

Gatskova, Kseniia; Gatskov, Maxim

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The Weakness of Civil Society in Ukraine: A Mechanism-Based

Ksenia Gatskova^{*}, and Maxim Gatskov^{**}

^{*} IOS Regensburg; University of Konstanz. E-mail: gatskova@ios-regensburg.de.

^{**} BAYHOST Regensburg; University of Regensburg.

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Landshuter Straße 4
D-93047 Regensburg

Telefon: (09 41) 943 54-10

Telefax: (09 41) 943 54-27

E-Mail: info@ios-regensburg.de

Internet: www.ios-regensburg.de

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Abstract

This study explores the determinants of the low level of civic engagement in Ukraine. Applying the methodological framework of analytical sociology we consider different social mechanisms that explain the weakness of Ukrainian civil society. First, we discuss how the political system and economic performance of the country shape beliefs, values and motives of people by creating the context for their actions. Second, we focus on different aspects of people's experience during the Soviet times to rule out a number of hypotheses concerning unwillingness of citizens to join formal voluntary organizations. Using the results of the individual-level data analysis we show that the specific features of the *Homo Sovieticus* "socio-cultural type", such as passivity towards management of the own life, absence of political identification, and reliance on informal networks affect negatively the propensity of people to be members of civic organizations. These effects are complemented by the negative impact of post-Soviet transformation disappointment and subjective perception of low social status. Based on the results of analyses we formulate suggestions concerning possible ways to foster the civil society development in Ukraine.

1 Introduction

Vital scientific interest towards the development of civil society arises from the idea that a fully-fledged third sector¹ is one of the three pillars of a modern pluralistic and participatory democracy. Proceeding from this idea and works of such prominent political philosophers as A. Ferguson, A. de Tocqueville and A. Gramsci, contemporary social scientists have given much attention to considering various factors and contexts that determine civic activism and voluntary association membership (e.g. influential monographs by Keane 1988, 2003, Pérez-Díaz 1993, Putnam 1993, 2000, Skocpol 2003). The rise of the so-called new social movements in Western democracies in the late 1960s and especially the collapse of communist systems in the Central and Eastern Europe gave new impulses to the study of civil society. Due to the crucial role of civic associations in the collapse of the communist rule, they were expected to become one of the key (collective) players in the process of post-communist transformation. At the stages of establishing democratic procedures and liberalization of economy, civil society organizations (CSOs) were supposed to function as facilitator or at least as a watchdog of reforms. Political scientists theorized that after the institutionalization of a democratic system, vibrant development of the third sector would induce civic political culture (Almond, Verba 1963), thus ensuring that young democracies consolidate (Linz, Stepan 1996, Diamond 1999, Merkel 2000).

The rapidly growing empirical literature on determinants of voluntarism in nations around the world was considerably encouraged by the public availability of cross-national data from the World Values Survey. In order to explain the patterns of national organization involvement empirical researchers addressed the individual-level socioeconomic and demographic as well as country-level characteristics, paying much attention to social trust and social capital (for recent publications see Paxton 2007, Howard, Gilbert 2008, Valkov 2009, Sønderskov 2010, Schofer, Longhofer 2011, Wallace 2012). While this kind of cross-national analysis is, without a doubt, very useful in highlighting fundamental relationships, it remains considerably constrained in what it may reveal

¹ We use the notions “civil society” and “third sector” synonymously and therefore interchangeably here, defining them as a network of voluntary, non-profit, and self-governing organizations.

about the civic engagement in each of the states. Detailed knowledge of the country-specific associational life is however not only of theoretical interest but acquires additional importance when policymakers and donors decide about the support of the third sector in the states that have no stable democratic rule and tradition of participation. Without a profound understanding of the political and socio-economic context of a particular country, the allocation of financial aid can be ineffective (see Crotty 2003 for the case of Russia), if not futile. The focus of post-communist studies of the third sector has therefore to be more on mechanisms of its development.

Two decades after the collapse of the socialist systems in Central and Eastern Europe, there remain no doubts that civil society is not a given-for-granted platform for democratic development but rather a “third challenge”, after institutionalization of democracy and economic reforms. While some young democracies of Central Europe have achieved higher levels of third sector’s sustainability (with Estonia and Poland as leaders in the year 2010 according to the *USAID NGO Sustainability Index*), other countries, especially those with poorer economic performance and authoritarian regimes, have major shortcomings in many respects. We focus in our study on the case of Ukraine, a country which experienced very little positive change with respect to civil society during the last decade. Most of the expectations concerning growth of citizens’ participation, as part of overall optimism which arose after the “Orange revolution” of 2004, have been disappointed (Golovaha, Panina 2006, Stewart 2009, White, McAllister 2009). The annual survey data of the *CCC Creative Center 2002–2010* show a decrease in the share of organizations having full-time employees from 64 percent in 2002 to 41 percent in 2010 by a constant level of volunteer involvement (Palyvoda, Golota 2010: 36ff.). Representative sociological surveys confirm the notoriously low level of citizens’ participation rate.² The “promotion of democracy” through the donor assistance from abroad has had obviously a much smaller effect on the population than it could have been expected. What hinders the Ukrainian third sector to develop more rapidly?

² The amount of respondents who answered “Do not belong to any social or political organizations or movements” remained stable over all the years of independence (the share in percent): 82.2 in 1994, 86.6 in 1998, 83.9 in 2002, 83.6 in 2006 and 83.6 in 2010 (*Monitoring survey*, see Section 4 below).

Our present paper aims at mechanism-based explanation of the long-lasting weakness of civil society in Ukraine. We address this issue by applying the explanatory scheme of analytical sociology (Coleman 1990, Esser 1993, Hedström/Bearman 2009). In order to provide an explanation of people's unwillingness to join CSOs we treat the following questions: Which beliefs, values, and motives of Ukrainians emerged out of the transformation process of the last twenty years? What opportunities and restrictions define the options of citizens to solve their problems? What factors encourage and impede people's participation in the third sector? Is there a generational difference in the level of mistrust to CSOs (soviet legacy) and engagement in the third sector?

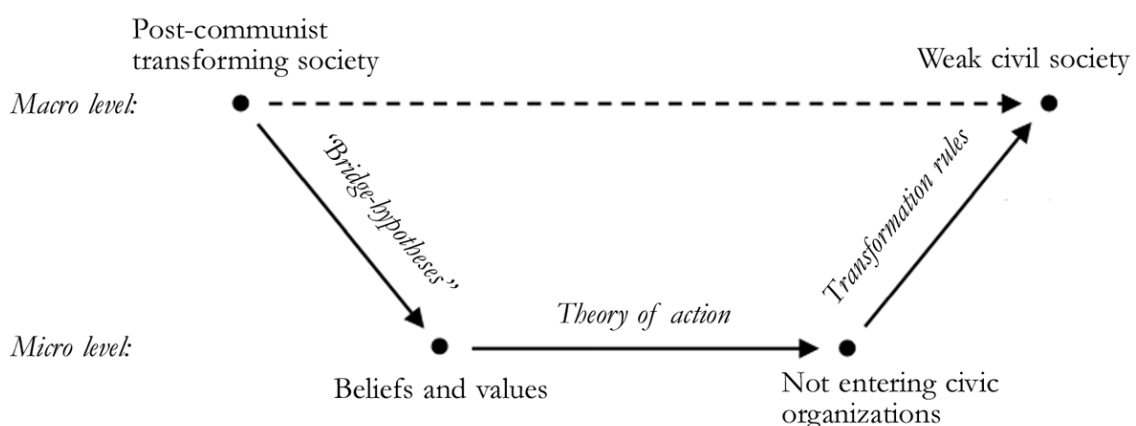
This paper consists of seven sections. The following section describes the basic principles of the methodological framework, which we apply in this study. In section 3 we proceed with a discussion of the relevant theoretical background for our research and point to the relevant findings from recent empirical studies that are noteworthy in the context of present paper. In the same section we formulate hypotheses to be tested on empirical data. The next two sections describe the data and the variables used in subsequent statistical computations. Section 6 presents the results of our empirical analyses. Finally, section 7 concludes and discusses possible policy implications of our results.

2 Approach of analytical sociology

We address the problem of weakness of civil society in Ukraine within the framework of analytical sociology. The core concern of analytical sociology is *explanation*. Unlike simple descriptions that seek answers to “what” and “which” questions, the explanation is concerned with “why” and “how” questions. According to J. Elster (2007: 9), to explain an event is to give an account of why it happened, that is, to explain why do we observe what we observe. In terms of this approach we seek for an answer to the question: Why is civil society in Ukraine weak?

Among different types of scientific explanation analytical sociology approach defines the mechanism-based explanation as the most appropriate for the social science. The representatives of this approach argue that “the basic explanatory principle behind the mechanism approach ... is that proper explanations identify the entities, activities, and relations that jointly produce the collective outcome to be explained” (Hedström/Bearman 2009: 8). This type of explanation is grounded on the idea of *structural individualism*. The essence of this methodological paradigm is that it assigns a unique explanatory role to individual’s actions but also stresses the role of social structures that constitute social environment for individuals’ actions. It means that to explain a social macro phenomenon (“weak civil society”) we need to refer to the micro level of individual actions. To do so, we consider mechanisms of three different kinds: (1) situational mechanisms, (2) action-formation mechanisms, and (3) transformational mechanisms.

Figure 1 Mechanism-based explanation scheme of the weakness of civil society in Ukraine



The situational mechanisms link the macro level of social context to the level of individuals in form of so-called “bridge-hypotheses”. In our case we formulate a number of assumptions about how Soviet legacy and post-communist transformation period shaped the beliefs, values, and motives of individuals in the contemporary Ukraine. Afterwards we turn to the action-formation mechanisms to explain why people decide to enter or not to enter CSOs. At this stage we empirically test the hypotheses about how different values, beliefs, and motives affected by the Ukrainian context define the actions of people. The last stage of explanation involves using transformation rules to outline how individual actions in their combination bring about the phenomenon we intend to explain. Figure 1 shows schematically the sequence of our investigation.

By implementing the approach of analytical sociology we seek to complement the investigations of social scientists, who specified various factors of underdevelopment of civil society in post-communist countries (e.g. Howard 2003) and particularly in Ukraine (Stewart 2009, Stepanenko 2006), but did not go the whole way of analytical explanation.

In the next section we give an overview of the social environment, in which the Ukrainian civil society is embedded. Afterwards, we discuss consequences of the Soviet experience and the adaptation of individuals to the objective circumstances of transforming society.

3 Explanatory elements

3.1 Objective factors: Political and economic conditions

Macro-level properties of a social system can insofar be called “objective” as they constitute the given “reality” for individual and corporate actors by creating opportunities for and imposing restrictions on them. The third sector cannot be viewed independently from the first and the second sector not only because the political system and the national economy make up the frame of action by providing essential (legal, material etc.) resources. A considerable part of CSOs seeks political influence (e.g. human rights and environmental groups) or strives to satisfy needs which are not served effectively enough by the respective economy (e.g. educational and self-help activities). Besides, there are also overlapping sections between the sectors with, for example, local organizations of political parties belonging to both the first and the third sector, and professional associations acting at the intersection of the second and the third sector (Howard 2003: 33).

The renaissance of the concept of civil society in the course of anti-communist resistance in Central and Eastern Europe (prominent on this topic Gellner 1994) led to the understanding of civil society as opposed to the omnipotent state. This resulted in some idealization of associational life and a conceptual underestimation of the role of the first sector in shaping civil society, especially in the problematic situation when the state doesn't follow the rule of law. Meanwhile it has been widely acknowledged, the rule of law is the essential principle of any modern democratic system and a critical precondition for successful post-communist transformation (Howard 2003: 32ff., Maćków 2004: 24ff.). Recent empirical research and theoretical reflection on the relationship between state and civil society asserts the importance of political structures and institutions in shaping the third sector. It was found that in different democratic regimes state–civil society relations may differ (Stadelmann-Steffen, Freitag 2010), but they generally remain of key importance for the development of associational life (see e.g. Skocpol 1999 for the USA; Bergem 2003, Olk, Klein, Hartnuß 2010 for Germany; Cepel 2012 for Finland). Arguing that modern state is an engine that drives the growth of associations, E. Schofer and W. Longhofer (2011: 540) point out that besides

being a locus of opportunities and constraints, the state is “a key source of the identities, purposes, and legitimations that underlie civic life more generally”.

Using D. Young’s (2000) typology of state–civil society relations (supplementary, complementary, and adversarial) we can find differing patterns, or mixes, of such relations in different countries (the author compares Israel, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States). Contrary to consolidated democracies, where the first two types of relations prevail, in post-Soviet non-EU countries the adversarial relationship seems to be dominant: associations oppose the government, lobby for democratic reforms and try to secure human rights (thus fulfilling the so-called “watchdog function”), while the state continues to conduct restrictive policies. According to the annual USAID report on the NGO’s development in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, in the year 2010 government harassment of some NGOs in Ukraine increased, and “a review of the three years of implementation of the Civil Society Development Concept, which provides a basis for government communication with civil society and for developing laws to regulate relations between government and civil society, showed that none of the major recommended improvements of the laws affecting civil society institutions were achieved.” (USAID 2011: 205). L. Palyvoda and S. Golota (2010: 52) note that one of the main barriers for effective cooperation between civil society organizations and government agencies in Ukraine is a lack of understanding of the benefits of such cooperation from the side of the government. Yet it could be argued that such an adversarial relationship results not so much from a lack of understanding, but is rather an inherent feature of a “defect” democracy, or, in other words, “transitional” authoritarianism (for this concept see Maćków 2009 and the contribution by A. Kolodii for the case of Ukraine).

If we correlate the *Democracy Index* with the *NGO Sustainability Index* of the Central and East European post-communist countries³ we find a very strong connection between the level of democratic and civil society development ($r=0.91$, $p<0.001$). A less strong, but still very distinct correlation between the *Human Development Index* and the *NGO Sustainability Index* in the same sample ($r=0.65$, $p<0.05$) supports the common

³ Without ex-Yugoslav and Caucasus states those countries are: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine.

idea that the strength of civil society goes in line with the standard of living. For Ukraine, which has one of the worst economic records of all transformation states (and is currently the second poorest country in the sample after Moldova), the economic argument is of great relevance. Ukraine was the only transformation country to have known nine consecutive years of economic decline (van Zon 2001: 71), during which it lost over 60 percent of its GDP per capita. Between 2000 and 2008 the GDP was growing at an average of 6.9 percent, but in 2009 it again dropped by 15 percent in consequence of the global financial crisis. Currently Ukraine continues to face a large number of challenges including high poverty rates, weak social security system, slow modernization of economy and society. If we agree with R. Dahrendorf that “civil society requires opportunities of participation which in the OECD societies (if not universally) are provided by work and a decent minimum standard of living”, we must follow his conclusion that “once these are lost by a growing number, civil society goes with them” (Dahrendorf 1996: 239).

To sum up, the importance of the first and the second sector for the development of the third sector is obvious. When in conditions of general insecurity and uncertainty people’s activities base more on interpersonal trust than on formal rules and institutions, informal networks expand quicker than the economy⁴ and consolidate stronger than the political system. However, there is also convincing evidence that it is not enough to consider the “objective”, macro factors. Recent cross-national research on the weakness of civil society in post-communist states shows that the specific communist and transformational experience is the most significant and powerful “subjective” factor which explains the low level of organizational membership in the post-communist states.

3.2 Subjective factors: Experience of Homo (post-)Sovieticus

According to the Thomas theorem, which states that if people perceive something as real, it is real in its consequences, the subjective perception of the situation has a decisive role for people’s actions. In his research on civil society in post-communist Germany and Russia M. Howard proceeds from the argument that people’s behavior is

⁴ According to the expert evaluations the shadow market in Ukraine makes up from 30 to 60 percent (Balakireva, Černenko 2009, Ivaščenko 2010).

shaped by their prior experiences and how they interpret those experiences (Howard 2003: 19). It means that in order to explain the specific motivations of people's current behavior we have to refer to the sources of their socialization, experience in interaction with social actors and institutions, and prior social practices.

Among publications on these issues a research work of A. Golov and Ju. Levada (1993) is perhaps the most prominent. The scholars analyzed beliefs, attitudes, and values of people in Russia as well as the historical development of the Soviet social institutions in order to portray a socio-cultural type, which he introduced into the social science under the notion of *Homo Sovieticus*. According to Levada's description, *Homo Sovieticus* is a "man of the crowd", deindividualized person, who seeks to be "like everybody", and who is easily controlled by the state. Such person has a paternalistic view of the state and is primitive in respect of her needs, in sense that she is satisfied with the very minimum needed to maintain existence. This sociocultural identity was formed in the process of socialization by a large network of state institutions and structures.

From the early childhood individuals in the Soviet Union learned to be a part of community by participating in the different structures created and maintained by the state. The channels of social mobility were strictly defined and controlled. The official community life started for 7-year old children in the *oktiabriata* organization formed on the basis of schools⁵. Then an appropriate ideological socialization was continued during formation period in *pioneer* and afterwards *komsomol* organizations to be finished for the most successful young people in the communist party. But since these organizations were created by the state from above, their existence was perceived as something given, objectively predefined and hence was taken for granted. Any other personal initiatives that did not fit into the given frames of all-encompassing state structures were suppressed and "independent behaviour has always been punished" (van Zon 2001: 78). These circumstances encouraged people either to adhere to the expectations of the Soviet state and actively promote its ideology or to be publicly passive. Being passive was a rational behaviour under the circumstances of a full state-management over the life course of an individual,

⁵ As a rule children were divided into 5-member groups called "stars". The major role of *oktiabriata* was to prepare children for becoming *pioneers*.

because adaptation to established rules implied less costs than attempts to change the situation. As far as people were required to show their devotion to the communist ideology they automatically were expected to join different kinds of organizations. It was almost necessary to be a member of trade union or the communist party for achieving high-level job positions and having access to some goods and services. Therefore, individual's public passivity was naturally combined with the official membership in organizations that "was more a formality, a matter of obligation and expediency rather than deeply felt" (Howard 2003: 27).

The importance of considering the qualitative nature of organizational membership was discussed by B. Weßels (2003: 178), who shows that the level of organizational membership in Soviet Ukraine was extremely high and it rapidly dropped from 81.4 percent in 1991 to 29.6 percent in 2001. These figures make clear that only under conditions of *voluntary* participation the level of associational membership is an adequate indicator of civil society development. If the membership in organizations is regulated by the state, as in the case of totalitarian regime, the rate of organizational engagement becomes a meaningless value. Thus, the nature of relationships between state and civil society should always be taken into account to avoid any hasty conclusions.

Today, when the situation has radically changed and people are not more forced to join any formal organization, being a member of voluntary associations is turned to be a matter of personal choice. People have no more external incentives to perform publicly useful activities. However, this situation encourages only those individuals to participate in voluntary organizations, who are able to set up their goals independently and rely on their own decisions in the process of reaching them, contrary to people who got used to have externally created frames of action and an idea that someone ("state") will do it for them. Relying on the socialization theory combined with the specific context described above we derive the following hypothesis: *Persons who hold an active position towards managing their own life are self-selected into the civic organizations (H1).*

The passiveness and output-orientation are the key features of the subject political culture in the conception of G. Almond and S. Verba (1963). To complement our argument discussed above we address the role of active citizens for the development of civil

society also from the perspective of political culture approach. Among three ideal types of political culture: parochial, subject and participant, the prevalence of the latter is deemed to be associated with consolidated democratic regime and developed civil society. The participant political culture is apparent when citizens possess comprehensive political orientations and actively contribute to political life. By contrast, parochial political culture is characterized by the absence of political knowledge and mixed feelings of citizens towards political system. In this type of political culture people tend to ascribe rather diffused roles to political actors – these roles include political, economic and religious elements. In the subject political culture, despite having cognitive, affective and evaluative attitudes towards political system, people are output-oriented and do not consider themselves as active participants of political life. The implication of this perspective leads to the hypothesis: *Citizens with clear political orientation represent the values of participatory political culture and are more likely to be members of the third sector organizations than those who have no political orientation (H2).*

The specific post-communist experience of individuals in relation to civic engagement was particularly well examined and described by M. Howard, who features three mutually reinforcing factors that negatively affect the associational membership. These factors are derived from the past experience of people and include mistrust of communist organizations, the persistence of friendship networks, and post-communist disappointment (Howard 2003: 26ff.). Since all these elements of post-communist experience are highly relevant for our present research we suggest coming into more detail.

M. Howard argues that because formerly membership was based mainly on obligation, obedience, and external conformity, rather than internal and voluntary initiatives, today this resulted in a fact that most people still “strongly mistrust and avoid joining any kind of formal organizations, even in the newly free and democratic setting” (Howard 2003: 27). Hence, the present aversion of formal affiliations was to a certain degree caused by the former compulsory character of membership in formal associations. Moreover, lack of positive experience and divergence between what was proclaimed and actually done by these organizations resulted in high mistrust level to formal associations. Unfortunately we are not able to test the effect of mistrust to NGOs on the membership in associations directly, because of endogeneity concerns: the relationship between trust in organizations

and associational membership is reciprocal. However, we can investigate this relationship indirectly. To do so we treat the question if associational membership and trust in NGOs increases or decreases with age of respondents. It is logically to expect, that the effect of Soviet socialization becomes weaker over time and therefore younger generation having less post-communist experience would differ in its values and perceptions from older people. Our next hypothesis is: *Younger people are more likely to participate in the voluntary organizations and demonstrate higher degree of trust to NGOs (H3).*

Turning back to the qualitative research of M. Howard we focus now on the second factor of the weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe. The author argues that because the public sphere was extremely politicized and state-controlled, people could express themselves openly only within their networks of close friends and family members (Howard 2003: 28). As a result the contrast between formal institutions and informal behaviour of people in everyday life was obvious and it could be described in terms of two co-existing realities: a “visible” reality of official (formal) state organizations, activities, and relationships and a “hidden” reality of informal networks, interpersonal relationships, and interactions. The latter has proved to be more genuine and reliable in the course of time. M. Howard distinguishes between two levels of the informal interactions: first, interactions within closed groups of trusted family members and best friends, and second, more distant connections used to acquire necessary goods and services, and to get ahead in general (Howard 2003: 28). The problem of goods shortage was solved in the independent Ukraine after the establishment of market economy rules. As a result the second type of informal relationships has partially lost its significance. However, the informal social capital is still very powerful factor in getting ahead in life, for example in improving career chances or getting good education, access to quality health care etc. According to the *Monitoring 2010* (Ukrajins’ke suspil’stvo 2010: 621) 57 percent of respondents believe that family members and friends may protect their rights and interests most effectively⁶. This is by far the most frequently indicated answer followed by “don’t know” (22 percent) and “all those persons, who could help me for bribes” (15.5 percent).

⁶ The question wording was: “Who can most effectively protect your rights and interests?” It was a multiple-choice question with 11 answer categories including respondent specified category “Other”.

Howard (2003: 28ff.) concludes that networks of close friends and family remain extremely prominent and important throughout the post-communist region, and argues that the informal private networks function as a substitute for formal and public organizations. The importance of formal and informal networks may be conceived through assessment of trust.

We address here neither the trust in social institutions, nor generalized social trust understood as a kind of depersonalized trust, which is directed to persons not directly known (to an ‘average’ person in a society). We consider in our paper the trust placed to the concrete persons with whom one communicates and interacts directly on a regular basis: family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. The scope of trust in surroundings, as mentioned above, helps to assess the importance of certain interpersonal relations for an individual. In case of intense and positive interactions with family, friends or neighbours we usually speak about the *informal* social networks. On the other hand, the relationships with colleagues bear a more *formal* character. Intense interactions in formal social networks have positive consequences for a number of important skills such as interpersonal communication competence, sense of interdependence and personal responsibility, bargaining skills, teamwork etc. By contrast, being highly dependent on a closed informal community of family members or best friends implies being less “opened for the world” and, hence, less interested to create a common good for all, but one’s small community. This argument is in line with the idea that “the more dependent individuals are on close associates and kin, the more they are likely to think of the world in terms of “we” vs. “they”, where “we” is a limited group. Individuals seeing the world as “us vs. them” would not learn to trust “most people” (Paxton 2007). Following the empirical evidence of K. Sønderskov (2010), such people are less likely to engage in civic organizations that direct their effort to produce public good. Therefore, our next hypothesis is formulated as follows: *The more people rely on their informal networks, the less they are likely to be members of civic organizations (H4).*

Another factor decreasing the level of organizational membership Howard points to is an overall disappointment of people with the consequences of the transformation. “Although they had many fears and uncertainties about where the changes would lead them, most people experienced at least a brief moment of genuine excitement, hope, and

idealism during those times of rapid transformation” (Howard 2003: 29). Their expectations about better life conditions and political freedom were not fully realized and in the context of general uncertainty about the future people finally come to feel disoriented, lost and frustrated. The state of Ukrainian society after the collapse of the Soviet Union may be reasonably described in terms of Durkheim’s ‘anomie’ – the values of the Soviet times were not more relevant after 1991, but the new system of values was not yet established and people simply did not know what to believe in. After negative experience with transformation period and the “Orange revolution”⁷ in particular people naturally tend to avoid participation in the public sphere. The transformation period was especially difficult for the representatives of older generation that spent the biggest part of their lives under communism and knew no other system of values than those transmitted by the official propaganda. Younger Ukrainians were also affected, but perhaps, first of all by the economic consequences of transition. Consequently, we assume that *the higher degree of anomie and disappointment a person shows, the less likely she is to join voluntary organizations (H5).*

The last important factor, we consider in our paper, is associated with the economic situation and welfare of citizens. As it was already discussed above, the high poverty rate in Ukraine is one of the reasons for the weak civil society. Indeed, it is hard to expect that people would engage into voluntary activities when they have not enough of money to support their families and should allocate their time and effort in a way to get additional means for survival. Hence, we hypothesize that *poorer people who have to cope with severe financial difficulties are less likely to engage in voluntary organizations (H6).*

At the same time, given that the objective welfare of the household is higher than the subsistence minimum, the subjective definition of the situation should be crucial for the explanation of the input of its members (e.g. in terms of time) aimed at improvement of their financial situation. Different subjective perceptions can make people exhibit different volunteer behaviors. If compared to a reference group one considers himself ra-

⁷ The *Monitoring* survey captured the rise of hope for better life in many respects at the beginning of 2005 and the effect of disappointment in the following years after the “Orange revolution” (Ukrajins’ke sus-pil’stvo 2010: 614ff.).

ther poor, it may induce him to look for additional source of income rather than to participate in unpaid work. If, on the other hand, one perceives the own financial situation as satisfactory or even better than of the reference group, the motivation to engage in civic organizations (e.g. in order to help others) is likely to increase. Therefore it seems plausible to assume that *people who perceive their socioeconomic status as low are less likely to engage in voluntary organizations (H7)*.

4 Data

We test our hypotheses using the cross-section data from a large-scale survey *Monitoring 2010* conducted by the Institute of Sociology of National Academy of Science in Ukraine. This dataset is representative for the Ukrainian population aged 18 and older.

The *Monitoring 2010* (also referred to as the *Monitoring “Ukrainian society”*) provides individual-level information on people’s attitudes concerning various political, economic, and social issues. This survey is conducted in Ukraine on the yearly basis (with some exceptions) since 1992 (Ukrajins’ke suspil’stvo 2010). In 2010 there were 1800 respondents questioned using the standardized questionnaire, the basic part of which is replicated every year. Some additional questions, first of all concerning attitudes towards the “Orange revolution” were included since 2005. The *Monitoring* data are especially suitable for our research since they contain not only the necessary information on a quite large list of organizational affiliations but also the most relevant indicators that capture the specific post-Soviet reality perceptions of citizens. Moreover, contrary to many national surveys the *Monitoring 2010* contains a comprehensive set of questions concerning subjective and objective economic welfare of households. Unfortunately the cross-section design of the study doesn’t allow for tracking the changes over time, nevertheless, this dataset is one of the best available for Ukraine to examine the voluntary association memberships of citizens.

5 Operationalizations and measures

The dependent variable used in our study is individual's membership status measured as a dichotomous variable, which takes on value 1 if a person reported being a member of any of the voluntary associations listed, and 0 if not. Several studies express scepticism concerning this traditional way of measuring associational membership. The argument used is that it is impossible to distinguish between the individuals who are actively involved in the activities of an organization and those for whom "participation" means only a nominal affiliation (Howard, Gilbert 2008). The opponents of this view argue however, that even passive membership creates a sense of belonging to a real or an imagined community (Sønderskov 2010). Moreover, passive memberships are more typical for the organizations that produce public good (for example, passive membership may be attained through contribution payments to an environmental organization) than to the associations that provide direct benefits to its members (e.g. sports or recreational association). This means that the passive members also make their contributions to the improvement of life quality. The not-differentiating approach to membership measurement seems to be appropriate in the context of post-Soviet Ukraine not only because the total organizational participation rate is extremely low and exclusion of certain cases would make analyses problematic, but also for the reason that membership status is really likely to indicate the actual involvement of people. This can partially be explained by the fact that there was no traditional culture of membership in voluntary independent organizations in post-Soviet countries, and, hence, there exist no expectations of population about socially approved behavior to be a member of any voluntary organization, and partly because in the conditions of overall economic marginalization people are less likely to donate money than propose activity.

The concepts we consider as related to the elements of the *Homo-Sovieticus* values and beliefs system of Ukrainians include political party identification, active position in life, and level of anomie and demoralization (the complete list of variables is described in Appendix 1).

Looking at the distribution of answers to the question that asks people to identify a political ideology they feel closer to given a list of alternatives and an opportunity to indicate other option, if the right option was not listed, we find out that about half of the population (59,7 percent) stated that they have no preferences, they have not decided yet, or that they simply “have no notion of those ideologies”⁸. Based on the initial variable we computed a dummy that takes on value 1 if a person reported her political preference and 0 otherwise. This dummy is treated as an indicator for clear political orientation.

Further, we use in our study a slightly modified additive scale of anomie and demoralization, which was adapted and validated for Ukraine by N. Panina in 1990 (Ukrajins’ke suspil’stvo 2010). The index of anomie and demoralization is computed for every person and it takes on values from 0 to 17, with the larger values indicating higher level of anomie and demoralization. The complete list of statements that constitute basis for the computation of this index is provided in Appendix 1. Based on the individual values of index a mean value of anomie and demoralization is supposed to reflect the state of anomie in the society.

As an important component of the beliefs and values system typical for *Homo Sovieticus* we regard the attitudes of people towards their individual role in managing their life and acceptance of the responsibility for things happening around. The active personal role towards way the own life is organized is measured by a dummy variable constructed on the basis of a question “What would you say mostly defines how your life goes on?” with the answer categories using the five-item scale that were grouped accordingly: “life depends mostly on me /life depends more on me than on circumstances” contrary to “life depends mostly on circumstances/ life depends more on circumstances than on me/ life depends equally on me and on circumstances”.

In addition, we use in our regression analysis a set of controls that refers to the socioeconomic status of the respondent’s household. Here we address both objective and subjective measures. As a principle objective indicator of person’s welfare we use a logarithmized monthly income per household member measured in national currency (UAH). Further, we consider employment status of individual grouped in five catego-

⁸ The refusals to answer were coded separately as missing values. They make up 0.1 percent for this question.

ries: employed (including self-employed), student, pensioner, and not employed (unemployed, working casually, housewife), other. The educational attainment is presented in the model in form of a dummy variable for possessing a higher education. Finally, we refer to the so-called “social ladder” question to measure the subjective social status of respondents based on their perception. In the *Monitoring* survey the “social ladder” consists of seven rungs.

There are three more concepts left to be discussed, namely, trust in one’s family, neighbours, and colleagues. We use the respective three variables as the proxy variables that are thought to be indicators for the level of development of individual informal and formal networks. The trust in family and neighbours correspond to the quality of informal social networks, and the trust in colleagues, accordingly, stands for the quality of formal interactions.

Respective demographic variables for age, gender and place of residence (defined in four categories: Kyiv, big city, small city, and village) were also included in the list of independent variables.

6 Results

Given that our dependent variable is dichotomous we investigate the factors that affect people's propensity to engage in civil society organizations using the maximum-likelihood probit regression models⁹. Table 1 reports the average marginal effects that represent the average change of probability (in percent) that person joins a civic organization associated with changes in each of the regressors. The first column of this table presents the results of probit regression analysis for the total sample. Accordingly, the second and the third columns display the results for the younger and older cohorts. The younger cohort includes respondents aged 18 to 39 years, the older cohort consists, respectively, of respondents who are 40 years old or older.

Among the determinants of membership in organizations of civil society in Ukraine one of the most salient is performed by a clear political identification of a person. Respondents who were able to indicate a political ideology they felt closer to in fact are more often involved as members into organizations of the third sector. This empirical finding strongly supports our hypothesis concerning relationship between values of participatory political culture and engagement in voluntary associations. The probability that people would join any formal association on average is almost 12 percent lower for those Ukrainians, who were not able to report their political preferences. This positive effect is robust and highly significant over all considered models although it seems to be stronger for younger citizens compared to the older generation. As anticipated, the presence of civic culture elements is an important factor of citizens' mobilization and an essential precondition for the civil society development. On the other hand, politically passive individuals bearing the legacy of Soviet experience still prefer not to get involved into public sphere and stand aside from political life even in terms of self-identification.

⁹ We are aware of the complementary log-log regression technique typically used when dependent variables have rare positive (or negative) outcomes. The model assessment is available from authors upon request.

Table 1 Probit regression model predicting the membership in associations, average marginal effects

| <i>Independent variables</i> | <i>All population</i> | | <i>Younger generation</i> | | <i>Older generation</i> | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| | <i>Coeff.</i> | <i>Std. Er.</i> | <i>Coeff.</i> | <i>Std. Er.</i> | <i>Coeff.</i> | <i>Std. Er.</i> |
| Political party identification ¹ | 0.124*** | 0.018 | 0.190*** | 0.032 | 0.084*** | 0.022 |
| Index of anomie | -0.006* | 0.003 | -0.004 | 0.004 | -0.006* | 0.003 |
| Trust family | -0.096* | 0.050 | -0.102 | 0.077 | -0.076 | 0.062 |
| Trust neighbors | -0.046* | 0.021 | -0.038 | 0.032 | -0.054* | 0.027 |
| Trust colleagues | 0.051** | 0.020 | 0.069* | 0.032 | 0.042* | 0.025 |
| Social ladder | 0.019** | 0.008 | 0.017 | 0.013 | 0.019* | 0.009 |
| Log of income | -0.012 | 0.014 | 0.000 | 0.021 | 0.005 | 0.019 |
| Age | -0.001 | 0.003 | -0.059* | 0.023 | -0.004 | 0.010 |
| Age squared | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.001* | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Male ² | -0.033* | 0.018 | -0.010 | 0.029 | -0.045* | 0.023 |
| Higher education ³ | 0.075* | 0.030 | 0.028 | 0.044 | 0.108** | 0.041 |
| Student ⁴ | 0.209** | 0.069 | . | . | . | . |
| Pensioner ⁴ | -0.025 | 0.033 | . | . | . | . |
| Not employed ⁴ | -0.074** | 0.022 | . | . | . | . |
| Other ⁴ | 0.002 | 0.040 | . | . | . | . |
| Life depends mostly on me ⁵ | 0.068** | 0.023 | 0.070* | 0.035 | 0.068* | 0.032 |
| Big city ⁶ | -0.074* | 0.033 | 0.007 | 0.062 | -0.119** | 0.038 |
| Small city ⁶ | -0.071* | 0.034 | -0.043 | 0.061 | -0.086* | 0.040 |
| Village ⁶ | -0.044 | 0.038 | -0.045 | 0.063 | -0.060 | 0.046 |
| N | 1606 | | 658 | | 957 | |
| McFadden's R ² | 0.11 | | 0.13 | | 0.08 | |

Reference categories: ¹“Don't know”, “I have no notion of the political ideologies”, “Hard to say”; ²“Female”; ³“No higher education”; ⁴“Employed or self-employed”; ⁵“Life depends mostly on external circumstances”; ⁶“Kyiv”. • p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Data source: Monitoring 2010 IS NASU

Another empirical finding further supports our theoretical argument concerning the passivity of people and their avoidance of organizational affiliations, namely, the positive effect of the dummy, which describes the active position towards own life. People, who believe that their life depends more on them than on external circumstances are found to be more likely to join formal organizations. These people are less habituated to

be externally manipulated and they differ in this respect from the common pattern of *Homo Sovieticus*. Similarly, our results confirm the assumption that those, who reported to be ready to join a peaceful demonstration to protect their rights, are more likely to be members of civic organizations.

Consistently with these results, the higher level of disappointment and anomie is associated with the lower propensity to engage in civic organizations. Although this effect is rather weak, it is statistically significant and in expected direction. The results show that one point change on the anomie-scale (the scale ranges from 0 to 17) is associated with a drop in probability to join associations on average by 0.6 percent. This empirical finding is in line with recent research and highlights the specific effect of the post-Soviet experience of transition. More disoriented and frustrated persons are less likely to be members of voluntary organizations. Because of their strong disappointment in consequences of the transformation they typically tend less to believe in the positive future prospects and stick more to the Soviet past. They drastically prefer the authoritarian order to the young 'democratic disorder' and uncertainty. The constant recall to the ostensible stability of the past conflicts in their mind with the present new conditions and it results in their unwillingness to accept personal responsibility for the things going around or reluctance to contribute somehow to the processes that contradict with their 'natural' view of the world. Our results provide weak support for the argument that the adaptation to the new conditions was especially painful for the older people. The effect of anomie variable in the regression based on sample of younger respondents loses its significance.

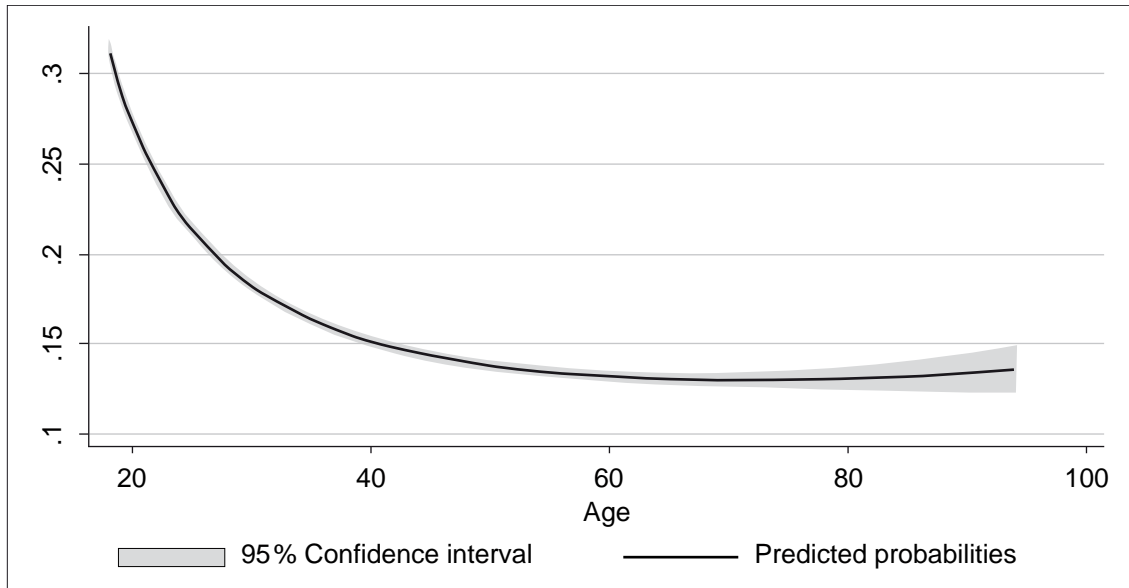
The coefficients of the three variables capturing trust in family, neighbours and colleagues point to another interesting finding of our study. The signs of the coefficients, which are the same across all models, show the direction of relationship between importance of formal or informal networks and associational membership status. Our results suggest that higher trust in colleagues, that is trust placed on rather formal relationships, is associated with higher probability to civically engage. On the other hand, higher trust in relatives and neighbours negatively affects the probability that a person would be a member of a voluntary organization. This is perfectly in line with our conjecture that the persistence of informal networks impedes the development of civil society.

Further, based on the generational theory, which attributes the cohort differences in behaviour to beliefs, values and attitudes, we assumed that the younger generation is more likely to participate in the third sector organizations and to express higher degree of trust towards such organizations. Although the effect of age is not significant in our main model, it is remarkable that the students have 20 percent higher probability to be members of voluntary associations compared to other groups of citizens. In the model based on sample of younger respondents the employment status variable was removed because of collinearity and the effect of age appears to be significant. Its negative coefficient indicates that younger respondents are more likely to participate in the civic organizations. Moreover, the effect of age squared shows that the relationship between age and membership status is not completely linear and it tends to be weaker for older representatives of the younger generation. We investigate this relationship more thoroughly by running another probit regression (for the output see Appendix 2) with a dichotomous dependent variable, which indicated whether a respondent trusts in NGOs or not. We included in this model controls for gender, objective and subjective welfare indicators, and education. To examine the effect of age we used four splines of age (Baum 2006: 181), this enables capturing the non-linear relationship between age and trust in NGOs. The findings show that the trust in NGOs is considerably higher among the youngest respondents (figure 2).

One may argue that the activism of students could be attributed to a large existing network of formal students' organizations. However, if the membership in CSOs would be a pure formality, the level of trust in such organizations would not have differed across population groups. Our finding, thus, is consistent with a social capital theory, which states that trust is created through participation in associations.

Turning back to the main model from table 1, we may conclude, that overall women, people with higher education, and capital city dwellers are more often found to be members of civil society organizations. On the other hand, not employed persons, including housewives and persons who work casually, are less likely to join the organizations.

Figure 2 Predicted probabilities of the trust in NGOs for citizens of different age



Our data provide no support for the economic marginalization thesis: the effect of household income per capita is not significant. Although according to our data the objective measures of welfare are not decisive for the membership in associations, the subjective social status seems to be an important predictor. People who perceive themselves as occupying the lower rungs of the social ladder are less likely to join the civic organizations.

7 Conclusion and discussion

Guided by the principles of analytical approach in sociology we investigated the problem of persistent weakness of the third sector in Ukraine over the years of its independence. As the initial step we described the principal aspects of an unfavourable political and economic context, in which the Ukrainian civil society is embedded. In the next step, in order to understand the decisions of people to civically engage, we addressed people's beliefs, values and motives that were shaped by the political and economic context as well as by the former Soviet experience. Accordingly, we tested a number of hypotheses concerning various factors that affect people's entering civic associations. The evidence we have presented in this paper suggests that an overall passivity and the output-orientation of citizens, their frustration and disappointment with the consequences of transformation, stable informal networks and subjective perception of low social status have negative effect on organizational membership and, hence, impede the development of civil society in Ukraine. Contrary to our expectations, the effect of objective income level was not discerned. However, a closer look at the household income (per capita) distribution shows that there might be a pitfall. The majority of the respondents in our dataset is located on the bottom of the income distribution: 85 percent of respondents reported their income per capita not more than 1600 UAH, and the median income per capita is 810 UAH, which is comparable to the official subsistence minimum, which in 2010 made up on average 848.6 UAH¹⁰. The effect of the objective welfare may, thus, remain uncovered, since the whole sample consists predominantly of people with low incomes, who as a rule give priority to paid work or different coping strategies to support their families. A more elaborated research on this issue is needed to shed light on the relationship between the objective welfare and participation in voluntary associations.

Our findings support the assumption that people who attribute a higher value to the informal networks are less likely to join formal organizations. In the contemporary Ukraine a very large part of individuals' activities rests in the dimension of informal

¹⁰ According to the Ukrainian law "On the state budget of Ukraine in 2010" from 27.04.10, available online at: <http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2154-17/page3>.

relationships. Because of its specific nature the informal relationships are regulated through some conventions accepted by interacting actors as opposed to formal relationships which subordinate to the regulations of law. As a result, the informal conventions may be interpreted in different ways or be violated without tangible consequences for those who break engagements¹¹. Therefore people are not likely to engage in any informal relationships, if they would not be sure about the trustworthiness of their partners. That is, informal relationships arise exclusively between individuals who personally trust each other and therefore the interactions may occur between acquaintance of acquaintance but not with the persons not directly known by the circle of trusted persons. By definition such interactions are hidden from and not accessible for the broader community. This is quite the opposite of the formal voluntary organizations that are opened to volunteers and even interested in them, because these people are ready to engage into activities of such organizations and pursue its goals. Due to persistent importance of the informal relationships in the post-Soviet countries and the advantages they often provide (double standards), informal networks are considered the most effective means of solving personal problems. However, ubiquitous informal relationships do not assist the integration of society and slow down the development of formal organizations.

In accordance with our methodological approach after considering the micro level of individual's behaviour the next step is to define the transformation rules, that show how single actions of people bring about the macro phenomenon of weak civil society. We argue that apart from a simple aggregation, which is the most obvious mechanism of combination of personal decisions not to join the civic organizations that leads to an overall low rate of civic engagement, there are at least two more transformation rules that produce additional negative effect on development of the third sector.

The first mechanism deals with the threshold models of collective behaviour (Granovetter, Soong 1983, Hedström 1994). This model describes how individuals decide on their actions based on the information on costs and benefits of these actions which is transmitted through social networks. That is, choices of people's actions are interdependent but every person has her own subjective "threshold" which defines the

¹¹ We are not discussing here the extreme cases such as informal arrangements of criminal groups etc.

number of other persons around who should perform a certain behaviour to induce this person to similar action. For example, an individual's decision of whether or not to join a civil society organization may be influenced by the anticipated number of other individuals who have already joined such organizations. For some individual it could suffice to have one member of some civic organization among acquaintance to decide for participation, for other individual this number could be not less than twenty. Taking into account that the overall level of organizational membership in Ukraine is very low, the thresholds of many individuals are certainly not reached, and as a result, the current weakness of civil society has a self-reinforcing negative effect.

The second transformation mechanism concerns the lack of organizational experience, respective knowledge and competence to engage in formal relationships. People would probably self-organize into formal associations to pursue common goals and deal with the everyday problems, if they knew how the mechanism of formal organizations works. But since they have no such knowledge, which is usually drawn from previous experience, they simply do not perceive formal associations as an effective instrument to solve their problems. This implies that until the practice of formal associations is spread and acknowledged by the larger groups of society, the Ukrainian population is likely to rely on the old reliable informal ways to cope with their everyday problems.

To step out of this vicious circle the effort should be directed to cultivation of personal activity and responsibility of population. This can be achieved through primary support of small initiatives which can in a relatively short term cause tangible positive changes in direct vicinity of its participants. Such small initiatives could be housing committees, small environmental groups, consumers' associations, self-organized child-care or recreational communities etc. All of such organizations contribute to enhancement of the life quality of those who engage. Moreover, sometimes they contribute also to the common good as far as they provide benefits for larger community (e.g. a small environmental group that cares of a lawn in front of their house contributes to ecology of their neighbourhood).

In light of these conclusions the donor assistance directed to Ukraine which aims to foster the development of the third sector should be readdressed. We suggest that the

civic organizations (and therefore the grant donors) in Ukraine should focus less on overall promotion of democratization but more on projects that contribute to improvement of life quality. Although these projects tackle smaller issues, their beneficial outcomes would be tangible for people, thereby improving the image of NGOs and civic activities in general. In the medium and long term it could turn out to be a more effective way of promoting democratization.

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Appendix 1

Variables description

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Operationalization, wording</i> | <i>Values</i> |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Membership status | <p>Member of which organizations are you?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Club or interest group 2. Political party 3. Socio-political movement 4. Ecological movement 5. NGO, foundation, association 6. Trade union 7. Artistic association 8. Sports club, association 9. Professional association 10. Student's organization, youth organization 11. Religious community, organization 12. Farming group 13. Other organization, association, movement | <p>1 – Member of any organization 0 – No memberships</p> |
| Political identification | <p>In a political spectrum several more or less independent political ideologies can be distinguished. Below some of such ideologies are indicated. Choose please one of them that you personally feel closer to.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communist 2. Socialist 3. Social-democratic 4. Green 5. Liberal 6. Christian-democratic 7. National-democratic 8. Nationalist 9. Other 10. None at all 11. I haven't decided yet 12. I have no notion of those ideologies | <p>1 – Indicated an ideology 0 – Did not indicate an ideology</p> |
| Active position in life | <p>What would you say mostly defines how your life goes on?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Life depends mostly on circumstances 2. Life depends more on circumstances than on me 3. Life depends equally on me and on circumstances 4. Life depends more on me than on circumstances 5. Life depends mostly on me | <p>1 – Life depends more on me than on circumstances/mostly on me 0 – Other categories</p> |

Variables description (continued)

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Operationalization, wording</i> | <i>Values</i> |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Level of anomie and demoralization | An additive scale of following items (1 – agree, 0 – disagree): 1. Nowadays everything is so uncertain that it seems that anything can happen 2. What we lack today is a genuine friendship, as in the past, friendship for the whole life 3. Under current disorder and uncertainty it is difficult to understand what to believe in 4. Everything around changes so quickly that it is not clear which laws to follow 5. Much of what our parents believed in is being destroyed before our eyes 6. The current problem is that majority of people do not believe in anything 7. I often don't understand what is going on, I feel awkward 8. People felt happier in the past, because they knew how to behave properly 9. It seems to me that others know better what is right and what is wrong 10. A couple of strong leaders can make for our country more than all laws and discussions 11. Much evidence is needed to convince people of some truth 12. I think the majority of people can lie to get promoted 13. The majority of people are honest only because they are afraid that they can be caught lying 14. I believe that majority of people can behave dishonestly in order to gain benefit 15. It is safest to trust nobody 16. I believe that practically everyone is able to lie to keep of trouble 17. The majority of people don't like to burden themselves by helping others | 0 to 17 |
| Readiness to participate in peaceful demonstrations | If a peaceful protest demonstration (against decline in life quality, to protect your rights) would happen in your place of residence, would you participate in it? | 1 – Yes 0 – No |
| Logarithm of monthly income per household member | Indicate, please, the total income per capita in your household for the last month (Sum up wages and all other inpayments of all household members and divide this sum by the number of household members) | 2.77 to 9.74 |

Variables description (continued)

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Operationalization, wording</i> | <i>Values</i> |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Social ladder | Imagine that people with different social positions are located on some kind of a ladder: on the lowest rungs there are those, who have the lowest social position, and on the highest – those, who have highest social position. On which rung would you place yourself? | 1 to 7 |
| Trust in family | How much do you trust your family, relatives? 1. Completely distrust 2. Rather distrust 3. Hard to say trust or distrust 4. Rather trust 5. Completely trust | 1 – Trust/rather trust 0 – Other categories |
| Trust in neighbours | How much do you trust your neighbours? 1. Completely distrust 2. Rather distrust 3. Hard to say trust or distrust 4. Rather trust 5. Completely trust | 1 – Trust/rather trust 0 – Other categories |
| Trust in colleagues | How much do you trust your colleagues? 1. Completely distrust 2. Rather distrust 3. Hard to say trust or distrust 4. Rather trust 5. Completely trust | 1 – Trust/rather trust 0 – Other categories |
| Trust in NGOs | How much do you trust NGOs? 1. Completely distrust 2. Rather distrust 3. Hard to say trust or distrust 4. Rather trust 5. Completely trust | 1 – Trust/rather trust 0 – Other categories |
| Age | Your age | 18 to 94 |
| Gender | Your gender | 1 – Male 0 – Female |

Variables description (continued)

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Operationalization, wording</i> | <i>Values</i> |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Higher education | Your education | 1 – Higher education 0 – No higher education |
| Employment status | Indicate please your current occupation. | 1 – Employed, self-employed 2 – Student 3 – Pensioner 4 – Not employed, working casually housewife 5 – Other |
| Place of residence | Where do you currently live? | 1 – Kyiv 2 – City with population over 250 thousand people 3 – Small city 4 – Village |

Appendix 2

Trust in NGOs: Average marginal effects after probit regression

| | <i>Coef.</i> | <i>Std. Err.</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Spline 1 (18–30) | –0.009** | 0.004 |
| Spline 2 (30–40) | 0.002 | 0.004 |
| Spline 3 (40–60) | –0.003 | 0.002 |
| Spline 4 (60>) | 0.001 | 0.002 |
| Higher education ¹ | –0.012 | 0.026 |
| Male ² | –0.034 [•] | 0.018 |
| Logarithm of income | –0.009 | 0.014 |
| Social ladder | 0.032*** | 0.008 |
| N | | 1632 |

Dependent variable: trust in NGOs (1 – yes, 0 – no). Reference categories: ¹ “No higher education”; ² “Female”. [•] p<0.1; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Data source: Monitoring 2010 IS NASU.