering the civic life of our town, people become interested in processes transpiring in this town, how this town works, what kinds of problems it has, how we can help the town, how we can improve our immediate surroundings. People begin associating and the very civil society is emerging, the one that everyone is talking a lot about but nobody can say where this society is and of what it consists.

R11: From these seedlings, like these women for instance, sprout the [charitable] foundations. ... This stems from the children and a lot depends on their parents. Right now, it is the parents that have to foster patriotism in their children, to lead by example, that is number one. Because to talk about it and not to exemplify it, that does not work.

R5: We travel to schools, in small municipalities, in villages. We give open lectures in these schools. Tell them what war is, why they have to do well at school to change this country, that they need to love this country. And in this way, we raise this spirit beginning in childhood, this is what we, as volunteers, can do.

Respondents noted specifically about their work changing people's consciousness, and this being an important part of what they do. This is an especially important task for civil society as, according to the interviewees, the government does not fulfill its role in fostering positive civic values, if not downright impeding their development (e.g., lack of civic education in secondary schools, propaganda-filled government-owned television, corruption and impermeability of political systems, etc.). Respondents used illustrative phrases to describe these aspirations, including "we need to

raise people up” (R29), “we need to jump start this process to change people’s consciousness” (R50), “I was able to help shift awareness” [of animal rights] (R57); as well as reporting to launch initiatives filling the gap of government’s failure to “develop critical thinking” especially among rural populations (R44).

Social transformation towards the “good society” is a complex and arduous process in the context characterized by turbulent history and contemporary developments, such as Ukraine. Civil society actors understand that to instill a positive change, some sweeping transformations in the Ukrainian governance systems, and the society’s relationship with its state, are crucial. This stimulates the creation of advocacy groups and initiatives, and many service-focused groups also reported being compelled to take part in the policy-development process. In order to achieve the “good society,” the government needs to be able to secure social contracts and foster value-based institutions, something that is glaringly compromised in Ukraine at the present. This study’s respondents reported having an understanding of the importance such developments for the future sustainability of the sector, attesting:

R60: My dream is for 10-15% of people to be the activists, and all the rest would be the empathetic supporters. This would be ideal. But I think that the government will infiltrate all this, it is so used to stealing. They go there not to be of use to society, but to [make profit] for themselves. And they do this exceedingly well. If this remains, then the society will roll back to the same level of apathy that used to be before...

R5: If before we thought that those [corrupt politicians/oligarchs] would make decisions for us, right now we understand that for the politicians it is business. We understand that it is the second front of our resistance.

That being said, civil society alone, as Edwards rightly (2014) concludes, cannot achieve the “a society that is civil.” Social change takes time, painstaking effort, and monumental energy expended across sectoral and institutional boundaries. Currently, the

efforts of instilling positive change towards the creation of democratic systems of the “good society,” is brimming with challenges and setbacks, and there does not appear to be sufficient will across the sectors to institute the necessary sweeping reforms in an expeditious manner. Respondents in this study conveyed a mix of optimism and pessimism regarding their expectations of future developments. Some emphasized their understanding that change is necessary, but also that it is a long-term process and that resistance by those who do not want to change is inherent in this development.

Respondents conveyed:

R67: ...this is a transitional period, we just need to live through it, really. Nothing bad about it, this is a transformation of society and power. And what is happening right now is a withdrawal, there is nothing surprising or extraordinary in this, and all is lost and we are all being had, etc. We just need to understand that this is transformation.

R5: This is the main task for the volunteers. Not only to help, clothe, feed, cure. Certainly, this is also accomplished through volunteerism, but in order to have more volunteers we need to develop this direction [of fostering patriotism] as well. This is a very long process and someone has to start it, and the sooner the better.

In sum, when expanding the boundaries of Ukraine’s civil society sector by including the informal action as both *part*, as well as *kind* of civil society, our assessment and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses in the Ukrainian context likewise expand. First, given the less than ideal (if not antagonistic) political, economic and societal factors, including the challenging legal and enforcement frameworks, staggering poverty levels, and the persisting “Soviet legacies” fomenting civic apathy, the informal civil society institutions that are inherently mobile, flexible, “lean and mean,” and relatively independent, may be the key to existence and survival for many grassroots voluntary organizations, groups and initiatives. Informal civil society’s family-like

values, characterized by personal engagement, mutuality, transparency and trust, potentially could be the missing link in the process of engaging the apathetic and unengaged polity more actively in civic life.

The road to a “good society” in Ukraine, undoubtedly, is a long and arduous one. Informal civic activists, while feeling vastly outnumbered, often burnt-out and discouraged (and even personally embattled), see their role in contributing their part of paving that road. It will take concerted effort, spanning far beyond the capacity of civil society, however, to eventually build the appropriate institutions that would foster public trust and cooperation, providing impetus for engaging more widespread civic participation in public processes. Governmental institutions, to start, need vast and sweeping reforms to strengthen the rule of law and its enforcement, drastically reduce corruption, guarantee equitable economic opportunities, as well as begin genuinely engaging civil society in policy making. Furthermore, a concerted and strategic effort across all three sectors of society needs to be expanded towards the development of cultural norms of altruism and civic engagement beginning at schools and families. Can the espoused positive values of informal associations eventually infuse the formal institutions? If so, can Ukraine’s civil society potentially co-create these strategies in collaboration with other sectors in the public sphere?

Public Sphere: Tension, Contention, and Boundaries

Ukraine’s public sphere is a precarious terrain for civil society. Factors distorting it are abound, including oligarchization and the impermeability of the political systems, scarcity of independent mass media misrepresenting events and promulgating propaganda, ongoing military operation in the Donbas and the occupation of Crimea

traumatizing and polarizing society, the persistent economic crises and staggering poverty levels, and the prevalent public apathy tendencies discussed above, to name but a few. At the same time, there are also some dynamic opportunities and positive recent developments in the country's public sphere, including heightened levels of volunteerism and civic participation since 2013-14 Euromaidan, the proliferation of social media opening alternative channels for communication and information transmission, the gradual (albeit lagging) implementation of the necessary political, economic and social reforms, and the relative pro-democratic tendencies of the incumbent Ukrainian government (comparing, for instance, to Ukraine's political situation under the preceding presidency or to some of the country's neighbors to the north and east where public sphere is more severely constricted), among others.

When negotiating these challenges and opportunities, civil society in Ukraine does not have a prominent space in the public sphere, and frequently none at all, with the exception of mass protests. Furthermore, informality can have both positive and negative effects on fostering dialogic politics as coined by Jürgen Habermas. Informal interactions can help transcend the formal boundaries and bureaucratic hurdles, leveling the playing field and opening alternative spaces for participation and deliberation in certain contexts. They can also create fractured and disconnected polities focused on localized issues, even pursuing radical agendas, rather than engaging in open dialogue and all-inclusive collaboration.

The public sphere lens is perhaps the most challenging one through which to analyze Ukraine's informal civil society and its impact, because of the greatly blurred boundaries between the sectors of society, which also makes the boundary between the

private and the public spheres often indistinguishable. It is no less important than the previous two discussed in this chapter, however, as it broadens our understanding of civil society in Ukraine and the environment that shapes it. What follows is a discussion of the informal civil society's capacities and limitations, as well as boundaries between public and private spheres.

Capacities, Limitations, and Tensions

The proliferation of informal networks can have both positive and negative effects on the development of public sphere. On the one hand, informal approach to communication can help transcend formal barriers of bureaucratized formal institutions. Interviewees in this study reported that the proliferation of informal networks, and especially with the upsurge of social media, make cooperation between individuals within their extended networks of friends and colleagues (but also outside of them) easier and more efficient, contributing to greater collaboration between organizations, groups, and initiatives. A respondent conveyed: [R28] "It is very easy right now to find cooperation between civic organizations and active people. ... Everything happens very fast and online."

In Ukraine's habitually bureaucratic (and, at the same time, informal) society this is a noteworthy advantage, as the boundaries between organizations and initiatives can be more permeable through informal communication, cultivating the bridging social capital between groups. Such bridging communication and activities can have tangible effects on the developments in the country. Ukraine's volunteer efforts supplying the Ukrainian army in the ongoing war, especially at the onset of the conflict, for instance, exemplified prolific informal communication and bridging between groups, as well as linking with

both the governmental and business sectors. Tremendous amounts of information has been exchanged informally, lessening the duplication of efforts, as well as gaps, in supplying the official and volunteer battalions on the front lines that, ostensibly, played a crucial role in the preventing the further spread of foreign military incursion and separatism in the eastern regions.

At the same time, informal networks and their efforts can be fragmented and exclusionary, inhibiting genuine deliberation in the public sphere. Informal groups and initiatives can be detached and even isolated from the public sphere, conducting short-term or narrowly defined projects and relying on small personal networks in their development and implementation. Interviewees in this study also reported the prevalence of “everyone is a *hetman*”⁶ mentality among Ukraine’s civil society actors, often making it difficult to seek consensus and consolidation when opinions diverge. Overcoming these hurdles, however, also has positive developmental effects, with civil society actors seeking consensus and collaboration in achieving common goals, and understanding the need for tolerance of diverse approaches to building the “good society.” Respondents conveyed:

R29: In the beginning, this really stressed me out, but then I realized that everyone who helps, does the right thing. The way he knows that it is needed. This is a leader, everyone is a leader. ... It is just that I have my position, and he has his facts. ... All people are different and you can make your own mistakes.

R67: The main thing is that this has to be an adequate person and you have to always be ready for a compromise – not to be radically right or radically left. The most important thing is to know how to listen to others.

⁶ *Hetman* (ukr. гетьман) was the highest military rank in the 16th-18th century Ukraine, and is associated with elected political power; the idiom represents situations in which participants insist on their individual approaches/opinions to prevail, rather than participating in shared leadership.

Informal networks within civil society groups can create mini-coalitions and link to governmental groups and business entities, potentially playing a pivotal role in the adoption of new legislation in the parliament. However, such activity can have both positive and negative outcomes and, as several respondents attested, it can lead to the development and adoption of legislation that looks good on paper, but in reality is completely non-functional and subsequently is not enforced. While informal coalitions between political forces and civil society often do not possess sufficient force and momentum to instill sweeping change, they do come into existence and can be considered a positive development in certain contexts. Future studies could focus on the development and outcomes of such processes to see how their positive effects could be potentially amplified.

While there is evidence of informal cooperation suggesting the possibility of linking capital, there is also evidence of government's direct or tacit subversion of civil society's consolidation through governmental agents' infiltrating and then causing fractures within notable groups and organizations. Attempts to consolidate civil society activities have been overtly and covertly hindered by the governmental (and pro-governmental) forces through an array of subversive formal and informal mechanisms, including instituting overly burdensome and frequent governmental audits on formal organizations, spreading distorted information about activities and activists via the channels of government-owned media, governmental agents' attending public meetings and intimidating activists, and even fabricating criminal evidence against leaders of civil society groups resulting in fines and imprisonment, throughout Ukraine's independent history. Going underground for some of these groups is a way of sustaining activity and

thus retaining voice in the public sphere through informal channels. This is especially true in situations of explicit contention between government and civil society, such as during popular protest movements (Krasynska & Martin 2017).

In certain cases, the relationship between government and civil society is not as explicitly contentious. For instance, partisan politics may be playing out in civic councils, where political forces attempt to influence the outcomes of municipal initiatives by implanting “favored” CSOs on civic councils in ways that lack equity and transparency. In these cases, civil society groups may opt to create alternative institutions to counterbalance the ineffective, even destructive, civic councils. In Ukraine, where being official does not always mean being legitimate (Krasynska & Martin 2017) such alternative publics may carry more weight in communities than the distrusted official institutions. A respondent in this study, speaking on behalf of one such informal coalition of organizations, conveyed:

R51: But when there is such a civic council that was organized with a destructive purpose, we need to counterbalance it with something – if they start making certain appeals, we need another coalition. Perhaps we have fewer rights under the law, but we will have much more weight in the community...

Other groups confront political establishments in different ways attempting to create and foster true public deliberation, countering the illusion of public discussion habitually propagated by the municipal authorities. One entirely informal initiative in a metropolitan area has managed to garner support of a substantial faction of local community to save an historic park from demolition, reversing the previously approved (reportedly, in a highly non-transparent manner) city plans to broaden an adjacent road at the expense of the park. A respondent, one of the leaders of the said initiative, conveyed:

R38: [before the initiative came into force] There were several public discussions about this [redevelopment], but in reality, they were not discussions but, rather, presentations. This is when they came and showed you the final result, and, in essence, there is no room for your comments. You understand that this is already the result and that is it. After several such 'public discussions,' I understood that nothing changes from these people to those; in other words, people think they fight for something, but in reality an illusion is created that they have influence on something. They can criticize, but there will be no changes and, in the end, we will get what we get.

After a long and rather heated confrontation and multiple concessions on both sides of the issue, the initiative accomplished government action based on earnest feedback from the community that was affected by the outcomes of the process. The interviewee continued, discussing a new kind of roundtable that was made possible after months of discussions, protests and official and informal appeals organized by this small but dedicated group of activists:

R38: This roundtable lasted seven and a half hours, practically without a break. We had professional moderators, there was live streaming, because this topic in [our city] has become a heated one, everyone and everywhere was talking about it, on either side of this issue. ... There were about 200 people in attendance, the [venue] was full and we moved a part of the people into the library and they were watching it live-streamed, and there were many people watching it on the internet, and interestingly, everyone remained until the end. ... It was a very difficult conversation. But it was on a completely different level, it felt so unusual to speak your mind and make the arguments in front of the camera, so that everyone hears and everyone has the same information.

Eventually, a new plan that left the park intact was approved by the municipal government. This particular case also demonstrated internet and social media's crucial role in creating and upholding the public sphere, ensuring that objective information is presented on all sides of the issue. While internet and social media definitely have limitations (Morozov 2014, 2012; Hindman, 2008; Robins & Webster, 2004), the online

tools have been reported by multiple study participants as crucial in their existence in the public sphere.

Between Private and Public Spheres

This study's key findings regarding the boundaries between formal and informal activity, as well as between all three sectors of society, also point to the lack of clear boundaries between the public and private spheres in Ukraine. These results challenge Western scholars' conceptualizations of the public and private spheres, claiming a distinct separation between the two. Howard (2010), for instance, in his conceptual diagram depicting the various arenas of democratization (Figure 9) and illustrating interactions between sectors and spheres of society, specifically separated family friendship networks from the public sphere.

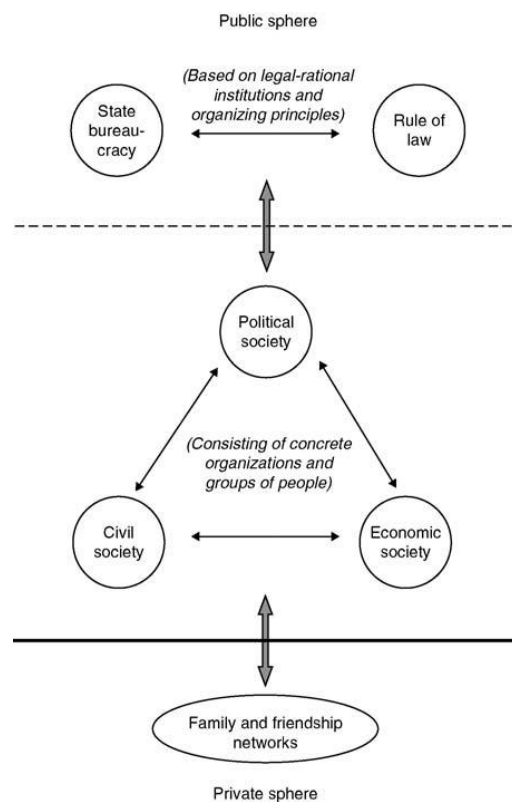


Figure 9. "Fig. 1. The arenas of Democratization" (Howard 2010, p. 186).

Discussing the diagram Howard (2010) particularly emphasized:

The first is the broad distinction between the public and private spheres, indicated by the solid line separating family and friendship networks, on the one hand, from civil society and the other four arenas, on the other. This distinction refers to the important difference between social activities that are within close and trusted circles, and those that go beyond them to involve interaction with other forms of social organization in society at large. (pp. 186-7)

This conceptual view of the private sphere, consisting of family and friendship networks, as entirely separate from civil, political and economic societies, fails to match the Ukrainian context, where the boundaries between these spheres of society are highly blurred, and all three are infused with family and friendship relations. This is not to claim, of course, that these dynamics are necessarily positive, as they breed corruption and clientelism in the government, foster nepotism and lower productivity in the business sector, and create distortions in civil society (see Chapter 2). To alleviate the negative ramifications of informality, eventually these dynamics should undergo gradual transformations towards a healthier separation between the public and the private spheres; currently, however, such blurred boundary is a vital aspect to our understanding of Ukraine's public sphere and civil society's place in it. This lens of informality can also be extended to other postcommunist contexts in Eastern Europe or elsewhere. It expands the capacity of researchers to capture more accurately the often invisible ties and networks shaping individual decisions and collective outcomes.

What do such blurred boundaries between public and private spheres mean for the public deliberation, as well as citizens' communicating ideas and demands to the decision makers in the Ukrainian context? While, by default, they can lack transparency, the continuously shifting informal networks of activists can also serve as viable avenues for proposing and passing legislation in the context of Ukraine's highly flawed political

system. Several respondents conveyed working informally with representatives of members of the Ukrainian parliament on various issues that eventually became (or were on the path to becoming) law. While often begrudgingly, several activists conveyed that “working the system” through informal means was a more effective way of influencing public processes via grassroots participation. A respondent imparted on a successful adoption of legislation by working through informal networks of activists, who had several personal connections in the parliament as result of the 2013-14 Euromaidan; he stated:

R46: We were from different organizations, given that our network was very narrow, we created an initiative group, and proposed the law on [redacted]... We found an MP who would register the proposed law, choosing a very compromise-prone one.

The key in this process was to have a trusted circle of friends representing both formal and informal organizations that advocated for their specific issue and also, within that circle of friends, to find optimal personal connections to members of the parliament who would formally effectuate the legislation.

By contrast, several activists also conveyed that going through formal procedural means, especially on heated advocacy issues, was often met by governmental officials with unresponsiveness, hostility, and even physical violence and covert intimidation. Many activists, nevertheless, persisted in pressuring the government through formal procedures, believing that this approach would eventually start breaking the toxic and outdated systems. Such activists often become proverbial (if not literal) martyrs of the system, however, and at least three of this study’s respondents have lost their formal jobs in the process (two – suffered physical violence and detention), and eventually had to

find alternative ways of making a living and survival in order to continue their advocacy initiatives.

The prevalent informality creates a vicious cycle for Ukraine's public sphere. In the context where written laws are frequently ineffectual, the efficacy of public deliberation for their formal adoption comes into serious question, thus lowering citizens' incentive for participation in public processes. In practicality, it can be more sensible in citizens' view, to circumvent the unfavorable law informally than expend tremendous amounts of energy towards adopting a formal alternative to it that, in all likelihood, eventually will not be enforced. Potentially high personal price, as noted in the paragraph above, for formal advocacy activity serves as a further disincentive for participation. This further complicates our understanding of Ukraine's public sphere; however, it also helps explain the prevalent informal civil society dynamics, as well as the general apathy and low citizen engagement in formal political processes. At the same time, several advocacy success stories that emerged out of the informal public sphere, and that were captured in the process of this research study, suggest the trends may be gradually reversing, offering modest room for optimism.

In short, there is evidence of informal civil society's active participation in the public sphere through a variety of formal and informal means. While the relationship with governmental institutions can be either non-existent or even overtly hostile, civil society groups and initiatives find ingenious ways of remaining and engaging in the public sphere by formally confronting the formal institutions, informally "working the system," creating alternative publics, and utilizing social media tools to their advantage. The initiatives aimed at bringing the marginalized voices to the discussion of important

public issues have varied degrees of efficacy and may not be as wide-spread as needed for full-fledged democratic processes; nevertheless, they exist and persist in a variety of settings, both metropolitan and rural. Activists generally lack formal mechanisms by which to continue engaging in the public sphere beyond mass protests, as one of the respondents in this study conveyed: [R55] “During the Orange Revolution, and then later Euromaidan, people were given the opportunity to shout and protest, but not the space and mechanisms to act towards sustained change afterwards.” Finally, the lack of boundaries between the private and public spheres creates hurdles, as well as opportunities, for the informal civil society to engage and participate in the public sphere.

Conclusions

This chapter has delved into the effects of informal voluntary action in Ukraine through the three lenses of contemporary scholarly discourse of civil society. When viewing informal civil society through the associational ecosystems lens (*part of society*), the study reveals informal voluntary action’s complex role in building and upholding democracy in Ukraine. While offering essential services which neither the governmental, business, nor even the formal civil society organizations undertake, it is also counterbalancing the negative effects of formal sector’s professionalization. At the same time, informal activities can lack strategy and sustainability, focusing on narrow issues rather than engaging in broader societal collaboration. These dynamics play a vital role in fostering civic engagement by providing more relatable and culturally-congruent associational institutions to society. Considering Ukraine’s turbulent contemporary developments, informality is a central component of civil society. While levels of informality can and should be reduced over time (addressing institutional and

environmental hurdles to formalization), certain activities will and should remain informal and ephemeral in the long term for the sake of maintaining an authentic and vibrant associational ecosystem.

Viewing informal civil society's role in fostering the 'good society' (as the *kind* of society, fortified with positive norms, and able to reach common goals), reveals tensions between the prevalent social norms in Ukraine's society: while certain norms stimulate the emergence of a rather active yet still not plentiful faction of activists and service providers, other prevailing norms foment apathy, disengagement, and the persistent Soviet-style dependence on the state. These tensions are especially triggered by the informal civil society actors who have the vision of shifting the values towards the "good society" by teaching the younger population, engaging other activists, and simply leading by example. Many activists realize, however, that they can only partially contribute to the creation of these positive norms, and it will require efforts from a wide spectrum of actors from all sectors of society to promote more sweeping transformation. The normative and the associational ecosystem lenses collectively pose the following questions for civil society scholars and practitioners: Do current approaches to building civil society in the region offer associational models that reflect the authentic, relatable, and culturally-congruent institutions? If not, as this research seems to suggest, what kinds of institutions would promote robust civil society that would be supported by wider factions of society? Future research and social experiments can potentially answer these questions.

The final issue leads us to the *public sphere* lens in this discussion. Does Ukraine's civil society and its informal faction contribute to an expanding public sphere

as a pre-condition to sustained democratic dialogue about political and social changes, reflecting true needs and values of its citizens? The short answer, at least for now, is “not yet,” and informality appears to have ambivalent effects on fostering true public deliberation in a liberal democratic sense. While helping transcend the formal hurdles of bureaucracy, and opening alternative spaces for deliberation and collaboration, informal voluntary action can also foster fractured polities, reducing citizens’ capacity, and will, to effect sweeping social change through formal political action. This, along with the highly blurred boundaries between the public and the private spheres in Ukraine’s society, renders the *public sphere* lens the most challenging through which to analyze Ukraine’s civil society and its informal effects. It is an important one, however, in painting a more complete picture of Ukraine’s civil society.

The next question is then, as fittingly posed by Edwards (2014) at the end of his discussion of the three lenses of civil society discourse: “So What’s to be Done?” (pp. 114-132). The following, concluding chapter of this dissertation attempts to provide at least partial answers by outlining this study’s implications for theory and methodology, as well as providing ideas for future research, and recommendations for policy and practice.

CHAPTER 6

No 'Easy' Button: Implications and Recommendations

How do the study's findings enhance our understanding of civil society, and how can this knowledge be used for improving the sociopolitical conditions in Ukraine?

Attempting to tackle this question, this concluding chapter discusses the study's key theoretical and methodological implications, presents directions for future research, and offers some recommendations for policy and practice.

Theoretical and Methodological Implications: Institutional Conundrums

The study's implications have been discussed throughout Chapters 2-5. The discussions generally revolved around two major topics: the formal-informal interactions and their effects on the third sector in Ukraine, and the efficacy of institution-building processes in non-Western contexts driven predominantly by Western theory and practice. These topics, and their implications for theory and research, are discussed here in turn.

Formal-Informal Interactions

First, echoing the emerging discussions regarding the formal-informal interactions within the economics, political science, management, and the post-Soviet literature (Morris & Polese 2014; Alter Chen 2012; Grzymala-Busse 2010; Hussmanss 2004; Helmke & Levitsky 2004), this study finds that Ukraine's informal civil society is more than a temporary, residual, or largely inconsequential phenomenon. Furthermore, informal civil society will not be naturally replaced by formal institutions with time or, otherwise, continue to undermine the "healthy" development of the third sector and its institution-building processes (as has been maintained by various civil society scholars,

e.g., Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2013; Howard 2003). Informal civil society is “here to stay,” fulfilling vital service and advocacy functions and, despite its various drawbacks, potentially contributing to democracy building and even counterbalancing the negative effects of Western-driven professionalization in the sector. Furthermore, informality provides a relative autonomy from the antagonistic and incongruous formal institutions in the external environment, as well as offers relatable, culturally-congruent associational institutions. It can also serve as a method for attaining and expanding civic agency for Ukraine’s citizens.

Nuanced relationship. Considering the contextual nuances of informal practices’ upshots and limitations, informal and grassroots civil society needs to be actively and systematically taken into account, within empirical and conceptual research, as well as within the country’s social and political development. Informal civil society actors can provide viable insights into the authentic nature of civic engagement, and the indigenous civic practices and motivations. Thus, instead of dismissing informal practices as inconsequential, or worse, seeing them as solely hindering the formal sector development, a more nuanced approach to understanding the formal-informal institutional interaction would consider the benefits as well as limitations of informality. Drawing on insights offered by political scientists studying the interactions between formal and informal institutions (Grzymala-Busse 2010; Helmke & Levitsky 2004), for instance, new typologies of formal-informal interactions in the third sector can be developed. These typologies would capture and examine the different kinds of relationships between formal and informal institutions in the third sector, as well as

investigate civil society's formal and informal interactions with the Ukrainian state, and the relative effectiveness of those interactions.

Boundaries. The lack of boundaries between formal and informal organizations and their activities, as well as between the sectors of society revealed in this study, challenges a binary formal-informal approach to studying Ukraine's civil society. Rather, a spectrum of informality should be considered, encompassing the activities, outputs, and interactions of both formally registered organizations and the informal groups and initiatives. The notion of the blurred boundaries between informal and formal activities (as well as between sectors of society) helps address the following questions regarding the role of informal institutions in the civil society dynamics. Would the informal activities have taken place at all, had they been forced to formalize to exist? Conversely, would the resources currently activated in the informal domain otherwise have been directed at formal organizations? And, if so, would the latter strategy render these activities more effective? The study's findings answer these questions with "not really." However, if the goal is not necessarily to have a formal sector but to have an *effective* sector (or as effective as possible in the given circumstances), then the notion of the blurred boundaries implies the existing dynamics are not a zero-sum game. Formal and informal activities all comprise the same sector and, in all practicality, it often does not matter whether the resources have been formalized, so long as the shared goals are achieved within the bounds of *legitimate* institutional boundaries (Webb et al. 2013).

How can a more effective sector be eventually developed? If the imported institutions are often not ineffective, what kinds of institutions are appropriate in this context?

Institution Building

The second key topic that emerged in this research encompasses the efficacy of civil society “reconstruction” in the post-totalitarian contexts utilizing predominantly Western-conceptualized institution-building processes. While an institutionalized and consolidated sector traditionally is the desired destination, in certain contexts, it may not be attainable through imported institutions presented in a top-down fashion, especially if it is done without a careful consideration and inculcation of local contextual nuances. Institution-building processes, especially through the means of foreign aid distribution, have backfired in many non-Western contexts (see, for instance, Chahim & Prakash 2014; Burger & Owens 2013; Choudry & Kapoor 2013; Lutsevych 2013; Mendelson & Glenn 2002; Sogge 2002; Crawford 2001; Henderson 2000), calling for alternative, more culturally-nuanced approaches to civil society development. Edwards’ (2014) second lens of civil society discourse, the “good society,” can be especially helpful in addressing these issues inherent in institution-building processes.

The incongruent formal institutions do not always resonate with the Ukrainian society that is habitually informal and relational, as well as distrustful of bureaucracy, garnering meager support from the general polity (especially outside the metropolitan areas, where society in general is less accustomed to Western institutional models). Furthermore, the formal third sector organizations generally are not perceived to embody the positive norms and values of the “good society,” according to the grassroots activists and service providers, but, rather, echo those of the largely distrusted formal institutions, promoting disassociation and disengagement. Informal civil society potentially serves as

a viable alternative to the ostensibly over-professionalized, impermeable, and perceptibly resource-dependent part of the sector.

In order to have a more widespread engagement with the mainstream institutions of civil society, they must reflect socially relevant values and norms that cultivate trust. Thus, if the idealized civil society institutions are based in the values of mutuality, familiarity, transparency, and independence, then how can these values be instilled into the sustainable institutions that have the potential for societal consolidation society without the negative side-effects of corporatization, impermeability and external resource dependence that promote distrust? A nuanced approach, in which the positive values (cultivating trust) would be amplified and capitalized upon, while the negative values (promoting distrust) – reduced and replaced, could help conceptualize and build more balanced and relevant civil society institutions.

Research Design and Methods

Based on these theoretical discussions, this research also has some methodological implications, calling for alternative conceptualizations of civil society, including its activities, boundaries, efficacy, and impact, in contexts like Ukraine. First, the prevailing unit of analysis (membership in civil society organizations) needs to be expanded to include informal activity. Second, there is a need for additional units of analysis in civil society research that transcends organizational boundaries.

Widened scope. Extant methodological approaches based on World Values Survey (WVS) and other national and international datasets do not fully capture informal civic engagement. The Ukrainian translation of the WVS question, which serves as the key dependent variable in comparative civil society research (generally diagnosing civic

engagement deficit), includes such terms as “civic organization” and “membership” both of which are closely associated with formal organization participation. Had the WVS questions been asked in the way that would include *all* of voluntary association (formal and informal), would our assessment of civic engagement change? If so, how different, if at all, would it look?

Outside the box. When expanding our conceptualization of civil society beyond the number of organizations and the extent of their formal memberships in the Ukrainian context the central question is: What is being accomplished by civil society, and how? Shifting the unit of analysis in the assessment of civil society from organizations and their membership levels to collective outcomes, as well as levels of communication and collaboration between individuals and groups within a given society would paint a more accurate picture of civic engagement in contexts where informal practices prevail. Additional approaches to civil society research would focus on outcomes (Böröcz 2000a), as well as on the efficacy of interactions between the members of society, and their collective engagement in the polity (Ekiert & Kubik 2014).

How can we begin addressing these shortcomings in the empirical and conceptual research? The following section offers some ideas for future research.

Future Research: In Search of Sustainable Institutions

The theoretical and methodological discussions noted above offer several ideas for future research. Here, I focus on three specific research directions stemming from my study’s findings. First, future research can expand upon the insights revealed by this study by deepening our understanding of the dynamics, as well as casting a wider net to generalize and scale up the findings. Furthermore, to augment our understanding of the

interactions between formal and informal institutions, other stakeholders' perspectives should be examined, such as the Ukrainian state and the Western aid community. Importantly, the interplay, as well as the tensions between these formal institutions and the informal institutions of civil society should receive particular attention in future research. Finally, historical legacies affecting civic engagement should also be reexamined. While studying the effects of the Soviet totalitarian regime on the formation of norms and values that drive informal behavior and civic disengagement, future research should also examine the civic, philanthropic, and self-governance activities that both predated and outlasted the regime.

Deeper Dive, Wider Net

Based on the study's findings, there is a need for a systematic research encompassing civil society's informal activities in Ukraine. While deepening the existing knowledge with greater nuance, research should also cast a wider net to generalize and scale up the study findings.

Depth. Additional qualitative data can enrich the study's findings by shedding additional light on the different kinds of activities within the civil society sector, including their differences and similarities. Thick description and process tracing of activities within specific cases, for instance, can enrich our knowledge on the processes and strategies employed by different groups, as well as examine their failures and successes. Qualitative approaches can also help better understand both the kinds of inputs and outputs of the informal civil society, as well as the multiple interactions within the sector, and between various stakeholders in other sectors of society. Intimate

knowledge of the communities, and their formal and informal leaders and participants, will be crucial for obtaining earnest and nuanced qualitative data.

Breadth. To generalize this study's findings, as well as to begin assessing the scope of informal civil society activities, survey methods engaging national representative samples of the Ukrainian population should be employed. Survey methods can also help test the typologies of informal activities revealed by this study. Furthermore, to begin scaling up the study's findings, comparative qualitative and quantitative studies can engage informal civil society dynamics in other developing contexts, including those in the post-Soviet domain (e.g., Moldova, Georgia, Estonia, etc.), the wider post-communist region of Eastern and Central Europe (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Slovakia), as well as other developing and developed countries where informality pervades (e.g., Argentina, Italy, India).

From Bottom-Up to Top-Down

While this study employed a bottom-up approach, being grounded in the perspectives of civil society stakeholders, future research can also consider top-down viewpoints of the prevalent informality by analyzing in what ways both formal laws and institutional funding shape the behavior of civil society actors. Thus, additional angles in research can focus on the actions of those actors whose decisions play a significant role in shaping Ukraine's civil society and its informal activities.

State-civil society. First, the relative power of the Ukrainian state and its interactions with societal actors can be examined through an in-depth review of legislative texts pertaining to civil society activities in Ukraine, with a special emphasis on the provisions that may be driving informal practices. Interviews with legal experts

working in Ukraine who can speak to the nuances of the laws' provisions, including their applicability, enforcement and implementation, can augment the insights derived from the analysis of legislative texts. The findings can then be compared with this study's data on civil society actors' experiences with and perceptions of the legislative environment.

Western aid-civil society. Second, to expand our understanding of the role and significance of Western aid efforts on the development of authentic civic engagement and the tension between formal and informal institutions, future research can involve an in-depth analysis of the major Western aid strategies (e.g., EU, USAID., etc.), analyzing the implications of their efforts for civil society actors on the ground. Interviews with representatives of funding institutions, as well as civil society actors' perceptions of those efforts, can complement and expand the knowledge gained through the review of relevant texts. My prior research suggested that, without the practical knowledge and consideration of contextual preponderance of informality, Western assistance directed at formal organizations is at least partially missing its target, and even potentially distorts authentic civic engagement. The above can examine the extent to which this is happening, as well as the nature and the underlying reasons for these developments.

Institutional interplay. While examining these two sets of external forces driving informal civil society action (government regulation, and foreign aid), one of the underlying foci in research should be on the interplay between formal and informal institutions, and their mutual effects on civil society development, efficacy, and impact. Factors inhibiting as well as fostering communication and cooperation between the different institutions should be examined. Importantly, *tensions* between these formal

institutions and the informal institutions of civil society revealed by this study should receive particular attention.

‘Back to the Future,’ or Onward through the Past?

Finally, in the quest for more culturally-appropriate models of civil society organizing in Ukraine, future research should reconsider historical legacies driving the undercurrent predispositions of Ukrainian citizens in their civic engagement. How far back in history do the extant norms of informal civic behavior go? Are they the result of the turbulent post-Soviet developments? Are they the symptoms of the debated “communist legacies”? Or are they embedded in something even more deeply rooted, predating and transcending the events of the previous century? In order to understand what kinds of institutions can potentially work constructively to support Ukraine’s civil society, research should explore the kinds of institutions that may have worked in the past, and how they continue to manifest themselves at the present.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

As this research has thus far inferred, there is no “easy” button which will “fix” informality in Ukraine’s third sector. In fact, the institutionalization processes that have been tacitly attempting to “fix” the institutionally-deficient consequences of the totalitarian era, have largely backfired, resulting in citizens’ resistance to formalization, on the one hand, and in formal CSO sector chronically lacking grassroots support – on the other. Such pervading informality and even implicit antagonism between formal and informal institutions will need to be eventually reduced to more constructive and sustainable levels. However, in attempting to achieve this result, the development of new strategies must depart from the point of the society’s current “location” and move

towards the desired ends, instead of assuming the point of destination and hope for the rest to catch up. That approach has not worked, and in all likelihood will continue to be ineffective, if not altogether destructive. The process of building the appropriate institutions will be gradual, painful, and not always successful, but it can happen eventually with a concerted and painstaking effort within all sectors of society. Below are some of the practical recommendations to begin improving the conditions for civil society in Ukraine.

Policy Development

While the “easy” button for reducing informality often entails deregulation for scholars (Thießen 2003), and stricter regulation – for the governments, the study’s findings have revealed that incongruent formal regulatory environment constitutes only one of the factors driving informality in Ukraine’s civil society. It is an important factor, nevertheless, and reducing a regulatory burden (specifically, simplifying formal procedures of registration and financial reporting) should reduce at least some of the existing hurdles hindering formalization of civic activity; one of the examples of such deregulation could be a provision reducing reporting requirements for organizations with small budgets, similarly to those in the U.S.

More importantly, however, to reduce civil society’s avoidance and subversion of formal institutions, Ukraine’s state needs to foster genuine communication and collaboration with civil society, including CSOs, grassroots groups, and informal community leaders. For that to occur meaningfully, formal policies are needed that would reflect a general reconceptualization of the relationship between the society and state (as discussed in Chapter 5), as well as open and genuine communication. The

existing civic councils are a good step in that direction in theory; however, they need to foster true collaboration and input from community which currently has significant issues.

External Funding

Study findings suggest that the Western aid community could strive for being more accessible to groups, organizations, and initiatives that may not have the professional capacity to apply for and be competitive within their extant institutional grants programs. This may require revisiting the change logics for some of these agencies with an explicit intent of engaging informal groups and initiatives in dialogue and problem-solving. Specific strategies may entail simplification of application processes, working with groups through fiscal agents in their community, and simply taking a leap of faith with some of the groups that do not have strategic plans, permanent staff, and the ability to produce professional reports. There are certainly risks associated with such approaches, including the possibility that the resources will not be used as intended, but there are always these risks, and, as this research suggests, the production of a comprehensive report by a perceptibly institutionalized organization does not always guarantee effective materialization of grant resources. These risks can be reduced by building personal relationships with stakeholders in the community which, of course, will require time and resources to develop overtime.

Closing Thoughts

This dissertation provides no “easy” button for fixing the theoretical and practical conundrums presented by Ukraine’s informal civil society. On the contrary, the study suggests that it will take a painstaking, long-term effort spanning all sectors of society to

make a turn for more positive and widespread civic engagement in the country.

Furthermore, it will take a considerable amount of additional research to fully understand the dynamics, motivations, as well as scope and impact, of informal civic activities, in Ukraine and other contexts.

Will Ukraine's society move painfully forward, towards stronger state, stronger society, and a healthier relationship between the two through sweeping reforms and social and political transformation? Will it fall apathetically backward, towards the Soviet-style paternalistic and authoritarian relationship between the state and society by disengaging even more as result of the many disappointments of the past failures to instill change? Or will it continue to "muddle-through" (Riabchuk 2012; Dyczok 2000), remaining stuck in the extant institutional gridlock, by lacking consolidation and collective will to instill change? Time and future research will show. However, Ukraine's civil society's persistence against often insurmountable odds documented in this research offers some room for optimism and hope.

REFERENCES

- Aasland, A. & Lyska, O. (2016). "Local democracy in Ukrainian cities: civic participation and responsiveness of local authorities." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32(2), pp. 152-175.
- Abzug, R. (1999). "The Nonprofit Sector and the Informal Sector: A Theoretical Perspective." *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 10(2), pp. 131-149.
- Aliyev, H. (2015). "Post-Soviet informality: towards theory-building." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 35(3/4), pp. 182-198.
- Allina-Pisano, J. (2010). "Social contracts and authoritarian projects in post-Soviet space: The use of administrative resource." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43 (2010), pp. 373-382.
- Alter Chen, M. (2012). *The Informal Economy: Definitions, Theories and Policies* (Working Paper No. 1). Retrieved from Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and organizing:
http://www.wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Chen_WIEGO_WP1.pdf, last accessed on October 31, 2017.
- Alter Chen, M. (2005). *Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment* (Research Paper No. 2005/10). UNU-WIDER, United Nations University (UNU). Available at:
<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/63329>, last accessed on October 30, 2017.
- Anheier, H.K. (2014). "Civil Society Research: Ten Years on." *Journal of Civil Society* 10(4), pp. 335-339.
- Anheier, H.K. (2004). *Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Bekeshkina I. & Kaźmierkiewicz, P. (2012), *Making Ukraine's Civil Society Matter: Enabling Ukrainian NGOs to absorb international assistance. A review of capacity gaps and needs for institutional support*. Warsaw: Institut Spraw Politycznych. Available at: <http://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/pdf/1965036503.pdf>, last accessed on February 28, 2016.
- Berenson, M. (2010). "Less Fear, Little Trust: Deciphering the Whys of Ukrainian Tax Compliance." In D'Anieri, P. (Ed.), *Orange Revolution and Aftermath: Mobilization, Apathy, and the State in Ukraine* (pp. 193-228). Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

- Berg, B. L. (2007). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 6th Edition. San Francisco, CA: Pearson Education.
- Bidenko, J. (2013). “(De)Structuring of Civil Society and Protest Risks in Political Processes in the Borderland (political background, regulatory frameworks, structural features and points of growth of civil society in Belarus and Ukraine).” *Crossroads: The journal for the studies of Eastern European borderland* 1(2), pp. 140-208.
- Bohdanova, T. (2014). “Unexpected revolution: the role of social media in Ukraine’s Euromaidan uprising.” *European View* 13(1), pp. 133-142.
- Böröcz, J. (2000a). “Informality and Nonprofits in East Central European Capitalism.” *VOLUNTAS, International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 11(2), pp. 123-140.
- Böröcz, J. (2000b). “Informality Rules.” *East European Politics and Societies* 14(2), pp. 348-380.
- Burger, R. & Owens, T. (2013). “Receive Grants or Perish? The Survival Prospects of Ugandan Non-Governmental Organisations.” *The Journal of Development Studies* 49(9), pp. 1284-1298.
- Bruton, G.D., Ireland, R.D. & Ketchen Jr., D.J. (2012). “Toward a Research Agenda on the Informal Economy.” *Academy of Management Perspectives* 26(3), pp. 1-11.
- Chahim, D. & Prakash, A. (2014). “NGOization, Foreign Funding, and the Nicaraguan Civil Society.” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 25(2), pp. 487–513.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Choudry, A. & Kapoor, D. (2013). *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Crawford, G. (2001). *Foreign Aid and Political Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Democracy Assistance and Political Conditionality*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

- D'Anieri, P.J. (2017). "Anarchy, the State, and Ukraine." In Heathershaw, J. & Schatz, E. (Eds.) *Paradox of Power: The Logics of State Weakness in Eurasia*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- D'Anieri, P.J. [Ed.] (2010). *Orange Revolution and Aftermath: Mobilization, Apathy, and the State in Ukraine*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Dallago, B. (1990). *The Irregular Economy: The "Underground" Economy and the "Black" Labour Market*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Dartmouth Publishing Co.
- Dauvergne, P. & LeBaron, G. (2013). *The Corporatization of Activism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- De Castro, J.O., Khavul, S. & Bruton, G.D. (2014). "Shades of Grey: How do Informal Firms Navigate between Macro and Meso Institutional Environments?" *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* 8(1), pp. 75-94.
- De Tocqueville, A. (1945). *Democracy in America*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Dyczok, M. (2000). *Ukraine: Movement without Change, Change without Movement*. Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Reading, UK: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Edwards, M. (2014). *Civil Society*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Ekiert, G. & Kubik, J. (2014). "Myths and Realities of Civil Society." *Journal of Democracy* 25(1), pp. 46-58.
- Eliasoph, N. (2013). *The Politics of Volunteering*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Eliasoph, N. (1996). "Making a Fragile Public: A Talk-Centered Study of Citizenship and Power." *Sociological Theory* 14(3), pp. 262-289.
- Elster, J. (1989). "Social Norms and Economic Theory." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3(4), pp. 99-117.
- Fowler, A. (2010). "Civic Agency." In Anheier H.K. & Toepler, S. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* (pp. 150-155). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Freedom House (2000-16). *Freedom in the World* Reports. Available: <https://freedomhouse.org/reports>, last accessed on October 17, 2017.
- Gatskova, K. & Gatskov, M. (2015). "Third Sector in Ukraine: Civic Engagement Before and After the 'Euromaidan.'" *VOLUNTAS, International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27(2), pp. 673-694.

- Ghosh, M. (2014). *In Search of Sustainability: Civil Society in Ukraine*. Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/10862.pdf>, last accessed on February 18, 2016.
- Ghosh, M. (2010). "Civil society in Ukraine," in Piotr Kaźmierkiewicz (Ed.) *Integration of migrants in Ukraine. Situation and needs assessment*. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (Warsaw, 2011).
- Grzymala-Busse, A. (2010). "The Best Laid Plans: The Impact of Informal Rules on Formal Institutions in Transitional Regimes." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 45(3), pp. 311-333.
- Helmke G. & Levitsky S. (2004). "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda." *Perspectives on Politics* 2(04), pp. 725-740.
- Henderson, S. (2000). "Importing Civil Society: Foreign Aid and the Women's Movement in Russia." *Demokratizatsiya* 8(1), pp. 65-82.
- Hindman, M. (2008). *The myth of digital democracy*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.
- Howard, M. M. (2010). "Civil Society and Democracy." In Anheier H.K. & Toepler, S. (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* (pp. 186-192). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Howard, M. M. (2003). *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Husmanns, R. (2004). "Measuring the Informal Economy: From Employment in the Informal Sector to Informal Employment," Preface, pp. i-iii. Working Paper No. 53. Geneva, Switzerland: *International Labour Office*.
- Kopecky, P. & Mudde, C. (2005). *Uncivil Society?: Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Krasynska, S. (2014). "Contra Spem Spero: The Third Sector Resilience in the Face of Political Turbulence and Legislative Change in Ukraine." *Nonprofit Policy Forum* 6(2), pp. 167-186.
- Krasynska, S. (2015). "Digital Civil Society: Euromaidan, the Ukrainian Diaspora, and Social Media" In Marples D.R. & Mills, F.V. (Eds.), *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution* (pp. 177-198). Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, and New York: Columbia University Press.

- Krasynska, S. & Martin, E.C. (2017). "The Formality of Informal Civil Society: Ukraine's EuroMaidan." *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 28(1), 420-449.
- Kuts, S. & Palyvoda, L. (2006). "Civil Society in Ukraine: 'Driving Engine or Spare Wheel for Change'?" *CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for Ukraine*. Kyiv, Ukraine: Center for Philanthropy and Counterpart Creative Center.
- Kuzio, T. (2012). "Twenty Years as an Independent State: Ukraine's Ten Logical Inconsistencies." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45(3-4), pp. 429-438.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. 2nd Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2017). "Trust in Social Institutions." Available at: <http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=678&page=1>, last accessed on October 17, 2017.
- Lagerspetz, M. (2008): "Estniska frivilligorganisationer mellan professionalisering och gräsrotsaktivism." In: Kanckos, L. & Kauranen, R. (Eds.) *Social samhörighet och religion. Festskrift till Susan Sundback* (pp. 245-261). Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.
- Lutsevych, O. (2013). "How to Finish a Revolution: Civil Society and Democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine." Chatham House, briefing paper. Available at: https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0113bp_lutsevych.pdf, last accessed on February 28, 2016.
- Marples D.R. & Mills, F.V. (Eds.). *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution*, Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, and New York: Columbia University Press.
- Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. 3rd Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- McCabe, A., Phillimore, J. & Mayblin, L. (2010). "'Below the radar' activities and organisations in the third sector: a summary review of the literature." *Third Sector Research Centre*, Working Paper 29.
- McGahan, A.M. (2012). "Challenges of the Informal Economy for the Field of Management." *Academy of Management Perspectives* 26(3), pp. 12-21.
- Mendelson, S. & Glenn, J. (2002). *The Power and Limits of NGOs*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

- Minakov, M. (2014). "Cooperation and competition between civil society organizations, the ruling elites and the oligarchs after Maidan 2014." *Forum of newest Eastern European history and culture* 2(2014), pp. 11-18.
- Misztal, B.A. (2000). *Informality: Social Theory and Contemporary Practice*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Morozov, E. (2012), *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.
- Morozov, E. (2014), *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.
- Morris, J. & Polese, A. (2014). "Introduction: Informality – enduring practices, entwined livelihoods." In Morris, J. & Polese, A. (Eds.), *Informal Post-Socialist Economy: Embedded Practices and Livelihoods* (pp. 1-18). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Onuch, O. (2014). "Who were the protesters?" *Journal of Democracy* 25(3), pp. 44-57.
- OSCE (2015). *Thematic Report: Civil Society and the Crisis in Ukraine*. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Available at: <http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/141046?download=true>, last accessed on February 28, 2016.
- Palys, T. (2008). "Purposive Sampling." In Given, L. (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 697-8). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Palyvoda, L., Vinnikov, O., & Kupriy, V. (2016). *Defining Civil Society for Ukraine – Research Report*. Kyiv, Ukraine: CCC Creative Center.
- Palyvoda, L. & Golota, S. (2010). *Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine. The State and Dynamics (2002-2009): Survey Report*. Kyiv, Ukraine: Publishing house "Kupol." Available at: http://uniter.org.ua/data/block/civil_society_organizations_in_ukraine_eng.pdf, last accessed on February 10, 2016.
- Paniotto, V. & Kharchenko, N. (2017). "Dovira Sotzial'nym Instytutam [Trust in Social Institutions]." Kyiv, Ukraine: Analitika.
- Perry, G.E., Maloney, W.F. & Arias, O. (2007). *Informality: Exit and Exclusion*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications.
- Pop-Eleches, G. & Tucker, J.A. (2013). "Associated with the Past?: Communist Legacies and Civic Participation in Post-Communist Countries." *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 27(1), pp. 45-68.

- Putnam, R.D. (2000). "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." In Crothers L. & Lockhart C. (Eds.), *Culture and Politics* (pp. 223-234). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Putnam, R. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Razumkov Centre (2016). "Ukraine 2016-2017: Signs of Progress and Symptoms of Disappointment (assessments)." Kyiv, Ukraine: Razumkov Center.
- Razumkov Centre (2013). "Sudova Reforma i Stan Sudochynstva v Ukraini: Oztinky Ekspertiv [Judicial Reform and State of Judicial Process in Ukraine: Expert Assessments]," pp. 107-155. Kyiv, Ukraine: Razumkov Centre.
- Riabchuk, M. (2012). "Ukraine's 'muddling through': National identity and postcommunist transition. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45(3-4), pp. 439-446.
- Robins, K., & Webster, F. (2004). "The long history of the information revolution." In Webster, F. & Blom, R. (Eds.), *The Information Society Reader* (pp. 62-80). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Schneider, F., Buehn, A. & Montenegro, C.E. (2011). "Shadow Economies all over the World: New Estimates for 162 Countries from 1999 to 2007." In Schneider, F. (Ed.), *Handbook on the Shadow Economy* (pp. 9-77). Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Skocpol, T. (2003). "Doubly Engaged Social Science: The Promise of Comparative Historical Analysis". In Mahoney, J. & Rueschemeyer, D. (Eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (pp. 407-435). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Skocpol, T. (1999). "How Americans Became Civic." In Skocpol, T. & Fiorina, M. (Eds.) *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (pp. 27-80). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Skocpol, T. & Fiorina, M. [Eds.] (1999). *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Smith, D.H., Moldavanova, A.V. & Krasynska, S. [Eds.] (2017-forthcoming). *The Nonprofit Sector in Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia: Civil Society Advances and Challenges*. Leiden, Netherlands, and Boston, MA: Brill Publishers.
- Smith, D.H. (2000). *Grassroots Associations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Sogge, D. (2002). *Give and Take: What's the Matter with Foreign Aid?* London, UK: Zed Books.
- Stepanenko, V.P. (2015). "Konfihuratzii Panuvannya ta Sprotyvu v Konteksti Instytutzionalnyh Osoblyvostej Rozvytku Hromadyantskoho Suspilstva v Ukraïni" [Configurations of Power and Resistance in the Context of Institutional Idiosyncrasies of Civil Society Development in Ukraine]. Presentation at the International Academic-Practitioner Conference (November 26-27, 2015), "Derzhava ta hlobalni socialni zminy: istorychna sotziolohiya panuvannya ta sprotyvu v epohu modernu" [The State and Global Social Change: Historic Sociology of Power and Resistance in the Modern Age]. Kyiv: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Available at: http://www.sociology.kpi.ua/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/3бipka_тез_Держава_2015.pdf, last accessed on February 28, 2016.
- Stepanenko, V.P. (2006). "Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Civic Ethos in the Framework of Corrupted Sociality?" *East European Politics and Societies* 20(4), pp. 571–597.
- Stewart, S. (2009). "NGO Development in Ukraine since the Orange Revolution." In Besters-Dilger (Ed.), *Ukraine on its Way to Europe: Interim Results of the Orange Revolution* (pp. 177-194). Frankfurt a.M, Germany: Peter Lang Verlag.
- Thießen, U. (2003). "The impact of fiscal policy and deregulation on shadow economies in transition countries: The case of Ukraine." *Public Choice* 114(3-4), pp. 295–318.
- Transparency International (2016). Corruption Perception Index 2016. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016, last accessed on October 17, 2017.
- USAID (2012). *The 2012 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia: Ukraine*. Available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/UKR.pdf>, last accessed on February 10, 2016.
- USAID (2013). *The 2013 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. Available at: http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/EE_2013_CSOSI_FullReport.pdf, last accessed on February 10, 2016.
- U.S. Department of State (2000-16). *Human Rights Reports*. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>, last accessed on October 17, 2017.
- Van Til, J. (2008). *Growing Civil Society: From Nonprofit Sector to Third Space*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Way, L. (2014). "Civil Society and Democratization." *Journal of Democracy* 25(3), pp. 35-43.
- Webb, J.W., Bruton, G.D., Tihanyi, L. & Ireland, R.D. (2013). "Research on entrepreneurship in the informal economy: Framing a research agenda." *Journal of Business Venturing* 28(5), pp. 598-614.
- Williams, C.C., & Onoschenko, O. (2014). "The diverse livelihood practices of healthcare workers in Ukraine: the case of Sasha and Natasha." In Morris, J. & Polese, A. (Eds.), *The Informal Post-Soviet Economy. Embedded Practices and Livelihoods* (pp. 21-34). London and New York: Routledge.
- WILPF (2014). *Voices from Ukraine: Civil Society as a Driver for Peace: Strengthening the Role and Contribution of Ukrainian Women in Conflict Prevention, Resolution, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation*. Geneva and New York: Women's International League for Peace & Freedom. Available at: <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Report.pdf>, last accessed on October 30, 2017.
- Zmerli, S. (2012). "Social Structure and Political Trust in Europe." In Silke, K.I. & Gabriel, O.G. (Eds.), *Society and Democracy in Europe* (pp. 111-138). London, UK: Routledge.

APPENDIX A

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

The structure of inquiry chosen for this study highlights the importance of individual “perspectives of those being studied” (Merriam 2009, p. 1) in answering the three central research questions addressed in chapters 3, 4, and 5, respectively:

1. What are the expressions of informal civil society in Ukraine?
2. What explains informal civil society’s existence in the Ukrainian context? and
3. What is the significance of informal civil society activities in Ukraine?

In order to discover informal activities and understand their underlying reasons, the study relied on selecting a sample of individuals who could speak with authority and first-hand knowledge on behalf organizations, groups and initiatives of civil society that were largely unregulated by the Ukrainian government. The study sample was geographically dispersed, and reflected a broad range of service and advocacy-related activities. The use of semi-structured interviews as the core method allowed for an in-depth inquiry into activities and motives that cannot be meaningfully accomplished with other means of data collection (Kvale & Brinkman 2012; Creswell 2009; Berg 2007; Charmaz 2006).

Data Sources

The study is based primarily on data derived from 70 interviews with individuals who had first-hand knowledge of Ukraine’s informal civil society and its activities. Interviewees were solicited from diverse parts of Ukraine in order to engage as diverse spectrum of perspectives on informal voluntary action as possible, across rural and urban divides, as well as geographic locations with divergent historical legacies.

Study participants included predominantly leaders of civil society initiatives, groups and organizations that were at least to some degree unregulated by the Ukrainian

government. Several Ukrainian scholars were also interviewed for a broader understanding of the informal third sector dynamics. An interview guide was used to direct the semi-structured conversations with participants, encompassing both exploratory and confirmatory inquiry approaches. Most of the interviewees discussed in their own words the nature and scope of their civic activities, their reasons for operating informally, as well as the nature of their interactions with other stakeholders in the polity. Social media content, along with a variety of secondary data sources, was used to triangulate the interview data.

Sampling Strategies

In view of the absence of comprehensive information on the informal civil society groups and initiatives in Ukraine (Palyvoda, Vinnikov & Kupriy 2016, p. 23), the study employed a purposive sampling strategy (Palys 2008) striving to identify as broad a range of informal organizational strategies and settings as possible. Several strategies were used to diversify study participants in order to observe as broad a spectrum of informal activity as was possible within the purview of a single dissertation study.

First, individuals interviewed were located in diverse geographic regions of Ukraine, including the following cities, towns and villages: Khmelnytsky, Perehinka (Khmelnytska Oblast), Ternopil, Lviv, Chernivtzi, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhya, Nikopol, Kyiv, Boyarka (Kyivska Oblast), Kharkiv, and Sumy. Additionally, three internally displaced individuals from cities of Donetsk and Horlivka, who now reside in other locations of Ukraine, were interviewed. These various locations are illustrated in Figure A.1. While previous studies alluded to a possible variation in civil society dynamics between eastern and western parts of Ukraine, chiefly because of the different regions' varied historical

legacies (Aasland & Lyska 2016; WILPF 2014) which prompted this sampling strategy, interview data did not reveal significant regional variations in participants' informal approaches to civic engagement. Variations were more present in the types of activities undertaken, rather than their geographic locations.



Figure A.1. Map of Ukraine, Interview Locations.

Note: Research sites are denoted as follows: ■ In-person interview location; ■ Phone/Skype interview location; ■ Internally displaced individuals interviewed in alternative locations.

Thus, retrospectively, it turned out more important to diversify the pool of participants with regard to the kinds of organizations and initiatives included in the study. Thematic diversity was introduced to the sample in terms of organizational missions and goals: 27 participants represented organizations and initiatives primarily providing some sort of service (either to a specific target population or the organization's/group's informal members), 19 respondents represented advocacy organizations and initiatives,

and the remaining 18 – engaged in both service and advocacy. Finally, because of the ongoing war in the eastern parts of Ukraine, many organizations and initiatives, regardless of their core missions, took part in supporting the war efforts at one point or another or on a regular basis, while 11 respondents represented organizations and initiatives that engaged in supporting the Ukrainian army as their main activity.

The primary focus in the study was on groups and initiatives that operated either fully or predominantly on an informal/unofficial basis. Since the boundaries between formal and informal action are often unclear, both registered and unregistered organizations were included. Approximately one-third of the study participants (22 respondents) spoke on behalf of organizations that were registered with the Ukrainian government, while the remainder two-thirds (42 respondents) – did not have any official registration. While the focus remained on the activities carried out predominantly on an informal basis, the strategy of including both registered and unregistered organizations was pivotal for the subsequent analysis of the boundaries between formal and informal activities. The study sample, including respondents' organizations' and initiatives' various characteristics is summarized in Table A.1.

Table A.1

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Sample

	Organization/Group	Individual	Intersectoral	Total
Registered	22	0	0	22
No registration	28	11	3	42
<i>Advocacy focus</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Service focus</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Advocacy & service</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Temporary</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Long-term</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>51</i>

Note: Numerals denote the number of entities in the study sample exhibiting the various characteristics.

Informal Approach to Participant Selection

Because of the sensitive nature of the research topic (participants essentially had to reveal circumventing formal regulations through their activities), informal relationships and endorsements were at the heart of the study's sampling strategy, eventually proving pivotal for obtaining earnest and forthright information from the participants. The initial set of participants was selected based on my personal networks of friends, colleagues and family members residing in Ukraine, and I had personal knowledge about these individuals' activities prior to inviting them to participate in the study. To expand the pool of participants, I further employed a snowball sampling approach, by which I asked my friends, acquaintances and colleagues to connect me with individuals within their own personal and professional networks who, to their knowledge, were engaged in informal civic activity. In view of the semantic ambiguities inherent in the definitions of both "informal" and "civil society" in the Ukrainian language and culture, and to cast as wide a net as possible, I used rather broad terms to define the eligible activities to potential study participants. These included: "self-organization," "neighborhood groups," "civic initiatives," "working groups," among others, qualifying these by the terms "aimed at improving conditions, fostering culture, fighting injustice or helping others."

Particularly important in the process of securing and conducting interviews with this wider pool of participants was a personal recommendation and endorsement by those within my friendship networks. Before contacting most of the potential interviewees outside of my immediate networks, our point of contact (my friend, acquaintance or colleague) would notify me that the potential interviewee was assured that I could be

trusted. Interviewees with this informal “seal of approval” were significantly more likely to reveal honest information that was crucial for understanding the true manifestations, functions and roots of informal civil society action in Ukraine. In the few cases where obtaining such endorsement was not possible, conversations with participants were perceptibly more strained and formal, requiring painstaking attempts on my part to develop the degree of relational trust necessary for the participants to begin divulging earnest information regarding their true understanding of events, instead of providing their official versions. At the same time, these dynamics were also informative for the research study, speaking to the notions of trust and distrust, and the resulting cooperation potential, within and outside the immediate social networks.

Finally, because of the predominantly low public trust in formal institutions and bureaucracy, I have petitioned the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to waive the written consent requirement. The IRB has approved my conducting the interviews with *verbal* consent from participants.

Interview Process

The selection process eventually resulted in 70 interviews with a total of 75 individuals. Three interviews included two, three and four participants, respectively, each group talking on behalf of a single organization or initiative. Sixty four interviews concerned civil society groups, initiatives or organizations that were at least in some way unregulated by the government; the respondents were predominantly leaders in the activities they described. Six of the 70 interviewees were Ukrainian scholars whose work related at least in some way to the subject of civil society, and who provided the broader context of the activities and dynamics described by the other interviewees.

The interviews were conducted in an informal, conversational format at respondents' homes, offices, as well as in public spaces, such as community centers, parks and restaurants. Several interviews took place at the organizations' physical locations or offices, which further provided context for these organizations' activities. All settings were chosen, or agreed to, by the participants to protect their confidentiality. A verbal consent to participate in the study was requested and obtained from each participant. All participants were assured anonymity.

Additionally, the interviews were conducted either in Ukrainian or Russian language, as chosen by the participants, and ranged in duration from 20 to 150 minutes, on average lasting roughly one hour. Sixty-three interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed in their original language. Notes were taken for the seven interviews that were not recorded. Several follow up emails and private Facebook messages have been saved and included with the transcribed interviews for analysis. A list of interviews, types of initiatives and organizations represented by respondents, interviews' and interviewees' locations, and interview dates, is provided in the **Appendix C: Primary Data – Interviews**.

Interview Guide

An extensive interview guide was developed based on the relevant theoretical concepts distilled from literature across various academic disciplines, which are discussed at length in chapter 2. This interview guide was piloted and tested during the initial set of interviews, and is outlined in Table A.2.

Table A.2

Expanded Interview Guide

Overarching Concept	Guiding questions
STRUCTURES & FORMS	
Institutional forms (Castro, et al. 2014)	What are the organizational manifestations within the formal-informal “multidimensional <i>continuum</i> ”?
Management/governance (Bruton, et al. 2015; Helmke & Levitsky 2004)	How and <i>by whom</i> are the informal activities accomplished? How are the informal activities and groups regulated <i>internally</i> in the absence (or irrelevance) of formal rules?
Resources (Böröcz 2000)	What are the nature and mechanisms of <i>inputs</i> into the informal civil society?
Mission/programs (Böröcz 2000a)	What are the nature and mechanisms of <i>outputs</i> of the informal civil society?
INFORMALITY DRIVERS	
Exclusion vs. exit (Perry et al. 2007)	Is the informal civil society essentially <i>unable</i> to operate formally because of the overly burdensome regulatory requirements? Does the informal civil society <i>choose</i> to not formalize for lack of benefit that formalization offers, given its cost (Within that, is there a prevalent “culture of informality”)?
Legitimacy (Bruton, Ireland & Ketchen 2012; Suchman 1995)	What provides the informal civil society legitimacy enabling it to operate in the Ukrainian society? Is informal action inherently perceived as trustworthy? Are there factors that enhance legitimacy? Is it driven by the lack of the formal sector’s legitimacy (e.g., low trust in formal institutions)?
Flexibility and freedom (Miztcal 2000; Böröcz 2000)	Is there a level of flexibility in the informal action that is not available in the formal sector? Is flexibility and freedom/independence of action something inherently engrained in the Ukrainian culture?
INTERACTIONS	
Relationships with CSOs (Grzymala-Busse 2010; Helmke & Levitsky 2004)	What is the nature of these interactions? Complementary, substitutive, accommodating, competing. Replacing, undermining, supporting, competing.
Relations with government (Alter Chen 2012; Grzymala-Busse 2010; Helmke & Levitsky 2004)	How are the informal groups affected by (respond to) the regulatory environment? How, in turn, do they affect the regulatory environment? What is the nature of these interactions?

This extensive interview guide was eventually condensed into a shorter set of *guiding* themes and topics as result of the initial 8-10 interviews. The condensed interview guide is outlined in Table A.3.

Table A.3

Condensed Interview Guide

Theme	Topics
Background	When, how, and why the activity started How it is organized, and how it changed overtime Stakeholders, relationships, extent of involvement Inputs and outputs of activity
Reasons for informality	‘Exit’ and/or ‘exclusion’ (formalization impossible/undesirable) Flexibility, mobility, convenience Trust, legitimacy
Interactions	Interactions with other CSOs (formal and informal) Interactions with the government Interactions with other actors in the polity

While this condensed guide was used to provide general directions for conversation in terms of the concepts to be explored, the flow and content of individual interviews varied based on participants’ responses, as well as the context and activities discussed.

Other Sources of Data

In an attempt to at least partially triangulate the interview data, I reviewed over thirty personal and organizational (both public and private) Facebook profiles hosted either by individuals or organizations involved in the activities that were discussed by study participants during the interviews. Between summer 2016 and summer 2017, I have monitored intermittently all of these pages, noting posts that related to the dynamics discussed in the interviews. A list describing these Facebook profiles is provided in the **Appendix C: Primary Data – Facebook Profiles**, where information that could

potentially identify the owners of these pages has been removed to protect participants' confidentiality.

Additionally, in the course of my field research between May and August of 2016, I visited several sites discussed in the interviews, including a military hospital, a village church, a crisis center for the internally displaced individuals (IDPs), an army assistance organization's warehouse and office, among other sites. These visits helped contextualize and confirm select interview data.

Finally, I reviewed a multitude of secondary data sources, including national and international statistics pertaining to Ukraine's various political, economic and societal developments, as well as research studies published in peer-reviewed journal, online governmental and practitioner publications, and books. The secondary literature used in the course of this study is listed in the **Appendix D: Bibliography**.

Data Analysis

The data, including 63 transcribed interviews, as well as field notes and follow-up electronic correspondence (a total of 82 documents), were analyzed in two phases. The first reading of the data focused on identifying common themes and patterns, both guided by the insights derived from the relevant literature, as well as looking for additional themes emerging from the data. Notes were taken during this process resulting in the development of additional codes for the subsequent coding process.

In the second phase of analysis, NVivo software was used to code the data to determine how prevalent these themes were within the data, as well as to identify relationships, stories, and overarching ideas. A final set of 57 different codes and sub-codes was used in this process. For a complete list of themes, codes and sub-codes, see

Appendix B: Coding Scheme. Thus, both *inductive* and *deductive* approaches were used in the analysis of interview data. While some concepts identified during literature review (chapter 2) were tested in the process of interview coding (deductive approach), other concepts have emerged from the data itself and were used for theory generation (inductive approach).

Excel spreadsheets were used to create descriptive statistics of study respondents' activities in various categories, such as advocacy and service missions, ongoing versus short-term activities, registered versus non-registered organizations, group versus individual initiatives, among other descriptive characteristics presented by study respondents, as illustrated in Table A.1. These statistics were used primarily for understanding the overall body of respondents and subsequently contextualizing and presenting this descriptive analysis in chapters 2-4. Additionally, having the quantitative sense of different types of initiatives, groups and organizations assisted in identifying the prevalence of certain topics discussed (or not discussed) within these broad categories represented by study respondents.

Additionally, *analysis of narrative* (Polkinghorne 1995) approach was used in the construction of mini case studies providing contextual richness to the description of informal civil society's expressions. In addition to interview data, social media content, as well as site visits to most of the locations described in these cases, were used to construct the chronological stories with a focus on data most relevant for understanding the informal manifestations of these entities' activities.

Finally, the analysis used in chapter 5 included data that spanned beyond this study's empirical research. In addition to insights gained in the process of conducting

this dissertation research, I drew on knowledge gained in the larger literature, as well as in my extended exploration of the topic as a scholar and practitioner over the past several years.

Limitations

Several factors potentially limit the external validity and generalizability of the study's findings. However, these limitations potentially are outweighed by the study's unique strengths.

First, while the study purposely diversified its sample in terms of the types of civic initiatives, their geographic locations, and levels of institutionalization, nevertheless, it is based primarily on the experiences, perceptions and opinions conveyed by civil society stakeholders who led their initiatives predominantly on an informal basis. Other stakeholders' viewpoints (such as, formal CSO representatives and governmental officials, for instance) are not represented in this analysis. However, the strength of this approach, namely, the collection and analysis of original data heretofore largely untapped by academic research, may potentially outweigh those limitations. Diversification of respondents, as well as the collection and analysis of secondary data sources noted earlier in this appendix, helped offset some of these limitations.

Secondly, because currently there are no comprehensive data available on the informal groups, organizations and initiatives in Ukraine, obtaining a representative sample was not possible in this research, limiting the generalizability of the study's findings. At the same time, generalizability may not be requisite for expanding our qualitative understanding of a complex social phenomenon of informal civic engagement in Ukraine. Future research can expand upon and generalize the findings and insights

uncovered in this study by applying a multitude of other methodological approaches, including quantitative and comparative studies.

Finally, while my positionality as a researcher – being a native Ukrainian, an activist, and having intimate knowledge and understanding of informal societal dynamics – was pivotal for obtaining and analyzing the kinds of nuanced and earnest data involved in this study, being a relative insider to these dynamics certainly presented a potential for bias in this investigation. I tried to offset these limitations by collecting additional data sources, interviewing Ukrainian scholars who had an understanding of civil society dynamics, as well as using secondary data and extant literature to at least partially triangulate the results of the interviews.

APPENDIX B

Coding Scheme

The following codes were ultimately used in the analysis of data. The column on the right denotes the origin of the code: either drawn from specific literature or emerged from the data.

Themes/Codes/Subcodes	Literature/Data
EXPRESSIONS	
Boundaries: formal-informal, intersectoral	De Castro, Khavul & Bruton 2014
Informal inputs and outputs	Böröcz 2000
Advocacy	Data
Informal accounting/reporting	Data
Service	Böröcz 2000
<i>Connecting donors and recipients</i>	Data
<i>In-kind support</i>	Data
<i>Targeted person-to-person transactions</i>	Data
Specialization	Data
Official statistics: inaccurate, unreliable	Bidenko 2015; Palyvoda 2016
Organization as platform for engagement	Data
EXPLANATIONS	
CIVIL SOCIETY DRIVEN	
Collaboration, cooperation	Data
Internet, social media as way to connect	Onuch 2014; Bohdanova 2014
Intrinsic reasons for engaging	Data
Reasons to (or not) register with government	
<i>Cash grants</i>	Data
<i>Culture of informality</i>	Perry et al. 2007
<i>Dealing w/gov't: influence/communication</i>	Data
<i>Didn't get to it/lack of time and resources</i>	Data
<i>Efficiency, cost-effectiveness</i>	Krasynska 2015
<i>Financial, to get funding</i>	Krasynska 2015
<i>Flexibility, mobility</i>	Böröcz 2000
<i>Independence, freedom of action</i>	Miztcal 2000
<i>Lack of management experience</i>	Data
<i>Resistance to hierarchy/bureaucracy</i>	Data
<i>Risk aversion/weary of responsibility</i>	Data
<i>See no point</i>	Data
<i>Sustainability</i>	Data
<i>Transparency</i>	Data
<i>Trust and legitimacy</i>	Bruton, Ireland & Ketchen 2012; Webb et al. 2013; Krasynska & Martin 2015
Distrust of NGOs	Razumkov Center 2013
Distrust of government	Zmerli 2012
Trust: friends, colleagues	Bruton 2012
Trust: previous experience	Data
<i>Proximity to constituency</i>	Data

GOVERNMENT DRIVEN	Alter Chen 2012
Government abuses power	Krasynska & Martin 2015
Government fails to provide service	Kuzio 2012; Berenson 2010
<i>Activity as informal tax/quasi-voluntary</i>	Berenson 2010
<i>Government incapable in times of crisis</i>	D'Anieri 2016; Minakov 2015
<i>Government requires but fails to provide</i>	Data
<i>Government supports on local level</i>	Stewart 2009
Governmental subversion of association	Krasynska & Martin 2015; OSCE 2015
Reasons for (or not) registering officially	
<i>Activity is technically illegal/antigovernment</i>	Krasynska & Martin 2015
<i>Bureaucracy is too costly – time and money</i>	Perry et al. 2007
<i>Legislation is impossible to adhere to</i>	Perry et al. 2007
<i>Reasons to register/formalize activity</i>	Palyvoda 2016
<i>Small amount of money, no need</i>	Data
<i>Temporary activity, not worth the effort</i>	Data
IMPACT: THREE LENSES (Edwards 2014)	
Edwards 1 – part of society	D'Anieri 2016; Edwards 2014; Krasynska & Martin 2017; Krasynska 2015; Skocpol 2003; Howard 2003; Böröcz 2000; Putnam 2000; Smith 1999; de Tocqueville 1945
Edwards 2 – kind of society	Gatskova & Gatskov 2015; Way 2015; Aliyev 2015; Edwards 2014; Paniotto & Kharchenko 2013; Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2016; Stepanenko 2006
Edwards 3 – public sphere	Edwards 2014; Eliasoph 2013; Habermas 2006; Rosenblum 1998

APPENDIX C

Primary Data, Interviews

Code #	Type of organization/group/initiative, title	Location of respondent	Date of interview
R1	Secondary school parent association, chair	Khmelnysky	May 28, 2016
R2(1-4)	Community project, 2 leaders & 2 volunteers	Perehinka	May 29, 2016
R3	Community improvement project, leader	Perehinka	May 30, 2016
R4	Secondary school parent association, chair	Khmelnitsky	May 30, 2016
R5	Army support, founder/leader	Khmelnitsky	May 30, 2016
R6	Army support, volunteer	Ternopil	May 31, 2016
R7	Environmental/public spaces organization, leader	Ternopil	May 31, 2016
R8	Environmental/trash removal, leader	Ternopil	May 31, 2016
R9	Youth organization, leader	Ternopil	May 31, 2016
R10	Army support, leader	Khmelnysky	June 1, 2016
R11	Army support, donor/volunteer	Khmelnysky	June 1, 2016
R12(1-2)	Army support, 2 different organizations' leaders	Khmelnysky	June 2, 2016
R13	Secondary school parent association, chair/teacher	Khmelnysky	June 2, 2016
R14	Homeowners association, member	Khmelnysky	June 2, 2016
R15	Military hospital support, volunteer	Dnipro	June 5, 2016
R16	Military hospital support, leader	Dnipro	June 5, 2016
R17	Civic journalist	Dnipro	June 5, 2016
R18	Activist, several initiatives	Dnipro	June 5, 2016
R19	Army and refugees assistance, volunteer	Donetsk, Dnipro	June 6, 2016
R20	Feminist movement, leader/volunteer	Dnipro	June 6, 2016
R21	Civic journalist	Dnipro	June 6, 2016
R22	Support for demobilized soldiers, leader	Dnipro	June 6, 2016
R23	Army support, youth organization, leader	Nikopol	June 7, 2016
R24	Civic activism; army support, leader	Nikopol	June 7, 2016
R25	Youth initiatives, formal civic organization, volunteer	Donetsk, Zapor	June 8, 2016
R26	Third sector researcher	Zaporizhzhya	June 8, 2016
R27	Student organization, volunteer	Zaporizhzhya	June 8, 2016
R28	Student organization, chair	Zaporizhzhya	June 8, 2016
R29	Army support, leader/volunteer	Zaporizhzhya	June 8, 2016
R30	Refugee assistance, medical supplies to war zone, volunteer	Horlivka, Zaporizhzhya	June 8, 2016
R31	Online education, volunteer	Kyiv	June 17, 2016
R32	Third sector researcher (not recorded, notes)	Kyiv	June 17, 2016
R33	Human rights/political prisoners, volunteer	Lviv	June 22, 2016
R34	Urban development, volunteer	Lviv	June 23, 2015
R35	Public education/civic engagement, volunteer/leader	Chernivtzi, Lviv	June 23, 2016

R36	Youth advocacy/third sector expert, volunteer/staff	Lviv	June 23, 2016
R37	Social research, professor (not recorded, notes)	Lviv	June 23, 2016
R38	Urban development, volunteer	Lviv	June 24, 2016
R39(1-3)	Feminist organization, volunteers	Lviv	June 24, 2016
R40	Advocacy/service for people with disabilities, volunteer	Lviv	June 25, 2016
R41	Several orgs, informal/formal, volunteer/leader	Lviv	June 25, 2016
R42	Sociologist, researcher	Lviv	June 26, 2016
R43	Scholar, activist (not recorded, notes)	Kyiv	July 12, 2016
R44	Multiple civic initiatives, activist/leader	Kyiv	July 12, 2016
R45	Multiple initiatives/amateur sports, volunteer	Kyiv	July 13, 2016
R46	Political activism, environmental advocacy, leader	Kyiv	July 13, 2016
R47	Civic council, member/volunteer	Boyarka	July 14, 2016
R48	Amateur sports/leisure organization, leader	Boyarka	July 14, 2016
R49	Nature conservancy, leader	Boyarka	July 14, 2016
R50	eGovernment; community group, leader	Boyarka	July 14, 2016
R51	Civil society development association, leader	Boyarka	July 14, 2016
R52	Environmental cleanup, leader	Boyarka	July 14, 2016
R53	Advocacy/corruption monitoring, leader	Kyiv	July 15, 2016
R54	Nature conservancy/urban development, leader	Kyiv	July 15, 2016
R55	Renewable energy/social enterprise, leader	Kyiv	July 18, 2016
R56	Army support, scholar, volunteer	Ternopil	July 27, 2016
R57	Animal rescue, leader	Khmelnysky	July 30, 2016
R58	Environmental advocacy/urban development, activist	Kyiv	August 2, 2015
R59	Civic journalist	Kyiv	August 2, 2016
R60	Self-defense initiative, army support, volunteer	Kharkiv	August 3, 2016
R61	Homeowners association, leader	Kharkiv	August 3, 2016
R62	Corruption monitoring (via Skype), leader	Dnipro	August 5, 2016
R63	Internally displaced persons assistance, leader	Kyiv	August 8, 2016
R64	Human rights investigation group, leader	Kyiv	August 9, 2016
R65	Activist, scholar (via Skype)	Sumy	August 9, 2016
R66	Scholar (not recorded)	Kyiv	August 9, 2016
R67	Corruption monitoring/civic activism, leader	Boyarka, Kyiv	August 9, 2016
R68	Multiple initiatives, activist (not recorded)	Khmelnysky	June 1, 2016

R69	Self-organization in condo building (not recorded)	Khmelnysky	May 24, 2016
R70	Active community member, context interview (not recorded, detailed email)	Khmelnysky	May-August, 2016

Total interview time ~ 60 hours

Median interview time ~ 60 minutes

Primary Data, Facebook Profiles

#	Type of activity represented	Facebook profile	Observation: summer 2016-summer 2017
1	Civic journalism	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
2	Environmental activism	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
3	Multiple initiatives	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
4	Research	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
5	Army support	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
6	Animal rescue	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
7	Army support	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
8	Urban development	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
9	Social enterprise	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
10	Civic organizing	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
11	Civic engagement	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
12	eGovernment development	Organization's page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
13	Disabilities, civic engagement	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
14	Civic journalist	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
15	Feminist movement	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
16	Public Broadcasting	Organization's page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
17	Amateur sports	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
18	Scholar	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
19	Human rights	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
20	Environmental cleanup	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
21	Civic council	Organization's page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring

22	Advocacy/corruption	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
23	Youth empowerment	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
24	IDPs support	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
25	Scholar	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
26	Nature conservancy	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
27	Nature conservancy	Organization's page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
28	Historic society	Organization's page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
29	Property rights	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
30	Corruption monitoring	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
31	Feminist movement	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
32	Urban development	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring
33	Parent association	Personal page	Initial review; intermittent monitoring

APPENDIX D

Abbreviations

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
MP	Member of the Parliament
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SBU	<i>Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukraïny</i> (Security Service of Ukraine)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WVS	World Values Survey



Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

Action Date: May 20, 2016

Note: Approval expires one year after this date.

Type: ☐ New Full Review ☒ New Expedited Review ☐ Continuation Review ☐ Exempt Review
☐ Modification

Action: ☒ Approved ☐ Approved Pending Modification ☐ Not Approved

Project Number: 2016-05-232

Researcher(s): Svetlana Krasynska Doc SOLES

Hans Peter Schmitz Fac SOLES

Project Title: Bending the Rules: Exploring the Elusive and Omnipresent Informal Civil Society in Ukraine

Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.

Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

Dr. Thomas R. Herrinton
Administrator, Institutional Review Board
University of San Diego
herrinton@sandiego.edu
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, California 92110-2492

Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
Hughes Administration Center, Room 214
5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, CA 92110-2492
Phone (619) 260-4553 • Fax (619) 260-2210 • www.sandiego.edu