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CIVIL SOCIETY IN POST-EUROMAIDAN UKRAINE

From Revolution to Consolidation

With a foreword by Richard Youngs
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Foreword

Richard Youngs

In recent years, civil society around the world has undergone important changes. Innovative forms of activism are emerging and mass protests have occurred in a large number of countries in every region of the world. While much of this surge in activism is based around familiar forms of political contestation and formal NGOs, at least some of it appears to be qualitatively different and even experimental. These developments have prompted a series of academic and policy debates about how significant the changes to global civil society really are; about what is driving the emergence of a transformed activism; and whether the changes are an advance or setback for democratic politics.

Natalia Shapovalova and Olga Burlyuk have compiled a volume that contributes enormously to these debates. There is a clear need for in-depth case studies and this volume delivers quality chapters that address the many different dimensions of the civic activism that has taken shape in Ukraine since the 2014 Euromaidan revolt. The book represents a major addition to work on Ukraine itself, as it represents the first comprehensive assessment of post-Euromaidan civil society—and the conclusions the chapters generate will be of intense value and interest to those studying and engaged in the country’s still-fluctuating reform process. But the volume will have a wider appeal and relevance too, to the extent that it speaks to the more general debates about the ongoing evolution of civil society’s very nature and essence across the globe.

Indeed, the volume shows that Ukraine is an especially evocative and significant case for these debates. The country has witnessed the growth of an extremely vibrant civil society that, as the following chapters show, has had real impact. It is a country where civic activism intersects deeply with geopolitics, with the book highlighting the role of conflict in the east of Ukraine in propelling new forms of activism organized around issues related to the
armed conflict. It is also an example of civic activists transitioning into politics often with considerable success—questioning the critical view that today’s civic activism is reflexively anti-politics and invariably unable or unwilling to advance constructively “from protest to politics”.

The book makes clear in addition that the emerging civic activism can take on a variety of forms, not all of which are positive for democracy or liberal values. In Ukraine, religious, conservative-nationalist and liberal-rights groups have all become more prominent and active in recent years, highlighting that the new activism is far from representing any single uniform vision of politics or the nation. Some of this civic activism is very local, while some has been spurred by links to the extensive Ukrainian diaspora. Some is funded through small-scale local contributions, while some is still heavily dependent on external funding. Many of the micro-level grassroots initiatives that appeared in 2014 have not survived, while other actors that have regained prominence are the large, formal NGOs that have been active for many years. New and old civic activism exist in a complex relationship with each other.

Ukraine’s post-Euromaidan civic vibrancy has in some ways contributed to partial democratization and spurred a strengthening of state capacities. Yet, in other ways it risks undercutting state-building, or at least easing the pressure on government to accelerate effective reforms. Some emerging Ukrainian activism is supplementary service provision that is relieving the pressure on the state, while some is a critical contestation that has increasingly raised the danger of reforms stalling and authoritarian dynamics once again gaining ground. The book also shows that Ukraine is a case where restrictions to civic space are appearing, even in what has become a relatively open political space and under a government nominally committed to democratic reform; Ukraine shows that these kinds of attacks on civil society are by no means limited to the world’s most autocratic states. Overall, Ukraine’s unique situation of partial democratization combined with internal military conflict and still-contested statehood-sovereignty has been both a cause of new civic vibrancy and a limitation to this.
The following chapters combine analytical depth and clear policy relevance. The volume benefits from a team made up of academic scholars, policy analysts and those practically involved in activism. Indeed, several of the authors have experience both as scholars and activists, aptly personifying the very points made in the volume about the new fluidity of Ukraine’s civic sphere. As most of the chapters are written by Ukrainians, readers will gain a nuanced and detailed feel for the current on-the-ground developments within the country, while the contributions from EU-based writers help place Ukraine in a more comparative context. It can only be hoped that the volume will encourage similar endeavors to dissect the changing face of civic activism in other countries undergoing equally significant change.
The Euromaidan protests in Ukraine in the winter of 2013-2014 revolutionized Ukraine’s civil society. Although many question the extent to which the protests constituted a revolution in a classic understanding, the protests did lead to an unseen—in regard to both scale and scope—mobilization of Ukraine’s society that demanded radical political and social change. The protests created a new civic ethos of activism and participation based on the values of individual freedom, responsibility and dignity. They led to creation of a wide network of civic activists and initiatives, some of which dated to the pre-Euromaidan times; others emerged amidst the protests, while others mushroomed afterwards. They also led to civic awakening and national revival. Patriotism and nationalism became firmly enshrined in much of the civic activism in Ukraine, further spurred by Russia’s occupation of Crimea and support for the separatists in the east of Ukraine. Finally, they led to radicalization of civic activism that ultimately turned violent in response to the violence of the state. The spiral of violence continued after the protests had calmed down, in large part due to the fact that the state was unable to deliver security to citizens, leaving a vacuum to be filled by non-state paramilitary and armed groups.

Compared to previous pro-democracy and national revival civil society mobilizations in Ukraine, such as the Popular Front of Ukraine (Narodnyi Rukh Ukrainy) in 1989-1990, or the civic initiatives that formed the core of the Orange Revolution in 2004, the Euromaidan saw a different form of civic activism; it was more fluid, more informal, more horizontal and more diverse, penetrating different aspects of public life. In the aftermath of the protests, civil society mobilized to promote reforms, drafting and advocating for legislative proposals and monitoring reform implementation. Activists organized themselves to deal with the humanitarian crisis
spurred by the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine, helping displaced and affected populations. Civic activists stepped into new areas of public affairs, some of which (such as armed defense and hard security provision) are far from “traditional” for civil society in Ukraine, the region and beyond (Burlyuk, Shapovalova, and Zarembo 2017a).

Five years after the Euromaidan, Ukraine presents a mixed picture on all accounts. Unlike much of the literature on post-Euromaidan Ukraine, which has focused on the geopolitical factors behind its struggle for democracy and independence, this edited volume looks within Ukraine to examine the role of an actor traditionally regarded as a key driver of change in its political and societal transformation: civil society. Notably, this collective effort does not depart from a single definition of civil society: the authors contributing to this book were free to interpret the scope of “civil society” and approach it as an actor, a space or a set of values and norms related to society’s civility. Similarly, we use the trope “Euromaidan” in the title of this book and throughout the contributions to refer to popular protests in Ukraine in 2013-2014, as it is possibly most recognizable for future readership and it provides consistency across the chapters. We are acutely aware that the term “Euromaidan” limits the understanding of the events to one narrative (see Musliu and Burlyuk, forthcoming), and it is not our intention to endorse it blindly and collectively. We ask the reader to forgive us for choosing simplicity in this instance, which is further justified by the fact that this book is not about the events as such, but merely uses them as a marker to explore the dynamics in, of and involving civil society in the years that followed. Moreover, each and every contribution in this book confirms that, as could be expected, the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine is an important marker alongside the Euromaidan, exercising a significant impact on civil society’s mobilization, organizational forms, discursive practices and interaction with the state.

Whereas the role of Ukraine’s civil society in driving the “revolutions” has been acknowledged, scholars have argued that the revolutionary moments failed to result in democratic movements (Worschech 2017). Neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this
premise, we aim to provide deep insights into what role Ukraine’s civil society played in driving evolutionary change in Ukraine once the revolutionary moment was over. For this, we look at civil society developments across two dimensions. First, we examine changes in the nature of civil society relations with the state and society and its potential and ability to induce reform, or what we refer to as “change on the outside” (Part 1 of the book). Second, we focus on changes in the tissue of civil society as such, that is, in the way it is organized and operates, or what we refer to as “change on the inside” (Part 2 of the book).

Studies of civil society in Ukraine before the Euromaidan broadly fit the debate about the weakness of civil society in the post-communist context. Many researchers have argued that post-communist civil societies are weak because levels of participation in civil society organizations (CSOs) or levels of concern with issues of policy-making and governance across post-communist countries remain low in comparison to countries in Western Europe and North America (Howard 2003; Wallace, Pichler, and Haerpfer 2012; Way 2014). According to Marc Howard, who was among the first to coin this argument, such a weakness results from the legacy of mistrust in communist state-controlled organizations, the persistence of informal friendship and family networks and citizens’ disappointment with political and economic transitions (Howard 2002). Another side of this claim is that civil society is often reduced to one particular form of organization, namely a non-governmental organization (NGO), is reliant on foreign donor aid for its survival and implements donor agendas rather than their own. The scholarship is critical of Western assistance programs that “leave much of society untouched” (Lutsevych 2013, 17) and have “overwhelmed grassroots initiatives, turned democracy into a project and civil society into NGOs” (Ishkanian 2008, 56). It is also skeptical about the democratic impact of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are seen as disconnected from the wider society they claim to represent (Hendersen 2002; Hahn-Fuhr and Worschech 2014), while in practice citizens still rely on informal networks for service provision (Aliyev 2015; Stepanenko 2006). Even after the Orange Revolution, when CSOs played an important role in facilitating
mass mobilization (Onuch 2014), civil society did not transform significantly. Some third-sector organizations came under extra state control, hiding behind institutional facades that “legitimize and mask illiberal change”, a common practice in post-socialist countries (Allina-Pisano 2010, 230).

Book-length studies on the Euromaidan and the crisis in Ukraine examine mass protests, their causes and dramatic consequences, Ukraine’s political transformation, its foreign policy balancing between “the East” and “the West”, and the impact of geopolitical players (Bachmann and Lyubashenko 2014; Wilson 2014; Marples and Mills 2015; Bertelsen 2016; Sakwa 2016; Beichelt and Worschech 2017). There have been fewer efforts to examine the evolution of civil society in Ukraine in the years since, and its changing role in democratization, state-building and conflict transformation (Pishchikova and Ogryzko 2014; Gatskova and Gatskov 2016; Shapovalova 2017; Udovyk 2017; Burlyuk, Shapovalova, and Zarembo 2017b; Falsini 2018). Most of these studies acknowledge the prominent role of civil society in post-Euromaidan Ukraine. Unlike after the Orange Revolution, civil society did not just return home. Institutional facades may still cover up some of civil society’s weaknesses, but in general it is considered vibrant and alive. Falsini (2018) notes that post-Euromaidan civil society promoted social capital with bridging rather than bonding types of relations, thus promoting the relationship between expanded and heterogeneous social networks of diverse interests and identities rather than closed and homogeneous networks of people with shared interests and identities. Civic mobilization, in a reaction to the crisis of Ukraine’s statehood and the humanitarian consequences of the armed conflict, increased the legitimacy and acknowledgement of civil society’s role by both wider society and political actors in Ukraine (Shapovalova 2017). However, despite high levels of trust in civil society, formal engagement of Ukrainians in CSOs remains low and has not changed since 2008 (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2018a). Arguably, this is due to deeply rooted elements of Homo Sovieticus identity, such as passivity, an absence of political identification and a reliance on informal networks (Gatskova and
Gatskov 2016). There have been changes in the civil society population, however: more CSOs have registered since the Euromaidan, primarily charity organizations and housing associations (Yablonskyi et al. 2017).

This book aims to bring these different trends of civil society development under one roof: we aim to examine how civil society in Ukraine is changing the state and wider society, on the one hand (Part 1 of the book), and how civil society itself is changing, on the other (Part 2 of the book). We believe it is necessary to look at developments across—and interactions between—both dimensions in order to better grasp the evolution of Ukraine’s civil society, as well as the role of civil society in the evolution of Ukraine. Driven by this objective, we have solicited a team of authors from across Ukraine and Europe, some of whom are scholars, while others are practitioners, and others combine academic and activist identities. This book documents the result of this collective effort to identify, describe, conceptualize and explain various developments in Ukraine’s civil society post-Euromaidan. While all of the contributions address both dimensions (inside and outside) in some way, as it is virtually impossible to isolate one or the other empirically, we have clustered the chapters into two Parts based on their main focus. While the theoretical and methodological approaches differ greatly across the chapters, all of the studies in this volume draw on rich empirical data and the authors’ extensive fieldwork throughout Ukraine. The book represents a wealth of issues and themes in civil society development and its role as a change maker in Ukraine and, as such, offers a snapshot of what civil society is in Ukraine.

Civil society and change on the outside: Democratization, state-building and conflict

Much of the academic debate focuses on civil society and its relations with the state through the prism of democratization and state-building theories. In this section, we discuss how the chapters in this book contribute to our knowledge about the relationship between civil society and the state in Ukraine and the ambition as well
as ability of civil society to influence and eventually transform the state (hence: change on the outside).

In the Western political tradition, civil society is seen as an important ingredient of democracy performing various roles. It can be both an actor that is complementary to the state, providing socialization into democracy through participation, education and the internalization of democratic values and an actor controlling the state and protecting civic freedoms (see Hahn-Fuhr and Worschech 2014; Beichelt and Merkel 2014). In democratic political systems, thinkers and governments attempt to address democracy deficits through enhanced citizen participation and improved interaction with CSOs. Aid to civil society is a key element of many democracy support programs in less democratic countries, including Ukraine; the extent to which such external democracy support efforts help democracy is debated, however. Donors are increasingly aware of NGOs running like businesses and NGO elites becoming detached from the society as a result of donor dependencies. Donors try to address this when supporting civil society by focusing on grassroots organizations or promoting an enabling environment and infrastructure for civil society.

Civil society in Ukraine has been pushing in two directions in its relationship with the state in the studied period. First, it has substituted for the state when the state was at its weakest, providing important services to citizens at the time of crisis, all the way to sharing with the state the monopoly on violence. Arguably, conflict-oriented civil society mobilization has helped to protect Ukraine’s statehood in the face of a major threat. However, this appears to have weakened the state by relieving the pressure to reform and encouraging citizens to rely on self-organization in such “core” state functions as provision of security and defense. To a certain degree, civil society’s focus on substituting for the state is at odds with its democratization function of being a watchdog of the state (Cleary 2016).

Several chapters in this book contribute to this debate and show the complexity of civil society effects on state-building and democratization in Ukraine in the context of armed conflict. In her chapter on conflict-oriented civil society, Susann Worschech
demonstrates that the main democratic impact of volunteer groups supporting the army and the displaced is their trust and solidarity building function, which is key for the generation of social capital. Initially oriented towards service provision, many groups eventually develop watchdog and advocacy capacities. In turn, Kateryna Zarembo studies the effects of volunteer participation in defense sector reform and argues that volunteer organizations have contributed to both strengthening defense state capacities and weakening them. Valentyna Romanova studies the effects of appointing a civil society activist to the position of regional executive in a conflict-torn region. She finds that, rather than strengthening state legitimacy by promoting citizens’ representation through democratic elections, the former civil society activist aimed to strengthen the state’s effectiveness by empowering law enforcement institutions through volunteers.

Second, much of the civic activism born out of the Euromaidan has aimed to complete and consolidate Ukraine’s transition to democracy through reform advocacy. Civil society groups have offered their expertise to state authorities regarding how to reform Ukraine. In working closely with the government and the parliament, they have organized advocacy coalitions to draft and lobby for legislation, communicate reforms to a wider public and monitor the implementation of reforms. They have also teamed up with Western donors to put pressure on Ukraine’s government in what is called a “sandwich effect”. Advocacy and influence on public policy are seen as a key strength of Ukraine’s civil society (USAID 2017; Lutsevych 2017; Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2018b).

The contributions in this book show that such efforts have been successful to a significant degree. With the demand and support of civil society, many important reforms have been launched. However, the state has also resisted the civil society pressure for reforms in many ways (Shapovalova and Burlyuk, 2018). The pace of reforms has slowed down, and many reforms have been reverted. More in-depth study of why the reforms were not completed in Ukraine post-Euromaidan is needed and remains beyond the scope of this study; but it appears that civic energy alone was not enough to change the behavior of the ruling elite, which has
largely remained the same, and to break the long-standing patterns of patronage and corruption. Kateryna Zarembo shows how civil society found it difficult to bring corrupt members of the defense procurement system to justice due to a lack of capacity, private sector pressure and bureaucratic resistance. Kateryna Pishchikova demonstrates that, after the initial post-Euromaidan euphoria, the state has gradually closed to civil society pressure. In turn, with a case study of the Reanimation Package of Reforms (Ukraine’s largest coalition of CSOs and experts for development, advocacy and monitoring of reforms) Christina Parandii and Balázs Jarábik raise the question—quite literally—of whether civil society’s mission has been exhausted. Sadly, they conclude that the momentum for more robust cooperation between civil society actors and state authorities (which indeed followed the Euromaidan) is gone.

The legitimacy acquired by civil society after the Euromaidan worked as a double-edge sword. On the one hand, public trust in CSOs has been growing steadily (up 67% in volunteers and 43% in civic associations), whereas trust in state institutions has dropped to a new low, with only 11% and 7% of citizens trusting the government and the parliament respectively (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2018a; Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2017). It is thus more difficult for the state to ignore or rebuff civil society voices as the legitimacy of their own decisions among the public and Western donors relies on civil society’s backing and involvement. On the other hand, the power acquired by civil society groups has been fiercely contested by the authorities. Though Ukraine is far from an autocracy, the state attempts a set of hybrid legal and paralegal methods to strike against civil society, especially the most vocal and critical groups and activists. Moreover, the state seems to effectively use one set of civic groups against the others. Kateryna Pishchikova argues that the shrinking civic space is not a phenomenon that is exclusive to autocratic states and amply shows how the state manages to restrict the civic space despite the overall improvement in civil liberties in Ukraine. Her chapter exemplifies that the armed conflict in Ukraine is used to leverage against unfavorable civil society elements, when those who raise their voices against the state are targeted as traitors and Russian
agents. The situation is even more delicate when civil society attempts to engage in peace and reconciliation efforts, favoring an approach that is quite different from that of the government. Ganna Bazilo and Giselle Bosse show how grassroots civil society groups struggle to change the dominant domestic and international narratives of the conflict and its resolution in Ukraine.

John Schwarzmantel (2011, 38) calls for a distinction between movements that use violence as a weapon, seeking to overthrow democratic structures and processes, and those movements employing violence to extend democracy and to seek entry into the democratic system. However, making a distinction in practice is far from straightforward. Violence was used by civil society actors during the Euromaidan protests to protect democracy. At that time, radical far-right groups were the main collective agent engaging in physical violence (Ishchenko 2016). In post-Euromaidan Ukraine, radical far-right groups that consolidated during the protests use nationalist violence against the “other”, whom they deem to endanger the nation state. They call for ethnic and religious intolerance and engage in violent attacks against those they see as enemies of Ukraine’s “traditional” order and values, including leftist groups, feminists, the LGBT community, different ethnic communities (especially Roma) and refugees. This type of activism poses a threat to Ukraine’s democratic development (Likhachev 2018). What is more worrisome, however, is that Ukraine’s law enforcement agencies provide these groups with impunity or even tacit support (Shapovalova 2018). Some state agents or power groups may use such civic actors instrumentally as their “private” armies in the struggle for power or assets, including against other civic activists. The state’s inaction has also led to a situation where some citizens see a need for civic groups to consist of physically fit men in order to address what they consider to be social injustice. Divided and conflict-torn societies—of which post-Euromaidan Ukraine is one—are particularly prone to the rise of “uncivil” values among organized groups and citizens’ associations. Ukraine is no exception, and scholars have addressed the topic (Umland 2015; Vasylchuk 2017; Ishchenko 2018). The contributions in this book deal with the subject only indirectly.
As well as the extremist groups, geopolitics and armed conflict have also corrupted Ukraine’s more liberal civil society. Many NGOs work closely with the government, defying Russia’s information war against Ukraine. In this information war, they prefer to turn a blind eye to information that may discredit or go against Ukraine’s dominant narrative. The case of Hromadske TV, which was ostracized after showing a critical documentary about the secret prisons of Ukraine’s security services, is exemplary. Kateryna Pishchikova argues that such a risk of harassment and public vilification feeds self-censorship and contributes to greater polarization rather than reconciliation in the Ukrainian public sphere. Similarly, Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova show how journalists’ increased civic and political engagement has helped to decrease censorship—yet, under the circumstances of the armed conflict, may have resulted in increased self-censorship among Ukrainian journalists. While possibly in line with their activism, self-censorship is at odds with a journalists’ professional ethics and commitments. There are further tensions between professional peacemaker groups and “patriotically-oriented” segments of civil society (Kyselova 2017). Maryna Shevtsova demonstrates how these tensions have stimulated the construction of new narratives among the Ukrainian LGBT community, specifically what she calls “Ukrainian homonormative patriotism”.

Overall, the contributions in this book support the notion that there can be no strong civil society in a weak state, for civil society mirrors the weaknesses of the state. To second Lorsch (2017), in the context of weak states, in which alternative power centers inside and outside the state structure enhance their social control and political influence through patronage, corruption and violence, national civil society actors also participate in patronage and corruption networks and sometimes apply violence.

**Civil society and change on the inside:**
**Diversity of organization, participation and identity**

The Euromaidan and the armed conflict that followed immediately were also a landmark in regard to how civil society has changed
from the inside. In this section, we discuss how the chapters in this book contribute to our knowledge on the tissue of civil society in Ukraine post-Euromaidan, its forms of organization, themes and areas of engagement, sources of organizational survival and development, civic and professional values, and discursive practices.

Increased diversity is a key feature of Ukraine’s civil society post-Euromaidan. This book brings into the spotlight the heterogeneous character of Ukraine’s civil society. In this regard, alongside the usual suspects such as advocacy and watchdog CSOs, and charity and volunteer groups, it addresses such less studied actors as churches (Mykhailo Cherenkov, Tetiana Kalenychenko and Taras Antoshevskyy in this book), professional communities of mediators (Kyselova in this book) and journalists (Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova in this book), think tanks (Vera Axyonova and Fabian Schöppner in this book), ICT-based CSOs (Tetyana Bohdanova and Vitaliy Moroz in this book) and the LGBT community (Maryna Shevtsova in this book). Civil society in Ukraine is diverse in terms of its forms of organization, patterns of participation and values around which citizens organize and mobilize.

Professional NGOs set up with the help of foreign donor aid exist alongside less formalized and voluntary-based groups of activists. The voluntary sector in particular has expanded remarkably in the post-Euromaidan period (Lutsevych 2017, 61; Shapovalova 2017). While much of the volunteer work has been conflict-oriented, many activists volunteer in civic organizations or informal groups to push for issues of local development ranging from waste recycling, the protection of urban public spaces and activities for youth to local government transparency and accountability (Udovyk 2017; Shapovalova and Burlyuk 2018). For many civic activists in Odesa and Kharkiv interviewed by Natalia Shapovalova in spring-summer 2018, activism (or active citizenship, as some of them prefer to call it) is not a job at an NGO, but a way of life. Many activists are engaged with several CSOs or initiatives. Whereas professional NGOs work with core staff and partners, voluntary-based groups rely on their members and support groups. The latter are often better at engaging citizens in their work.
For Ukraine post-Euromaidan, the question is, to what extent organized civil society was able to meet the demand of enthusiastic citizens who wanted to engage more in public affairs through volunteering, giving, and participating beyond the conflict realm. If many criticized post-Soviet civil societies for being “organizations without citizens”, after the Euromaidan there seems to have been a period of “citizens without organizations” (or at least without organizations able and willing to engage them). More fluid forms of civic activism emerged, and some civil society groups managed to capitalize on these, especially the ones whose structures were designed to have a broad membership base (for example, cyclists’ associations or the Plast patriotic youth movement). However, even they struggle to find strategies and resources to maintain their interaction with their members. Sustaining mobilization and channeling energy and ideas so as to have an impact has been no easy task. Ukraine’s civil society paradox is that high trust in CSOs is combined with low participation rates: only 7% of citizens are engaged in civic activism, whereas 87% do not belong to any CSO (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2018). Tetyana Bohdanova and Vitaliy Moroz follow the stories of three selected ICT-based initiatives and reveal how these have struggled to reorganize (or resist reorganization) in order to continue their activity beyond the Euromaidan. Similarly, Christina Parandii and Balázs Jarábik argue that the gradual decrease in civic influence on reform in the years following the Euromaidan was as much due to systemic factors exogenous to civil society as it was due to endogenous factors such as the lack of consensus, organizational issues and insufficient grassroots mobilization capacity, among others.

Financial viability remains the main challenge to the sustainability of CSOs in Ukraine (USAID 2017, 244). This situation has remained largely unchanged in the post-Euromaidan period: foreign donor funding remains the main source of income for many CSOs. The volume of international grant assistance to Ukraine is estimated to have doubled since the Euromaidan, and assistance channeled via civil society amounts to roughly 30% (or 300 million USD) of all aid to reform-related projects (Lutsevych 2017, 64). Vera Axyonova and Fabian Schöppner show how Ukrainian think-tanks
have largely failed to diversify their funding sources. Tetyana Bohdanova and Vitaly Moroz, in their contribution on online civic activism, demonstrate that foreign grants are also the main source of funding for ICT volunteer-based initiatives that have managed to sustain their operation since the Euromaidan.

Local sources of support grow but they are still insufficient or inaccessible for many organizations. Whereas the number of Ukrainians who volunteer and donate money has increased, the largest share of these efforts (over 60%) in 2015 and 2016 went to army needs (Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2017). More organizations are attempting to diversify their sources of funding, and there are indications that the share of funding to civil society from local donors is slowly growing (USAID 2017, 244). Some organizations use crowdfunding platforms to raise funds, others engage in social entrepreneurship, while some others cooperate with local businesses. Although the annual state funding to CSOs is significant—in 2016, 2.5 million USD was allocated just for CSOs working with people with disabilities and veterans at the national level and 11 million USD was allocated for activities related to the development of civil society at the regional level (EU Project for Civil Society Development in Ukraine “Together” 2018)—it is not distributed in a competitive and transparent manner, and as such it feeds corruption rather than supporting civil society. Consequently, the state in Ukraine has not become a donor to civil society, as is the case in many European countries.

This book raises another interesting issue of relevance beyond Ukraine, which is: the effects of the booming civic activism on the existing professional communities. Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova reveal a rather mixed picture with regard to the influence of the increased activism on Ukrainian journalists. According to democracy theories, the independence and impartiality of mass media are among the crucial elements of democracy alongside a vibrant civil society. Yet, a journalist’s impartiality is very much circumscribed by their civic activism, which is at odds with their professional ethics and commitments and may eventually split the professional community. In turn, Tatiana Kyselova offers a more opti-
mistic picture with regard to the civic activism of professional mediators in Ukraine. She argues that civic activism has allowed them to find a way to apply their skills and knowledge to the most relevant real-time challenges, popularize the need in their profession and raise professional standards, thus fostering rather than undermining the community’s professionalism and identity.

Communities of faith, some of Ukraine’s churches have also seized the opportunity to rethink and reset their social role and have built on high levels of popular trust to promote consolidation in Ukraine’s (civil) society. Mykhailo Cherenkov, Tetiana Kalenychenko and Taras Antoshevskyy unpack the churches’ social activism in post-Euromaidan Ukraine and argue that, despite the continuous disputes about canonicity and status, civilly active and patriotic church groups have taken more civic initiatives. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church are in the lead, followed closely by the Protestants, who used their well-developed network of communities in the east of Ukraine for active social work in the context of the armed conflict. The churches’ social ministry in the years after the Euromaidan became the main sign of their presence and the main criterion for their value as assessed by (civil) society.

The emergence of new civic actors, the diversity of the CSO population, boosted legitimacy and popular trust are core strengths of Ukraine’s civil society since the Euromaidan. However, as post-Euromaidan conflict-oriented citizens’ mobilization has faded away, CSOs have struggled to engage citizens in their day-to-day activities or campaigns for social change. Lacking a solid endowment of local support and dependent on foreign donor funding, civil society groups lack sustainability. Face with the threat of “uncivil” civic activism and government attempts to control and obstruct critical voices, liberal civic actors strive to defend their core values, integrity and space for civic action. These are main challenges that post-Euromaidan civil society has to deal with.
A glimpse of the contributions in this book

As mentioned above, this book is organized into two parts, with the chapters addressing primarily changes in the nature of civil society’s relations with the state and its potential and ability to induce reform clustered in Part 1, and chapters examining changes in the tissue of civil society as such, that is, the way it is organized and operates, clustered in Part 2.

Over the past several years a number of alarm bells have been sounded on the issue of closing space for civic society worldwide. Kateryna Pishchikova sets the scene for all of the other contributions in this book with an inquiry into how open the civic space is in post-Euromaidan Ukraine. Her chapter shows how, in a non-authoritarian regime, the competition over legitimacy and authority between the state and civil society involves a number of “closing space” tactics pertaining to both the legal and extralegal realms. These tactics are aimed at obstructing the activities of certain civil society groups, as well as discrediting them and questioning their commitment to the public good. The closing space measures in post-Euromaidan Ukraine seem to be on the rise, despite the international and domestic reputational risks for the ruling elite, which positions itself as pro-reform and pro-European. Pishchikova’s chapter contributes to a wider academic and policy debate on the closing space for civil society by untangling the puzzle of why non-authoritarian regimes engage in these tactics despite the high costs attached.

The following four chapters in the book examine, in one way or another, the intersections between civic activism and the armed conflict in Ukraine. Susann Worschech studies civic activism in response to the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in the east of Ukraine and its potential for democratization. She reviews numerous new organizations and initiatives that emerged to support internally displaced persons, veterans and the armed forces. Based on three case studies, Worschech provides an analysis of the characteristics and structures of the conflict-related civil society in Ukraine. She does so in reference to Charles Tilly’s concept of democratiza-
tion as political inclusiveness and to theories regarding the democratizing functions of civil society. Worschech argues that the most valuable democratic impact of conflict-related civil society in Ukraine is building trust and solidarity in society. Additionally, some voluntary groups have evolved into “watchdog” CSOs, thus increasing the accountability and transparency of the government. Worschech contributes to the literature on civil society’s role in democratization by examining the case of conflict-affected Ukraine.

In “Doing State’s Job,” Kateryna Zarembo zooms in on conflict-related activism further by examining the impact of volunteers on the state defense capacity since 2014. While the role of volunteers in sustaining the Ukrainian Armed Forces has been widely acknowledged in the literature, her chapter addresses the understudied issue of the effect of volunteer initiatives on the state defense capacity in the longer term. In particular, Zarembo investigates whether volunteer participation has led to institutional strengthening of Ukraine’s defense state capacity or to its weakening and reflects on how the context may have conditioned the result. She concludes that the volunteers simultaneously contributed to both: strengthening the state and weakening it. The outcome depended on the context in which the volunteers took action at different times. While volunteer participation failed to bring about systemic reform, it did provide powerful democratic oversight of the state’s key defense institution. This chapter contributes to the literature on the state-civil society relations in Ukraine and civil society’s role in matters of security and defense more broadly.

Valentyna Romanova takes a different approach to conflict-related civic activism by focusing on the regional governance level. Her inquiry is driven by the expectation of Daren Acemoglu (a co-author of “Why Nations Fail”) that, after the Euromaidan, Ukraine would obtain a new chance to foster inclusive political institutions despite the armed conflict in Donbas. Putting this, rather optimistic, expectation to the test, Romanova seeks to shed light on the fostering of inclusive political institutions in the conflict-affected Luhansk oblast. Her chapter examines whether and how the appointment of a civil society activist—one who had assisted the Ukrainian Armed Forces during the security operation in the east
of Ukraine—to the position of regional executive in Luhansk oblast has affected regional governors’ approaches to key conditions of inclusive political institutions: state capacity (operationalized as control over the contact line) and power distribution (operationalized as holding democratic elections). By drawing on a comparison of the three regional executives who governed the oblast in 2014-2017, Romanova finds that appointing a civil society activist to the position of regional executive in Luhansk oblast affected regional governors’ approaches to control over the contact line, but not to holding democratic elections. More broadly, Romanova’s study contributes to the literature on inclusive political institutions in the context of an armed conflict.

With their chapter on “invisible peacemakers”, Ganna Bazilo and Giselle Bosse fill the gap in the scholarly work on the Ukraine conflict and its resolution by focusing on the role of local actors rather than states or international organizations. Research on sub-state and non-state actors in the conflict in Ukraine remains scarce (see Puglisi 2015; Malyarenko and Galbreath 2016; Matveeva 2016; Matveeva 2018). Bazilo and Bosse argue that local CSOs have embraced reconciliation as a new agenda in the post-Euromaidan period and analyze their role in fostering a dialogue in the conflict in the east of Ukraine. By taking the “everyday peace” perspective, the authors show that local bottom-up narratives of the conflict differ greatly from the top-down narratives of states and international organizations. Whereas the latter tend to reconfirm the status quo of the conflict or the (neo-)liberal economic approach to peace, local CSOs promote “re-humanizing the other”, which is crucial for achieving sustainable peace in the east of Ukraine. This chapter contributes to the body of literature on the role of civil society in conflict management and peacebuilding.

Concluding Part 1 of the book, Christina Parandii and Balázs Jarábik center their chapter on civil society advocacy for reforms. Whereas the Euromaidan enabled civil society to become one of the key reform actors in Ukraine, five years since the beginning of the protests the window of opportunity seems to be closing. Civil society’s ability to push for policy change has decreased over time, as the reforms slowed down after the initial momentum of 2014-2015.
The chapter analyzes the pathways to civil society influence based on the experience of the Reanimation Package of Reforms (RPR), Ukraine’s largest civil society coalition of experts. The authors identify the conditions enabling RPR’s advocacy success and argue that the decrease in the coalition’s influence occurred due to a combination of exogenous and endogenous factors. The conclusions leave some cautious optimism as to whether civil society’s mission to promote reforms has yet been exhausted. The authors outline the factors related to the organization of civil society that enable the reform progress despite the challenges posed by the looming 2019 presidential elections.

The chapters in Part 2 of the book take a closer look at how civil society has changed (or not) internally. As in the previous part, the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine emerges as a key factor shaping civic activism since the Euromaidan.

Vera Axyonova and Fabian Schöppner continue with the theme of civil society advocacy by studying think-tanks in Ukraine. By mapping the Ukrainian think tank landscape and examining think tanks’ influence strategies, the chapter contributes to the understanding of this specific group of civil society actors in post-communist environments. Axyonova and Schöppner pose the question of whether think-tanks in Ukraine assure a pluralistic, open and accountable process of policy analysis, research, decision making and evaluation. They find that Ukrainian think tanks are still reliant on non-domestic funders, which raises questions about their general ability to set independent policy agendas and partly explains their pro-European ideological bias. Ukrainian think tanks also seek to influence international policies along with national impulses. The reciprocal relationship between dependence on foreign funding and striving for influence at the international (mainly European) level constitutes another distinct feature of the Ukrainian think tank community. Think tanks employ public influence strategies mainly to target domestic audiences, while private influence strategies are used to impact both national and European policy-making. The questions of how much influence Ukrainian think tanks actually have and whether this influence results in concrete policy outcomes remain open.
The following two chapters examine the tension between professionalism and civic activism in two professional communities: mediators (Tatiana Kyselova) and journalists (Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova). Tatiana Kyselova demonstrates how the social mobilization during the protests and armed conflict has inspired civic activism among the professional community of mediators, who previously focused on the commercialization and professionalization of their practices. The findings highlight the dual nature of the mediation community as a professional elite and a civil society actor. The perfect fit between their intrinsic mediation values and the post-Euromaidan system of values and beliefs has allowed Ukrainian mediators to reconcile and intermingle their orientations as "service providers" and "agents of change", which appear to reinforce each other. The Euromaidan and armed conflict in the east of Ukraine have triggered civic activism among mediators, with voluntary community mediation projects and political participation through civil society strategies. Kyselova argues that "civic activation", in turn, might contribute to the institutionalization of mediation within state structures and enhance the professionalization of mediation in Ukraine, provided that the mediators are able to use the window of opportunity opened for them by the Euromaidan.

Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova study how the professional standards of journalists' community have been affected by the Euromaidan protests (in which many journalists participated as civic activists) and Russia’s subsequent occupation of Crimea and the conflict in the east of Ukraine. Informed by the concepts of "journalism culture" and "journalism professionalism" and based on interviews with Ukrainian journalists, the chapter examines self-perceptions of professionalism and professional roles in the aftermath of the Euromaidan. The study reveals competing approaches to defining journalism professionalism and discusses what such a lack of consensus about professional standards and their relevance implies for media and journalism in Ukraine. The authors point to a fragmentation of journalistic identities and polarization among journalists, which also reflects the broader trend of polarization in society since the Euromaidan and the start of the armed conflict.
Tetyana Bohdanova and Vitaliy Moroz examine the sustainability of grassroots civil society initiatives formed with the help of the Internet and social media during the Euromaidan. Whereas many of these citizen journalist initiatives emerged and involved hundreds of people in the production and dissemination of information with the use of social media and emergent livestreaming technology during the protests, only one percent of them turned into registered CSOs afterwards. Bohdanova and Moroz investigate why some grassroots citizen initiatives have successfully continued their activity, while others have ceased to exist since the critical moment ended. They study what factors contribute to the sustainability of grassroots organizations that were originally created through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by examining three citizen journalist initiatives set up in 2014. They find that horizontally structured and de-centralized initiatives reliant on volunteer work and crowd-sourcing or in-kind contributions had to go through a process of restructuring in order to turn into sustainable organizations. This implied adopting some elements of hierarchy and centralization, redefining the vision, mission and goals of the initiative and securing longer-term funding for their organizational needs. The chapter contributes to the growing body of literature on the impact of ICTs on activism and on the professionalization of voluntary-based social movement organizations more broadly.

Mykhailo Cherenkov, Tetiana Kalenychenko and Taras Antoshevskyy examine the role of churches as civil society actors in Ukraine. Studying the social activism of churches and religious organizations as a part of civil society in post-Soviet countries is a rare enterprise, and this chapter, co-authored by three researchers who are also active members in their respective religious communities, is a valuable contribution to the literature (see also Krawcuk and Bremer 2016 on Churches in Ukraine’s crisis). The authors argue that in a time of crisis in Ukrainian statehood, the churches emerged as leaders of credibility and consolidation in civil society. Although the Euromaidan and the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine fostered the separation between the Orthodox Churches in Ukraine to the highest degree and led to the growth of ethno-nationalism, a
new consolidation emerged, the authors argue: “one that is not based on the externally defined canonicity, but rather on serving people in practical ways”. The churches in Ukraine seized the crisis as an opportunity to engage in charity, volunteer work and social service for the military, displaced and conflict-affected populations and revitalize their links with the communities. The churches’ social activism changed the religious map of the country: the churches that gained recognition and influence were not so much canonical as those that were socially responsible. The churches’ activism in the community helped the nation at a very difficult moment in its history, and also helped the churches take the initiative and play a responsible role in (civil) society.

In the final chapter of this book, Maryna Shevtsova studies an adaptation strategy of LGBT organizations to the growing militarization of the society and the rise of radical right-wing groups. Before and during the Euromaidan, the Ukrainian LGBT movement had to devise political strategies that would take into account the provocations by pro-Russian groups who used the homophobic attitudes of Ukrainians to oppose European integration. After the start of the armed conflict, the movement faced a challenge from right-wing groups that see LGBT people as a threat to national security. Though the post-Euromaidan political environment enabled LGBT groups to increase their visibility and participation, the need to respond to the increasing nationalist and militarist attitudes of the society triggered the emergence of new discursive practices for the Ukrainian LGBT movement. Shevtsova calls these practices “homonormative patriotism”, in an attempt to present an image of “a good Ukrainian gay citizen”, who has to fit within the heteronormative masculine role model, as well as demonstrate patriotic attitudes and be keen to defend the country. Shevtsova raises concerns that, while such an adaptation strategy may bear short-term fruit and result in growing acceptance by the society of normalized homosexual subjects who display patriotism, stereotypical masculinity and responsible citizenship, it is implicitly exclusive of other subgroups that can be covered by the abbreviation LGBT(IQ+). The chapter contributes to the literature on LGBT activism in Ukraine, in particular, and Eastern Europe, more broadly.
The remaining gaps and venues for further research

The twelve chapters in this book cover a wealth of trends, developments and groups of civil society in Ukraine post-Euromaidan. Naturally, however, a number of issues that we as editors find to be of great significance did not make it into the volume given the limitations of its size and timing. This concerns, first of all, the rise of *uncivil or illiberal civil society* in Ukraine and elsewhere in the post-soviet space over recent years (see Hug 2018), including radical nationalist and conservative groups openly inciting intolerance and hatred and resorting to violence. While this phenomenon and its crucial impact are acknowledged throughout the contributions, it is not the subject of a designated study and so merits further investigation.

The nature and role of *women and feminist civic actors* in post-Euromaidan Ukraine is also not addressed in this volume. Work on women’s activism has been done by a number of scholars (Phillips 2008; Khromeychuk 2016; Martsenyuk, Grytsenko and Kvit 2016). It would have been fruitful to approach the issue of women’s and feminist activism systematically from the two angles of this collective study, namely: change on the outside and on the inside.

The book does not delve into the *regional diversity of civil society* in Ukraine. Civil society has developed unevenly across Ukraine, with the strong and well-established CSOs being mostly based in Kyiv. In the regions, organized civil society is limited to a few large cities. Shifting the focus from national level CSOs to regional and local civic groups is necessary to understand civil society development in Ukraine fully. Given Ukraine’s regional mosaic, some regions have stronger civic traditions, civil society organizations and impact, while other are lagging behind. The regional dynamics of civil society development as well as locally based *grass-roots civil society groups* deserve further research.

The role of *cultural civil society groups* in conflict resolution and reconciliation domestically and Ukraine’s image internationally also remain fascinating avenues for future studies. Despite
their important role in democratization and indeed central role in public diplomacy and youth activation, cultural groups are rarely considered in studies on civil society and so remain largely underresearched.

Another venue for examination is the links between civil society and political society and the interactions between Ukraine’s CSOs and civic activists, on the one hand, and political parties, on the other. Given that many Ukrainian civic activists entered national and local politics in 2014 and 2015 and many political parties tried to recruit civil society leaders to their lists, it would be worth exploring what effects such “migration” has had on both party and electoral politics and civil society in Ukraine.

Finally, it would be worthwhile examining how the transnational links of Ukrainian civil society have changed since the Euromaidan and the start of the armed conflict (see also Beichelt and Worschech 2017). In this regard, studies of Ukrainian diaspora’s transnational networks and activism are important in the light of the broad diaspora mobilization during and after the protests. The armed conflict has also brought many international CSOs to Ukraine or to working on Ukraine’s issues in partnership with Ukrainian organizations. In addition to Western influence, Ukraine has also been penetrated by Russia-funded civic networks. The question of how transnational activism has changed Ukraine’s civil society map and helped it change Ukraine requires further attention.

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