The London School of Economics and Political Science

What Reform?
Civil Societies, State Transformation and Social Antagonism in 'European Serbia'

Marek Mikuš

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis examines a set of intentional transformations of the government of society and individuals in the globalising ('Europeanising') and neoliberalising Serbia in 2010–11. It asks two closely related kinds of question about these 'reforms' – first, what reform is really there, of what depth, and second, whose reform is it, in and against whose interests? This inquiry strives to identify some of the dominant transformational tendencies and resistances to these, and to relate these governmental projects and their actual achievements to the conflicted interests and identities in Serbian society that undergoes profound restructuring in the context of a prolonged economic decline and political crisis. Based on ethnographic engagements with various kinds of non-governmental organisations, social movements and public institutions, the reforms are traced at the interface of the 'state' and 'civil society' so as to examine how their mutual relations are being reimagined and boundaries redrawn. Civil society is conceptualised, building on anthropological and Gramscian approaches, as a set of ideas and practices that continually reconstitute and mediate the relationships of 'state,' 'society' and 'economy,' and which reproduce as well as challenge domination by consent – cultural and ideological hegemony. While a particular liberal understanding of civil society has become hegemonic in Serbia, in social reality there is a plurality of 'civil societies' – scenes of associational practice that articulate diverse visions of a legitimate social order and perceive each other as antagonists rather than parts of a single harmonious civil society. The discourses and practices of three such scenes – liberal, nationalist and post-Yugoslav – and their relationships to the perspectives and interests of various social groups are examined in order to identify some of the key moments of social antagonism about reform in contemporary Serbia.

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List of Acronyms

Some of the acronyms used are established acronyms based on Serbian and Slovak names. When applicable, these are provided in brackets.

APR Serbian Business Registers Agency (*Agencija za privredne registre*)
BCIF Balkan Community Initiatives Fund
BiH Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Bosna i Hercegovina*)
CDF Centre for Democracy Foundation
CEPI Central European Policy Institute
CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
CoE Council of Europe
CRNPS Centre for the Development of the Nonprofit Sector (*Centar za razvoj neprofitnog sektora*)
CSFP Civil Society Focal Points
CSO Civil Society Organisation
CSR Corporate Social Responsibility
CUPS Centre for the Advancement of Legal Studies (*Centar za unapređivanje pravnih studija*)
CV Curriculum Vitae
DfID Department for International Development
DILS Delivery of Improved Local Services
DP Democratic Party
EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC European Commission
ECNL European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law
ECSD European Centre of Serbian Diaspora
EESC European Economic and Social Committee
EMinS European Movement in Serbia
EU European Union
FCO Foreign & Commonwealth Office
FDI Foreign Direct Investment
FENS Federation of Nongovernmental Organisations (*Federacija nevladinih organizacija Srbije*)
FRY Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IA	Interim Agreement
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
ID	Identity Document
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISAC	International and Security Affairs Centre
ISC	Institute for Sustainable Communities
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslovenska narodna armija*)
JUL	Yugoslav Left (*Jugoslovenska levica*)
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PM	Prime Minister
PZZP	Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province (*Pokrajinski zavod za zaštitu prirode*)
RTS	Radio Television of Serbia
RZS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (*Republički zavod za statistiku*)
SDKÚ-DS	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (*Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana*)
SEIO	Serbian European Integration Office
SFRJ	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*)
SIV	Yugoslav Federal Executive Council (*Savezno izvršno veće*)
SIZ	Self-Managing Community of Interest (*samoupravna interesna zajednica*)
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SNP 1389	The 1389 Serbian National Movement (*Srpski narodni pokret 1389*)
SRA	Strategic-Relational Approach

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VRER	Vršac Region – European Region Movement

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Goran, I cannot thank you enough for your love, advice and all that you taught me.

My parents have supported me in this as well as all my previous projects. I could not ask for more. *Ľúbim vás.*

Introduction

What, and whose reform?

In Serbia, one quickly learns that current politics is an unusually common topic of casual conversation. Six months into my fieldwork, it therefore did not surprise me when Verica,[1] a worker in the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF[2]), came into my office and started one of our long discussions by asking me whether I had heard about the dismissal of an important minister earlier that day. I wondered if it would bring down the entire government, but Verica judged cynically that 'they' had a backstage agreement to preserve it – early elections were not in their interest when they could enjoy another 'golden year.' This led Verica to discuss the endemic corruption and her own apprehension that the next elections would produce another of 'those Balkan, Balkanoid governments of ours.' Sometimes she gets really disillusioned about the meaning of her work, Verica confessed. She fights for 'social change,' Verica said using the English phrase, but what she does is so 'narrow and small' that she is not sure whether it matters at all, especially as the 'system' does not seem to be changing.

This was one of many similar conversations I had with people from Serbian 'nongovernmental organisations' (NGOs) or, to use a more evocative as well as problematic native term, 'civil society.' They pointed to the expectation, particularly entrenched in postsocialist Europe and reinforced in Serbia by recent historical experiences, that the actions of civil society, equated with NGOs nominally independent from the state, (should) lead to social and political progress usually glossed as 'democratisation.' My initial research strategy reflected this. I hoped that a focus on civil society thus understood – a *liberal* civil society – would tell me a lot about ideas, if not always the reality, of Serbia's postsocialist, post-authoritarian, and post-conflict transformation. With a government in place that foreign commentators applauded as 'pro-European' and 'reformist' (*BBC* 2008; Pond 2009), I expected that an ethnography of two equally reform-oriented NGO initiatives in 2010–11 would yield abundant evidence of complementarities between the transformational projects of civil society and the state, and perhaps also of their alliance. And because the NGO sphere was closely integrated into the international aid system, I also hoped to learn how these projects interlocked with global power relationships.

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[1] Research participants were anonymised wherever practicable.

[2] This word was used as an acronym (pronounced approximately as /b'tsi:f/) by those working in or familiar with BCIF. I hence write it without the definite article.

However, the reality forced me to adjust my approach. True, there was a strong public discourse about the need for 'reforms' variously related to the dire economic situation, rampant poverty and unemployment, low quality of democracy and public administration, endemic corruption, or problems particular to myriad concrete domains of life. The government and civil society alike devoted a lot of effort to adopting new laws and amending old ones, developing dozens of strategies and action plans, and raising the nation's awareness about the necessary changes to their habits ranging from waste management to organ donation. Much, if not most of this activity was discursively and institutionally moored to integration to the European Union (EU). Politicians, media and liberal intellectuals talked about a 'European Serbia,' equating the country's 'Europeanisation' to its political, economic and civilisational modernisation – its comprehensive 'reform.' There were signs of an increasing cooperation of the state and civil society on some of the reform interventions.

And yet, as Verica's comments indicated, many critics felt that things were changing hardly at all, or very slowly and unevenly at best. They argued that the same old problems periodically resurfaced, creating a sense of entrapment in a vicious circle. Referring to 5 October 2000, the conventional date for the fall of the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević, they would say that '6 October never came.' While the discourse of Europeanisation and reform promised to lift Serbia to modernity and prosperity, its citizens rather described it as a country which has 'fallen to ruin' and found itself 'at the very bottom.' An influential weekly's editorial entitled *Stranded Serbia* and illustrated by a photograph of *Srbija* ('Serbia'), a boat stranded on a muddy, desolate bank of the Danube, referred to the abysmal economy and the government's lack of strategy before concluding gloomily: 'Serbia has definitely fallen out of the main stream and got stuck in a backwater of its own' (*NIN* 2011).[3] Much of this doom was due to the global economic crisis, which reached Serbia by the autumn of 2008, but there were also persistent issues that the crisis could not explain. All of this led to a disillusionment and cynicism about the modernising potential of the incumbent government and more generally the entire political system. A question that many Serbians seemed to be repeating was: *What* reform was really there? How much, of what depth?

An account of a happy convergence of the goals and actions of the state and liberal civil society, then, would seriously distort reality. The ways in which civil

[3] All translations from Serbian are mine.

society faced the state's stasis – critiqued it, tolerated and participated in it, or initiated its own transformative projects – emerged as equally important subjects of investigation. Beyond this diversity of state-civil society relations, broader questions to be asked concerned dominant assumptions about reforms – how accurately do they describe implementation practices and outcomes?

And there was another reason to expand my initial focus, which may be illustrated by looking at what Verica said next. Elaborating on her statement about the unchanging system, Verica told me that she considered the present moment the 'worst period ever,' and that she is scared. When you work here and then go home to your family, she continued, you are constantly in an environment where people share your mindset. You do not realise how many 'hooligans' and 'extremists' there are and that 'we really are an evident minority.' She mentioned some well-known cases of hooligan violence and added, half-ironic, half-serious, that her 'favourite' period was that of Operation Sabre, the government's heavy-handed offensive against organised crime in response to the murder of the first post-Milošević PM Zoran Đinđić in 2003. You could see people being identified and arrested in the street, there were police everywhere, and you felt safe. Somehow, this reminded Verica of the recent rally in downtown Belgrade called by the Serbian Progressive Party – then a quickly rising opposition which splintered off from the far-right Serbian Radical Party in 2008. NGO workers and many political analysts imagined its supporters to be recruited from the vast social intersection of two overlapping categories of former Radical voters and 'losers of transition.' These, they supposed, were the poor, the uneducated, the unemployed, older and rural people. Verica had to pass by the rally and found the atmosphere 'gruesome.' The 'violent-looking' people and what could happen scared her.

How accurate were these widespread assumptions? It was common knowledge that football hooligans provided fodder for the nationalist or far-right riots which occasionally managed to mobilise thousands of young men. To posit a link between such 'extremists' and the Progressives was more of a stretch, but perhaps understandable in the light of the latter's Radical roots and penchant for nationalist demagoguery (especially while they were still in opposition). Many NGO workers I knew shared Verica's feeling of being a peaceful, liberal island in the sea of violent, 'criminogenic' nationalism. This divide has been typically conceived in questionable terms, but the sight of the omnipresent nationalist, anti-Western and homophobic messages in Serbian public spaces (see Fig. 1) is enough to make one appreciate that the reformist visions of those self-identified as civil society did collide with rather different

ideals of numerous 'others.' However, they also called for a profound political and social change, though one based on a complete national sovereignty rather than openness to the world, and embedded in the cyclical temporality of a 'return to tradition' rather than the linear time of progress. In Serbian society, which is replete with narratives of division and actual inequalities exacerbated by the recent wars and postsocialist transformations, 'what reform?' necessarily also means: *Whose* reform?

FIGURE 1. Anti-Western stickers in Sremski Karlovci. Top: 'EU awaits you with arms wide open.' Bottom: 'Don't forget who BOMBED us! America, European Community...' Photo by Goran Dokić.

In and against whose interests? These questions direct us to the governmental rationalities and cultural imaginaries that animate 'reforms,' as well as their outcomes and implications for various social groups.

The liberal idea of civil society is one of an apolitical sphere, or political only in the non-partisan sense of pursuing universal liberal values and defending them from the state's authoritarian tendencies. However, 'civil society' in Milošević's Serbia emerged as a profoundly partisan discourse and practice. Not only did it advocate specific substantive visions of statehood, nationhood and citizenship; it was also part of the anti-regime bloc, together with opposition parties. Some of its members described the 1990s as a 'war with our own people' (Fridman 2011: 517). After the regime change, it experienced some rapprochement with the state. But discontented with the pace and depth of reforms as it was, it retained some of its critical and oppositional identity. At the same time, it was confronted with the proliferation of nationalist organisations and movements that, in terms of their organisational forms and practices, look suspiciously like liberal civil society fighting for non-liberal ideals. Beyond this most visible and much emphasised liberal/nationalist divide (Part I), there was another kind of civil society which reflected the legacies of associational practice and state-society relations in socialist Yugoslavia and which I call 'post-Yugoslav.'

This thesis argues that civil society can be 'good to think with' about these diverse and often contradictory discourses and practices. It can provide insights into the entanglement of what has been too often separated or even dichotomised – the state and society, politics and governmentality, and identity and inequality. For it to do so, we must address the power of normative notions of civil society while also developing it as an analytical concept. In the ensuing theoretical discussion, I will engage with the liberal discourse of civil society which has risen to dominance in postsocialist Europe and worldwide. Building on alternatives to this discourse in Western intellectual tradition and its anthropological critique, I will conceptualise civil society as a set of ideas and practices which continually reconstitute and mediate the relationships of 'state,' 'society,' and 'economy,' and which reproduce as well as challenge cultural and ideological hegemony. The liberal discourse of civil society is itself part of these hegemonic struggles as it attempts to set limits on what can be recognised as such. It also prescribes how civil society should relate to the state and the market and articulates supposedly universally desirable principles of statal and social transformation with code names like 'democratisation,' 'Europeanisation,' state-civil society 'partnership,' 'efficiency' or 'good governance.'

I already hinted at two sets of issues with this. The first concerns the very idea of 'reform' as a planned intervention. In the material I analyse, it operates at several different levels: from concrete government policies and NGO projects to the overarching donor-driven process of 'civil society building.' The dominant view of planned intervention assumes a linear relationship between policy, implementation and outcomes. In other words, it sees intervention as an 'execution of an already-specified plan of action with expected behavioural outcomes' (Long 2001: 24). It also entails a 'cargo' image of intervention as a gift of superior solutions coming from an omnipotent 'outside' (e.g. EU, 'advanced democracies,' donors) to an inferior and passive 'inside' (Long 2001: 33–6). Such perspectives prevent us from seeing intervention for what it is: 'an ongoing socially-constructed and negotiated process that goes beyond the time/space frames of intervention programmes' (Long 2001: 4). The social and historical context of intervention, different than those from which reform models are imported, as well as the understandings and actions of individuals who translate these models into practice, will need to be brought into analysis to grasp the particularly Serbian form of civil society and the actual intervention processes which it initiates or supports.

The second set of issues relates to the content of the reforms. These are often couched in technical or culturalist registers that obscure their fundamentally political nature. I will argue that liberal civil society in Serbia was and continues to be closely involved in two interrelated and inevitably political transformations: the country's deepening transnational integration and neoliberalisation. NGO workers, as a middle-class fraction that possesses global cultural capital and develops neoliberal forms of subjectivity, are among groups that these transformations are likely to benefit. But as the briefly mentioned struggles and resistances suggest, the latter did not go unchallenged. This shows that the liberal notion of civil society has not achieved complete closure and that there is actually a plurality of 'civil societies' – scenes[4] of associational practice that articulate diverse visions of a legitimate social order and see each other as antagonists rather than parts of a single harmonious civil society. Whether individuals will become active in a particular scene is conditioned by their positions in various systems of inequality. Why this is the case must be clarified through a historically and culturally contextualised analysis of the discourses and practices of these scenes, and how they resonate with various social groups and construct their

[4] I talk about scenes to capture the way in which the actors reify the distinct forms of associational practice as abstract entities (e.g. 'civil society,' 'patriotic bloc') with a degree of internal unity.

interests. Through such an analysis of the three scenes I mentioned – liberal, nationalist and post-Yugoslav – this thesis attempts to identify some of the key moments of social antagonism about 'reform' in contemporary Serbia. I will now turn to the ethnographic context of my study and identify key emergent issues that will provide an empirical anchor to the theoretical and methodological discussions that follow.

Ethnographic setting and issues

My original focus in Serbia was on two projects of two influential Belgrade NGOs with their NGO partners from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This comparative framework mirrored my interest in the emerging and little-studied pattern of official development assistance (ODA) between postsocialist countries. The particular geographic focus was based on the similarity of the ODA policies toward Serbia of the two governments that funded the projects. My native knowledge of Slovak and near-native proficiency in Czech aided me in communicating with Czech and Slovak NGO workers and government officials and analysing relevant documents. Moreover, it also facilitated my quick acquisition of Serbian, which, together with my Slovak identity, placed me out of the presumed dichotomy of either native or Western ethnographer of postsocialism (De Soto & Dudwick 2000: 5). Similarly to the recent experience of a Greek ethnographer of Serbian NGOs (Vetta 2013: 49), this kind of positionality proved an important advantage.

The projects involved transnational transfers of knowledge from the Czech and Slovak NGOs to Serbian liberal civil society. The underlying assumptions about who was to teach whom suggested that the conceptual framework of postsocialist 'transition,' the anthropological critique of which I revisit below, remained relevant even in this seemingly unorthodox development relationship. The Slovak-Serbian project specifically, administered in Serbia by the Centre for Democracy Foundation (CDF), was interesting in that it assumed and aimed to reinforce the support of Serbian civil society for the country's EU integration. Moreover, the Slovak-Serbian relationship proved particularly revealing of the evolving geopolitics of NGO-mediated international interventions and the porous boundaries between high politics and civil society in both countries. The Czech-Serbian project, implemented by BCIF, taught Serbian NGOs to fundraise from citizens and businesses in order to move way from an excessive reliance on foreign donors. These efforts and the obstacles they faced largely confirmed established views about the political identity, political economy, and class

origins of liberal civil society. At the same time, they pointed to the aspirations of some within its ranks to become more relevant and acceptable for the mainstream society. Some 20 years after NGOs started to emerge in Serbia, it is time to take seriously their growing self-critical awareness and indigenisation and, more broadly, move beyond the somewhat one-sided dismissal which pervaded much anthropological writing on 'civil society building' in postsocialist Europe.

While the projects proved pertinent for my concerns, I also found it rewarding to study BCIF and the CDF holistically, as organisations with particular histories, political agendas and internal and external relationships. In these *primary field sites*, I volunteered and conducted participant observation, typically several days a week, from the beginning of my fieldwork in September 2010 until June 2011 (CDF) and December 2011 (BCIF). I will discuss shortly my findings about these two NGOs and what they reveal about Serbian civil society in general. Beyond BCIF and the CDF, I chose a purposive sample of other field sites in Central Serbia[5] and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (see Fig. 2) in order to deepen my focus on the liberal scene as well as expand it to other forms of civil society. BCIF, a foundation providing funding and services to NGOs across the country, proved an excellent gateway to a broad range of organisations of varying sizes and resource endowments, working on all kinds of issues in both urban and rural settings. Methodologically, these non-primary sites may be classified in the following manner. *Secondary sites* were those in which I conducted participant observation during either shorter stays or repeated visits. I further accompanied BCIF workers on a number of so-called *'monitoring' trips* – visits at grantee organisations. Finally, *interview sites* were those where I conducted formal interviews. (See Fig. 2 for the number of interviews made in each research site.) I also conducted participant observation and interviews outside Serbia: in Bratislava, Brussels and Prague.

During my first monitoring trip, I learned about a BCIF-funded 'public advocacy' for the protection of a park in Vršac, a town in Vojvodina. While advocacy is introduced as a foreign-sponsored model of 'democratisation,' I found the practice of advocacy in this particular case to be shaped by local political relationships that it sought to transform. Two more BCIF-funded advocacies became my secondary sites. These were concerned with the accessibility of public spaces for disabled people and led by the Centre for the Development of Civil Society in Zrenjanin and the Committee for

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[5] This term (as well as 'Serbia proper') refers to the part of Serbia outside of the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. It is not an administrative entity.

Human Rights in Niš. Through these projects, I became aware of so-called ‘traditional’ associations of disabled people with roots going back to socialist Yugoslavia, some of which were invited to support the advocacies. This led me to study this post-Yugoslav

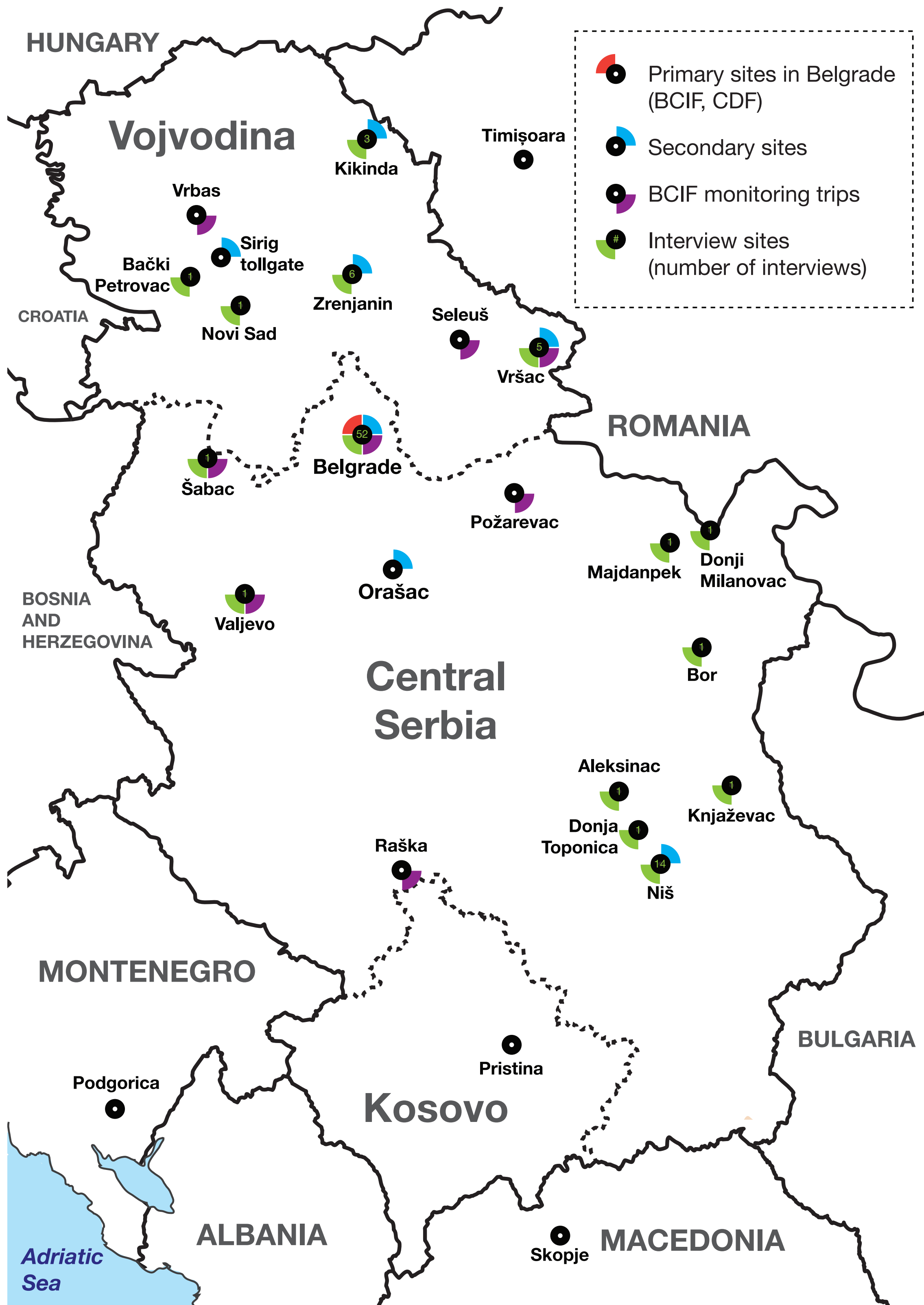

FIGURE 2. Research sites in Serbia. Created by Martin Falc.

kind of civil society and how these organisations were affected by and responded to the reform of the welfare state. My contacts in Zrenjanin linked me up with another 'traditional' association in Kikinda that became my case study. In Niš, the third largest city in Serbia, I spent a month volunteering for ProAktiv, BCIF's friendly and grantee organisation. This enabled me to follow the Niš advocacy more closely, interview members of local 'traditional' associations, and balance my mostly Belgrade-centred experience.

My engagement with nationalist civil society was mostly through the topical prism of its frenetic mobilisation against the (LGBT) Pride Parade in Belgrade. In October 2010, the first Parade was held that was fully protected by state security forces and carried out as envisioned. While the organisers and the government framed the event by discourses of liberalisation and 'Europeanisation,' nationalist organisations and movements countered it with themes of cultural autonomy and political sovereignty of the Serbian nation, suggesting that the struggle over LGBT rights came to stand for broader issues of globalisation. Similar motifs were acted out by the crowd of members of various nationalist organisations and movements whom I observed at the celebrations of the Statehood Day in Orašac in February 2011. The same month, I attended a press conference in which Dveri, one of the leading nationalist organisations, unveiled their plans to become a political party. This illustrated state-oriented ambitions of most such organisations, which sat uneasily with their insurgent rhetoric. To explore these issues, I interviewed leaders of the best-known and most influential nationalist organisations as well as several nationalist and conservative intellectuals, and attended a number of nationalist protests and semi-public meetings in Belgrade.

My final secondary site was the government's Office for Cooperation with Civil Society in Belgrade established in January 2011. I was able to occasionally visit the Office from September to December 2011 when it was still hiring staff and defining its agenda. However, I got some insight into the Office's discourse and activities even before then, for instance at a conference co-organised by the Office and BCIF. The Office was particularly important for my research because of its mandate to regulate the relationship of the state and civil society. The Office's vision of their 'partnership' was informed by neoliberal norms of 'efficiency' and competition, but actual interactions of the Office and other related state bodies with civil society organisations, which were meant to put these norms into practice, exemplified quite different forms of sociality. Similarly to the Vršac advocacy and the Slovak-Serbian project, these processes had to be studied in relation to established political practices and state-civil society relations.

Centre for Democracy Foundation

The CDF was one of the oldest liberal NGOs in Serbia. Characteristically, its donors in the 1990s were foreign bilateral and multilateral agencies and private donations, such as the Soros Fund Yugoslavia (later the Fund for an Open Society), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Council of Europe, or United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (CDF 1999). But the Centre's involvement with these agencies was not the only respect in which it typified the 'first wave' NGOs: as many of them, it was openly allied and closely linked to the anti-Milošević opposition. Such intimate relationships of political parties and NGOs remained common in the post-Milošević period and show that global normative models of civil society are fundamentally transformed when transposed into new settings.

The history of the CDF is inextricably linked to the biography of Dragoljub 'Mićun' Mićunović, its President from the start and a well-known figure in Serbian postsocialist politics.[6] Born in 1930, Mićunović got into conflict with the socialist regime already in the late 1940s and was sentenced to 20 months of forced labour in the infamous gulag of Goli otok (*NIN* 2000). In 1954, he completed a degree in philosophy in Belgrade, which opened the door to his academic career. As one of the members of Praxis, the renowned school of humanist Marxist philosophers, Mićunović was expelled from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 1975 and left for Germany. He returned to Yugoslavia in the 1980s, joined the activities of dissident intellectuals, and became one of the members of the founding committee of the Democratic Party (DP) in December 1989, to be elected its first President in 1990. By 1993, he and Zoran Đinđić were publicly accusing each other of cooperating with Milošević and arguing over the proper way of building the party (*Vreme* 2012). In the end, Mićunović resigned and Đinđić took over in January 1994.

A few months later, in July 1994, the Democratic Centre Foundation was registered with Mićunović as the President (APR n.d.).[7] Its founders included other prominent intellectuals and/or members of 'Mićunović's current' within the DP, including the lawyer Slobodan Vučković (CDF 1999). His daughter Nataša Vučković became the foundation's General Secretary, a position she still held at the time of my

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[6] Mićunović has been a member (or the President) of the parliament, either federal or national, from 1990 up to the time of my fieldwork. He served as the President of the Chamber of Citizens of the Federal Assembly in 2000–03 and as the President of the Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003–04.

[7] The name changed to its present form in 1997 (CFD 1999).

fieldwork. In an interview given in September 1994, Mićunović commented on the establishment of the CDF (which he described simply as 'the Democratic Centre' rather than an NGO) as follows:

> The initial idea was that people would gather around certain ideas and act as a political movement. (...) We'll see from the reactions whether all of this will grow into something more (Bjekic 1994).

It did – after Mićunović had left the DP completely in 1995, he founded a new party, called the Democratic Centre, in 1996. It stayed an elite party with a very limited constituency[8] until it merged into the DP in 2004.[9] However, it always succeeded in getting a handful of its candidates elected (including Mićunović) by joining broad electoral coalitions (in 1996 and 2000) or having them run on the candidate list of the DP (in 2003). The Democratic Centre MPs were recruited from among the founders of CDF.

Given this personal and nominal union, it is unsurprising that the media argued that the foundation 'grew into' the party (*Vreme* 2012) or that Mićunović 'transformed' one into the other (Vulić 2000), but the two actually existed simultaneously. Despite being registered as a foundation, the CDF was and remained a typical 'implementing' NGO. Most of its activities – debates, roundtables, educational programmes, networking, research and publishing – could be described as elitist since they usually involved politicians, civil servants, intellectuals and experts, and focused on abstract and/or state-level issues (CDF 2004).

The CDF became especially important in the run-up to the regime change in 2000. By the late 1990s, the chronically fragmented Serbian opposition came to understand that it could only defeat Milošević united. As Chapter 1 discusses in detail, liberal civil society was instrumental in mediating this unification and preparing the strategy for the 2000 elections that led to Milošević's fall. Mićunović told me that the CDF represented a particularly suitable 'link' between civil society and the opposition because there were numerous well-known MPs or party members among its founders.

In September 1999, Mićunović initiated a series of opposition round tables which contributed to the eventual formation of the united Democratic Opposition of Serbia in

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[8] Mićunović only received 87,000 votes when he ran as a Democratic Centre candidate for the President of Serbia in 1997. When he tried again as the candidate of the united Democratic Opposition of Serbia (with the DP as its backbone) in 2003, he received almost 900,000 votes.

[9] Mićunović then became the President of the Political Committee of the DP – a high office he still holds at the time of writing.

July 2000 (*Vreme* 2012). He used the CDF as a means of linking this emerging oppositional bloc with the NGO scene. What enabled this was undoubtedly that founders of the CDF were leading oppositional figures, but also that the CDF had been playing, in Mićunović's own words, the role of the 'coordinator of the nongovernmental sector.' Since 1998, it was working with another NGO, the Centre for the Development of the Nonprofit Sector (see also pp. 152–4), to create the Forum of Yugoslav Nongovernmental Organisations – a network of Serbian and Montenegrin NGOs which met at two annual conferences in 1998 and 1999 and a host of other meetings (CDF 2004: 34–5). In February 2000, the Forum organised a meeting between 30 NGOs and 12 opposition parties that were also attending Mićunović's round tables. The attendees adopted a joint statement in which they agreed to improve their cooperation and recognised their respective roles in the preparations for the elections (Paunović *et al.* 2001: 14). The NGOs were tasked with organising the 'get out and vote' campaign to mobilise voters. This coordinated strategy of the opposition and NGOs was partly inspired by the model of 'electoral revolution' pioneered in Slovakia in 1998 (for an extensive discussion, see pp. 95–7). The CDF was one of the NGOs which directed the 'get out and vote' campaign (Paunović *et al.* 2001). Its past and its special relationship with the DP seem to have influenced the decision of the Slovak NGO Pontis Foundation to approach the CDF to become a partner in the Slovak-Serbian project that I followed.

After the regime change, the CDF continued to implement similar kinds of projects as in the 1990s, funded by the EU, Fund for an Open Society, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, CIDA, Olof Palme International Centre, USAID, Freedom House, National Endowment for Democracy and other donors. Mićunović remained the organisation's President and Nataša Vučković its General Secretary while also pursuing a high-profile career in politics.[10] The Management Board still included a number of former or current Democrat figures. It is therefore unsurprising that those with insider knowledge of the NGO scene associated the CDF with the party. This was communicated to me, for instance, after I had attended one of the sessions of the Democratic Political Forum, an elite debate series that the CDF had been organising since 2007. This particular session also served as the concluding conference of the Slovak-Serbian project. As usual, it started with opening remarks by Mićunović. All other politicians in attendance also

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[10] After advising Mićunović while he served as the President of the Chamber of Citizens of the Federal Assembly in 2000–03, Vučković became a DP Member of the Assembly of the City of Belgrade in 2004 and then a Member of the National Assembly in the 2007, 2008 and 2012 elections. She also held various party offices and was elected as the party's Vice President in 2011.

came from the Democratic Party. The debate was recorded and partially broadcast by the B92 TV. My acquaintance, who was also familiar with Slovak NGOs, saw the broadcast and texted me: 'Hanging out with the Yellows [the Democrats]? :-) I saw you on TV, Centre for Democracy, Pontis, etc.' The occasional phone calls to the CDF office from people who believed they were calling the DP were another vivid example of the close association between the two.

The CDF has not been using public funds – possibly in recognition that this might be perceived as problematic in the view of its partisan linkages. When I asked Svetlana Vukomanović, Executive Director since 2007 and the wife of the sociologist and one of the founders Milan Vukomanović, about cooperation with the state and parties, she said that the CDF was a 'bit specific because of Mićun and Nataša' but the two did not influence any of the projects, except the Democratic Political Forum for which they chose keynote speakers and invitees. She further pointed out that none of the projects (except perhaps the Democratic Political Forum) resulted in the 'promotion' of the party, that none of the staff were members of the party, and most did not even vote for it. The CDF staff were indeed highly critical of the Democrat government and the projects I was able to observe while in Serbia, except the Forum, could not be described as 'promoting' the party. However, I was told that a former worker had had to leave because they were too 'close' to another party, and there were other circumstances complicating Vukomanović's claims about the separation of the NGO and the party, which I will not discuss in the interests of confidentiality. In general, given the historical and personal connections, the perception of the CDF's partisanship was inescapable. One cannot exclude that it influenced decisions on project grants by donors keen to assist Serbia's 'democratic forces.'

At the time of my fieldwork, there were six workers (all but one female) plus Nataša Vučković as the factual boss. Mićunović had his own office on the premises and his personal assistant sat with the CDF staff but neither was involved in the NGO's work. The CDF was downsizing – during its heyday a several years earlier, it had had as many as 12 workers. This was in a sharp contrast to BCIF, which experienced a fast expansion in the period preceding my fieldwork. The different fortunes of the two NGOs could be traced to the fact that the CDF was closely associated with donor agendas of the recent past, and thus hit harder by the beginning departure of foreign donors from the country. BCIF, to the contrary, understood its mission in terms of setting and pursuing future-oriented and increasingly professionalised agendas, which made it particularly interesting for my concerns.

Balkan Community Initiatives Fund

BCIF was a well-known, influential, but somewhat atypical Serbian NGO. It was a 'grant-making foundation' that provided project grants (and education and other kinds of support) to other NGOs, with a preference for smaller organisations that were unlikely to obtain funding and assistance from other donors. BCIF was also, as its workers would say, a 'domestic foundation' rather than a chapter of an international foundation, and the only private domestic foundation focusing on the development of civil society. It was a large NGO by Serbian standards, with an average of 14 full-time and two part-time workers throughout my fieldwork. In 2011, 34% of NGOs had five or fewer 'active people' (defined as management board members, employees, and contract workers), and another 37% had between six and ten active people (Građanske... 2011: 46). Many NGOs I knew had no employees and only engaged people as contract workers or volunteers. BCIF's 2010 budget of €1.35m was huge, considering that only 5% of NGOs reported budgets in excess of €100,000 for the same year (Građanske... 2011: 102).

The history of BCIF began in the UK in 1999. According to a version of the short account that BCIF reproduced in all its annual reports and on its website:

> [A] peace meeting was held at the Central Hall Westminster where Jenny Hyatt, consultant of social practice (*sic*) from Great Britain, spoke against the NATO bombing [of Serbia]. Thanks to her speech, more than £2,000 was collected in less than five minutes to support small local initiatives in Serbia and Montenegro. Jenny and her colleagues – experts on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) from Great Britain – used these funds to establish the charity BCIF UK so as to secure small donations for local communities in our country (BCIF 2005: 2).

As this shows, BCIF's focus on 'local communities' – in its discourse often used as shorthand for the grantee NGOs imagined as embedded in and serving their communities – originated in this formative period. The London-based BCIF UK cooperated with advisors based in Serbian and Montenegrin regions who assessed NGOs applying for grants. BCIF UK ceased to work in 2005 after the Serbian BCIF had been registered in 2004 – a process explicitly described in its first annual report as 'indigenisation' (*indigenizacija*) (BCIF 2005: 19). Since then, BCIF experienced a quick and sustained expansion. Under the leadership of the extremely hard-working and demanding Executive Director Aleksandra Vesić (2004–09), its budget grew from €213,000 in 2004 to €1,35m in 2010 (BCIF 2012: 8). Forty to 60% of each budget was

disbursed in grants whose number rose from 36 in 2004 to 101 in 2011 (BCIF 2012: 10). From five permanent employees in 2004, the team grew to 16 people in 2010, which remained the status quo during my fieldwork.

BCIF has had the same three ‘Programmes’ since 2004: Donations, Developmental, and Philanthropy. The Philanthropy Programme focused on the development of corporate and individual philanthropy. The Donations Programme encompassed BCIF’s core business of grant-making through several thematic programmes. The Developmental Programme helped NGOs build their capacities through education, networking and exchange of experiences. The line between these two programmes was blurred in practice since the grantees of the Donations Programme also received education. For instance, the public advocacy programme, which provided both funding and training, was part of the Developmental Programme before it was subsumed under Donations. The Developmental Programme had no team of its own, unlike the other two programmes.

Among BCIF’s most generous and loyal donors were foreign private foundations, especially the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which it ‘inherited’ from BCIF UK (BCIF 2005: 1). It also had a particularly good relationship with the Co-Operating Netherlands Foundations for Central and Eastern Europe and the Serbian branch of the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), which managed and distributed the entire USAID funding for Serbian civil society. BCIF was supported by a number of other official donors, private foundations, corporations and, to a lesser extent, state bodies.

BCIF’s workers in 2010–11 were all Serbian citizens mostly in their 30s, with a few people in their 20s or 40s. About two thirds were women and although the Executive Director in 2009–11 was male, his predecessor and successor, the two second-tier managers, and most members of the Management Board were female. (Such gender structure was common in NGOs, whereas nationalist organisations were male-dominated.) Many workers were born or raised in Belgrade, but a group of six originally came from western Serbia; a pair had known each other since their early childhood. One person was born in the Middle East and another in Bosnia and Herzegovina from where his family left to escape the war. Nearly everyone finished or at least started university (usually social science or humanities degrees) and had a working knowledge of English. While some people kept their private lives separate, there was a ‘social core’ of five to seven workers who shared two adjacent offices and spent a lot of their leisure time together and with common friends, some of whom

worked in the organisation earlier or cooperated with it on a contract basis. I found early on that I had a lot in common with most 'BCIF-ers' (*bcifovci*). Apart from age and education, I also shared more or less closely their 'urban' and alternative cultural tastes and frames of reference, lifestyle, consumption habits, and some political and moral views. This facilitated a more intimate communication and more intense and informal socialisation than in the CDF where there were more middle-aged workers from more varied cultural backgrounds. I accompanied the social core (sometimes joined by others) for drinks, gigs and other outings, and got invited to a number of private parties and picnics.

If I described the CDF as 'elitist,' BCIF's consciously built image and self-understanding could be characterised as 'populist.' What I mean is the emphasis in BCIF's discourse and practice on the development of and assistance to local, active and sustainable communities[11] and local, community-based, bottom-up, grassroots and authentic NGOs (the English terms were sometimes used in intra-organisational discussions). I was first made aware of this orientation in a particularly vivid manner on my pre-fieldwork visit to BCIF. Snežana-Andreja Arambašić, Administrative and Finance Director, turned my attention to a map of Serbia's municipalities on the wall. Some municipalities were marked in grey and had numbers written in which, Andreja told me, stood for the number of grants made to the local NGOs. Municipalities with no grants were rendered in white, hinting at a desirability of filling them in and achieving a complete coverage. Before I even managed to point out that many more grants seemed to have been made in Belgrade than anywhere else, Andreja explained that the map lumped together 17 municipalities which comprised the City of Belgrade as an administrative unit but some of which were not parts of Belgrade as an actual city. She emphasised that BCIF wanted to reach to organisations 'in the regions,' unlike other donors who focused on the capital. It was different from 'cold' and 'bureaucratic' donors who only 'look at the numbers' and expect grantees to just submit paperwork and 'tick the boxes' on forms. Rather, BCIF 'works with the people.'

This was not just rhetoric but ideas to which BCIF workers were strongly committed and which they tried to put into practice. For instance, when decisions about grants were being made, care was taken to achieve a balanced geographic representation and applicants from rural or poor areas, or ones with few NGOs, could get extra points. Down-to-earth, clear applications which demonstrated the practical importance of the project idea for local people fared better than those written in the technocratic and

[11] The trope of 'community' is analysed in Chapter 5.

obscure NGO-speak. Although BCIF-ers felt that they could not communicate with applicants and grantees as much as they had done earlier when they received far fewer applications, they endeavoured to visit each grantee NGO in person. The purpose of these 'monitoring' trips was to assess the grantees but also to simply get to know them better. BCIF tried to keep its procedures simple, answer all questions, allow extra time for paperwork if necessary, and motivate grantees with humane, informal communication rather than just money and 'technical support.' Many grantees I interviewed appreciated this approach. Some became friends with individuals in BCIF. The foundation's efforts to develop local fundraising and public advocacy were guided by the idea that NGOs should become more embedded in their 'communities' and reflect their needs. While the conceptual and action models applied to achieve these aims were not without problems, the efforts I studied did engage with local social and political realities and achieved some valuable results.

Notwithstanding BCIF's community focus, one comparatively small segment of its activities focused on the state with the aim of reforming the legal and institutional 'framework' for the activities of civil society. As I show in Chapter 3, BCIF was one of the group of what I call 'interface masters' – NGOs and individuals with a privileged access to and influence over the post-2000 reforms of the 'interface' of the central state and civil society. However, unlike the CDF, BCIF had no recognisable partisan links; the nature of these social relationships will have to be interpreted in a different manner. As for the content of the reforms that BCIF advocated for, which concerned especially the regulation of economic exchanges between the state, civil society and the private domain, I found them to be guided by a neoliberal ethos. The ensuing theoretical discussion will therefore address the concept of neoliberalism as well as the other issues identified in this brief ethnographic contextualisation. It will be followed by discussions of methodology and the historical context.

Theoretical framework

Civil society: from multiple traditions to (neo)liberal instrumentalisation

Over the past few decades, civil society has been resuscitated from near-oblivion and become a fashionable term of academic, political and popular discourses. It has returned in the 1980s as a way of interpreting multiple 'bottom-up' political processes that had been unfolding in all three worlds of the Cold War period since the 1960s: feminist,

student, peacenik and environmentalist movements in the West; growth of dissent in state-socialist Eastern Europe; and pro-democracy mobilisations, especially in Latin America and South Asia (Mercer 2002; Miorelli 2008: 60). To start unpacking this conceptual revival, we can, with some simplification, identify two classical traditions of thinking about civil society: the liberal and the line of Hegel–Marx–Gramsci, which might be called 'radical' (Lewis 2004: 303). While the contemporary discourse of civil society is 'culled from various theoretical traditions' (Chandhoke 1995: 33), its mainstream was mainly inspired by the liberal tradition (Garland 1999; Hann 1996). Moreover, this tradition was reinterpreted in a particular instrumental manner which equated the donor-driven expansion of NGO sector in postsocialist or otherwise 'problematic' countries with a revival of their civil society and hence 'democratisation,' while at the same time obscuring and depoliticising the hardships of capitalist transformation. This was the cluster of ideas that came to prevail in Serbia in the 1990s, though of course in a historically specific form. It is therefore necessary to identify more explicitly the attributes of the contemporary hegemonic discourse, its historical antecedents, and alternative conceptualisations.

There is a broad consensus that the modern concept of civil society originated in its differentiation from the state, which was prompted by the rise of the absolutist state and the consolidation of capitalism. It was political economists and moral philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly Ferguson and Smith, who started to elaborate the distinction between the state (or political society) and civil society (Keane 1988). Civil society, identified with capitalist Western societies of the time, was understood as the most advanced stage of the natural evolution of society and its economic organisation in particular. It was characterised by a complex division of labour, free competition, peaceable interaction, and the 'rule of law,' which were seen as properties arising, in a self-regulating manner, from the actions of naturally rational egoistic individuals. This emphasis on the autonomy of the market and the natural liberty of individual engendered the desirability of limiting government intervention (Chandhoke 1995: 88–107; Terrier & Wagner 2006: 11–7).

Nineteenth-century liberals, such as Mill and de Tocqueville, built on this work but progressed from the largely negative conceptualisation of civil society to a positive one. In doing so, they furnished guidelines for the institutionalisation of civil society as an arena distinct from both the state and the market. Perceiving the despotism of the post-revolutionary French state, de Tocqueville famously argued that various American associations kept state power in check and served as schools of democratic

participation. Moreover, he resolved the potential conflict between the liberal concern with the freedom of individual and the needs of civil society for activism by basing associations on the principle of free will (Chandhoke 1995: 107–12; Terrier & Wagner 2006: 21–3).

In the hegemonic re-reading of the classical liberals (especially de Tocqueville), civil society has been invested with a particular configuration of almost inextricable positive and normative attributes. It was characterised as the plural but tolerant realm of self-organised social life which is autonomous from the state or, particularly in undemocratic settings, even 'opposed' to it (e.g. Diamond 1994; Harbeson, Rothchild, Chazan *et al.* 1994). A strong civil society was defined as the virtuous counterpart of the liberal-democratic state which supports its accountability and transparency and shelters individual liberty and rights from its excessive intrusion (for a critical analysis, see Baker 1999). Political scientists emphasised the importance of civil society for democratisation in authoritarian and post-authoritarian settings (Linz & Stepan 1996; cf. Mercer 2002) and for the quality of democracy and public institutions in 'consolidated' democracies (Putnam 1993, 2000). It was supposed to meet these functions by engendering interpersonal trust and acting as a 'watchdog' that monitors, criticises, and puts pressure on the state. Finally, an ethos of civil society was hailed as the ingredient that will humanise neoliberal globalisation without challenging its foundations, as evidenced by the surge of interest in trendy concepts like 'social entrepreneurship,' 'corporate citizenship' or 'venture philanthropy' that purport to capture the virtues of enlightened self-interest (e.g. Eberly 2008).

This new civil society orthodoxy has glossed over the more ambiguous relationships of real civil societies, states and markets, and downplayed civil society's own 'incivilities,' inequalities and exclusions. But its simplicity made it suitable for mainstreaming in policy discourses of governments, international institutions, and official and private donors. It became associated with the quasi-technical public goods of liberal democracy like 'good governance,' 'participation,' 'accountability' or 'transparency.' The neo-Tocquevillian inspiration gave the discourse an 'organisational focus' (Lewis 2004: 302) which facilitated the equation of civil society with formal, professional NGOs. Apart from their role in democratisation, NGOs were defined – in an equally instrumental manner – as alternative and often superior providers of 'targeted' health, welfare, education and other services in the stead of Latin American, African or Asian states hollowed out by neoliberal restructuring (Fisher 1997; Hulme & Edwards 1997; Miorelli 2008: 111–23; Robinson 1993, 1997). NGO-run microcredit

and food-for-work schemes, for example in Bolivia (Gill 2000: 135–54) or Nepal (Rankin 2001; Rankin & Shakya 2007), promoted entrepreneurialism and self-help as cures to poverty while effectively disciplining the poor, extracting surplus, and expanding financialisation. In core capitalist countries too, for instance the UK under the 'Third Way' Labour, neoliberal reforms delegated some of state responsibilities for health, welfare or other services to the nongovernmental sector (Alcock & Scott 2002). Its ideological fit with neoliberalism was based on its placement in the private sphere and perceived market-like flexibility, cost-efficiency, and decentralisation. NGOs were believed to reach to the poor and marginalised groups, previously – as the influential public choice theory argued – ignored by corrupt and 'rent-seeking' state bureaucracies. Reinvented as a bottom-up alternative to the vilified statist development, NGOs breathed a new life into development thinking and practice. Underpinned by these assumptions, civil society became something which appropriate technical interventions could, and should, 'build' or 'strengthen' wherever it was deemed to be absent, fragile or immature (Blair 1997; Howell & Pearce 2000). Quantifiable characteristics of NGOs in a given country were now taken to indicate the level of development of its civil society (e.g. Fisher 1998) while the immense variation between actually existing organisations in terms of capacity, constituency, mission, politics, or relationship to the state was little understood.

However, Western intellectual tradition offers alternatives to the liberal perspective. Hegel agreed with the classical political economists that civil society is an essentially modern phenomenon and a set of practices and relations constituted by capitalism. But while he also took individual liberty as given, he was aware of the suffering caused by market forces and considered self-interested action as insufficient for his central preoccupation: the construction of an ethical community. Civil society, as the sphere of subjective particularity, needed to be regulated by intermediating institutions such as courts, schools or the police (which Hegel placed in civil society) so that individuals would realise their interdependence and develop a sense of the common good. For Hegel, then, civil society represented an intermediary space where the tension between the particularity and unreflective unity of the family and the ideal universality and ultimate ethicality of the state was reconciled (Chandhoke 1995: 116–28; Kumar 1993: 378–9; Terrier & Wagner 2006: 17–21).

Marx concurred with Hegel that civil society was permeated by egoism and conflict that needed to be overcome. However, he did not look for the site of transcendence in the state – which, far from being universal, he understood as the

product of the same capitalist development as bourgeois society – but rather in civil society, to which he accorded historical primacy. From defetishising the state, it was a small step to defetishise civil society as well, but the price to pay was economic reductionism. Marx argued that the normative constitution of civil society by the discourse of formal equality and freedom merely obscured the reality of exploitation determined by the production relations of bourgeois society. For him, 'the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy' (Marx 1962: 362, quoted in Kumar 1993: 380). But while civil society was where oppression was reproduced, it was also the potential site of the transformation of the entire system through the revolutionary agency of working class. Revolution would occur in the base and changes in the superstructure would follow (Chandhoke 1995: 134–46; Kumar 1993: 378–80).

Gramsci's idea of civil society can be seen as a creative reworking of Hegel and Marx's line of thinking. He agreed with their critique of civil society as the sphere of inequality and conflict rather than, as the classical liberals would have it, self-regulation and harmony. But while he concurred with Marx on the historical primacy and ambiguous potential of civil society for social change, he departed from his economic determinism to address issues of politics and consciousness. At the same time, he firmly refused Hegel's views about the reconciliatory role of the state. Gramsci's ideas about civil society are embedded in his reflections on mechanisms of rule in capitalist societies. He contrasted

> two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society,' that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private,' and that of 'political society' or 'the State.' These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'juridical' government (Gramsci 1971: 12).

In this passage, Gramsci associates civil society with 'hegemony' (rule by 'consent' and moral and intellectual 'leadership') and the state with 'direct domination' (rule by coercion, legislation and force). But the dichotomy is not that sharp. Elsewhere, he seems to include civil society in the state, for instance: 'But what does that signify if not that by "State" should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society?' (1971: 261). He actually differentiates between the state in the narrower sense of the government and an 'integral state' as the political organisation of a society of which civil society is the most resilient constitutive element (Buttigieg 1995: 4; Gramsci 1971: 267). The distinction between

political and civil society is therefore methodological (Buttigieg 1995: 28; Crehan 2002: 102–4). Gramsci further seems to oscillate between interpreting civil society as one of the elements of the superstructure (along with the state) and equating it with the 'mode of economic behaviour' (1971: 208–9).

These tensions are productive elements of Gramsci's relational and flexible analytic strategy which enables a non-dichotomous conceptualisation of civil society as a set of practices which negotiate the structures of capitalist production and the superstructures of ideology and the state (Chandhoke 1995: 149–50). This also implies an ambivalent role of civil society in the reproduction of the extant system of domination. For one, Gramsci argued that civil society in bourgeois states in the West is a 'powerful system of fortresses and earthworks' that stands behind the 'outer ditch' of the state apparatus with its naked coercive power (1971: 238). Civil society is the site where hegemony is continually re-enacted. But it is also where subaltern classes may defeat hegemony by a counter-hegemonic strategy – a multi-nodal political, economic, cultural and ideological revolution which leads to the establishment of a new order (Buttigieg 1995; Chandhoke 1995: 154–6). In the following section, I will make a case for the usefulness of the Gramscian perspective for the anthropology of civil society.

Toward an anthropology of civil society

I have alluded to the highly political role of liberal civil society in the 1990s Serbia and its blurred boundaries with the post-Milošević state. I also suggested that there were and continue to be other models of the relationship of the state and society which the hegemonic liberal discourse and practice marked as variously problematic but did not displace, at least not momentarily or completely. How can anthropological literature on civil society help us address these issues, and what are its deficiencies?

In general, anthropologists greeted the recent explosion of civil society rhetoric sceptically. The optimistic exceptions were few and far between, such as Nash (2004) who expressed appreciation for how 'transnational civil society' framed and mediated Zapatista struggles. Probably most influentially, Hann (1996) argued in his introduction to a co-edited volume on *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (Hann, Dunn *et al.* 1996) that the obvious agenda for anthropologists is to particularise the Western notion of civil society and trace its transformations when exported to non-Western settings. Hann advocated a middle path between universalism and relativism, suggested also by the collection's subtitle: 'the dominant western models of civil society are ones we wish

to challenge, but we must also recognise that they are *challenging* models that have great appeal throughout the world' (1996: 17, original emphasis). This intermediary path enables one to appreciate the global spread of Western models without assuming that they completely displace non-Western meanings and practices, or that the latter are always necessarily radically different from the Western tradition. We will see, for instance, that NGOs typically provide aid and services to 'vulnerable' or 'marginalised' categories of people, such as women, ethnic minorities, disabled and so forth. This approach did not entirely supersede established humanitarian and philanthropic practices which privilege those close to the donor as well as sick children, victims of natural disasters and so on. While these criteria of solidarity partially overlap with those of NGOs, they do disadvantage some groups often targeted by the latter (for instance, LGBT people) and, especially if the aid is provided by nationalist groups and movements, people of other ethnicities.

Hann's approach leads to a characteristically anthropological study of 'informal interpersonal practices' likely to be ignored by other disciplines. A more inclusive idea of civil society that such a project supposedly necessitates should refer 'more loosely to the moral community, to the problems of accountability, trust and co-operation that all groups face' (Hann 1996: 20; see also Hann 2003), and ideas and practices that groups deploy to solve these problems. Hann's emphasis on an empirical rather than just normative dimension of civil society is an important corrective for those approaches that engage with civil society *merely* as a figure of political rhetoric (e.g. Verdery 1996: 104–29). While civil society in Serbia and elsewhere in postsocialist Europe has been to a great extent precisely that, it is also important to identify the 'political economy which connects this discourse with a range of organisational practices' (Stubbs 2001: 89). Put simply, if civil society has been indigenised as an idea and practice and is having real effects in postsocialist societies, anthropologists must follow it from the realm of ideational and ideological to the sphere of material and pragmatic.

A number of anthropological studies have broadly followed Hann's guidelines. Practices as diverse as reformist Islam in Niger (Masquelier 1999), faith and kinship-based community life of American Mormons (Dunn 1996), women's 'reciprocal associations' in Istanbul (White 1996), cultural idioms of good citizenship in Tanzania (Stambach 1999), traditions of interconfessional tolerance in Poland and Bosnia (Hann 2003), or egalitarianism and hierarchy in Botswana (Durham 1999) have been analysed as local equivalents to Western civil society or, more loosely, public sphere. Imported

Western models of civil society may overlook, undervalue, or set out to replace such pre-existing practices.

However, there is a problem with Hann's 'more inclusive' idea of civil society. Described as a 'positive' definition, as compared to a 'negative' one which highlights civil society's supposed opposition to the state (Hann 1996: 22), it downplays the fact that the rise of a centralised political authority, and the attendant theoretical and strategic problems of understanding, limiting or resisting such authority, *were* key historical preconditions for the concept's emergence. Almost none of the essays in the two major anthropological anthologies on civil society (Comaroff, Comaroff *et al.* 1999; Hann, Dunn *et al.* 1996) avoid making at least a passing reference to the state. This might indicate that talking about civil society does not really make sense without talking about the state. Karlström (1999) suggests precisely that when he grounds his search for alternative forms of civil society in Buganda and Uganda in a specification of contextual conditions that justify using the concept. These he identifies as the entrenchment of the modern state and market in Africa which introduce 'local versions of the bifurcations – between public and private, and collective and individual goods, as well as between state and society – out of which the civil society concept first arose in early modern Europe' (1999: 117). The study of civil society, with its intermediary status, may thus be a promising strategy of researching broader processes of state formation and transformation.

Unlike Karlström's, Hann's approach expands a term which, as we have seen, is already characterised by 'polyvalence, incoherence and promiscuity' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 8). If we can identify at least some core non-normative elements of the concept that can be also detected in the given ethnographic context – such as its entanglement with the idea of the state – it seems a more obvious strategy to hold to them. Hann refers to issues of social cohesion and moral community that, while amenable to a civil society approach, can be analysed with a range of more specific concepts. Moreover, one-sided emphasis on trust and cooperation might marginalise struggles over the meaning of civil society as well as conflicts permeating civil society as a social arena. In so doing, it might even unwittingly reinstate some of the normativity of the liberal approach.

If we are to take a middle path between universalism and relativism, we obviously first need to know what a universal model of civil society might be. Hann argues that the 'only plausible candidate for this core definition is the liberal-individualist understanding that has emerged in the modern west' (1996: 17–8) and implies that the

West has really produced but this understanding. Thus, the Marxist strand (in which he includes Gramsci) and the liberal strand actually have more in common than not, because they both assume the universality of the modern Western notion of an 'autonomous agentic individual' (Hann 1996: 5). None of them therefore allows for an exploration of social relationships which deviate from the assumptions of liberal individualism, necessitating some kind of alternative anthropological conceptualisation, such as the one suggested by Hann. However, Gramsci explicitly refused that there is a transhistorical and universal 'human nature.' Instead, he defined human nature as 'history' and the 'complex of social relations,' and therefore inherently relational, processual, and particular to specific societies and individual positions within those societies (1971: 355; see also Rupert 2005). Hann further argues that both traditions erroneously 'identify civil society with realms outside the power of the state, and emphasise economic life as such a realm' (1996: 5). As we have seen, these views might be true of some liberals and Marx (although he too was quite aware of the state's role in reproducing capitalist relationships) but can be hardly attributed to either Gramsci or Hegel. They did not assume any neat separation, save opposition, between the state and civil society, and refused to reduce the latter to the economic sphere.

In other words, Western intellectual tradition did yield building blocks for analytical alternatives to the 'liberal-individualist' model of civil society. The Gramscian approach does not formulate universal prescriptive models of civil society to be replicated around the world. Rather, it develops an empirical, constructivist and political analytics. It is an approach that emphatically does *not* start from a legal, formal, functional or normative definition of civil society and its boundaries with other essentialised 'spheres' or 'domains' of the sociopolitical order. Nevertheless, it does contain the necessary modicum of a universal model of civil society as a set of ideas and practices in modern societies that dynamically reconstitute and mediate relationships between 'society,' 'economy' and 'state' in the context of hegemonic struggles. The boundaries of civil society with these reifications are in practice porous, blurred and contested, and their constitution in a given historical context must be itself the object of analysis.

In settings such as Serbia, where a particular notion of civil society is hegemonic but contested, it is crucial to consider civil society at two interrelated levels – as a discourse or rhetoric which is shaped by struggles over the definition of its meaning, as well as an arena in which hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles unfold. Defining civil society is itself a 'fundamental hegemonic operation' which sets limits on the

struggles which can take place in that arena (Miorelli 2008: 20; Munck 2002: 357). This could also be formulated as a distinction between practices comprising civil society and competing ideas of civil society that influence those practices (Lewis 2004: 304–5).

Guided by this theoretical approach, a historically and ethnographically situated study of civil society treads the middle path between universalism and relativism by documenting complex articulations between the penetrating Western models and rich depositories of meanings, values and relationships that go beyond them. A number of anthropologists have taken up this prism – without necessarily explicitly referring to Gramsci – to study such relationships in the Kalahari (Garland 1996), postsocialist Albania (Sampson 1996), India (Blom Hansen 1999), Turkey (Navaro-Yashin 2002), Mugabe's Zimbabwe (Rutherford 2004), across Africa (Ferguson 2004) or in post-disaster Taiwan (Jung 2012). Halmai (2011) has shown how the rise of the Hungarian nationalist conservative party Fidesz to hegemony had been propelled by its successful call onto supporters to form Civic Circles – small groups which the party registered and mobilised for its campaigns, while also serving as sites of everyday socialisation and political discussions. Here, the genuine desire of those dispossessed by 'transition' for civic participation and a sense of community had been captured by a party which subsequently proved concerned especially to consolidate its rule. Thus, as these works and this thesis suggest, rather than being simply exported to new contexts and passively accepted therein, the hegemonic liberal model of civil society is collaboratively imported and translated by networks of foreign and domestic actors with their own cultural idioms and meanings, interests, emotions and moral preoccupations, while also being the subject of struggles and contestations. In and after this process, it may be reinterpreted, transformed and appropriated in unforeseen ways. In the next two sections, I discuss how these processes unfolded in late socialist and postsocialist Europe, and apply my approach to civil society to the issues of postsocialist state transformation.

Late socialist and postsocialist Europe: from 'parallel polis' to 'project society'

In Eastern Europe, the discourse of civil society has predated the fall of state-socialist regimes. There were actually multiple discourses that differed from country to country and thinker to thinker (Ivancheva 2011: 258). However, these fluid debates did prepare the ground for the fixed liberal vision of civil society as a 'third sector' to be 'built' through Western assistance which replaced them in the early 1990s. Anthropological

accounts of ‘civil society building’ in the region critiqued these conceptual assumptions and documented the gaps that often separated them from the intervention practices that they were supposed to inform.

In the late socialist period, dissident intellectuals such as Havel (1989) in Czechoslovakia, Konrád (1984) in Hungary or Michnik (1985) in Poland, in close conversation with their Western colleagues, used the concept of civil society to talk about their own opposition to the authoritarian regimes. Solidarity in Poland – the only mass, worker-supported movement – was also described as the ‘rebirth of civil society’ (Pelczynski 1988: 363; see also Rupnik 1979). These elite dialogues are commonly identified as one of the major sources of the renewed interest in civil society from the 1980s onwards. Because of their collaborative, interactive nature, it is misleading to interpret the concept purely as a Western import to the region (Eyal 2000; Ivancheva 2011). However, the late socialist discourse did share similarities with the hegemonic liberal conception, especially the dichotomous ‘viewpoint of civil society *against* the state’ (Arato 1981: 24, added emphasis). Even more than in some other cases, civil society was inherently good and the socialist state bad. It followed that to build civil society in these polities was to democratise them. All of this was mutually reinforcing with the Cold War theory, fed by the dissidents’ amateur social science (Hann 1996: 7), that the ‘totalitarian’ party-state left absolutely no space for social life that it did not dictate and control. While totalising tendencies were evident, anthropologists and others suggested that there were more autonomous activities and relationships than the theory assumed, including families, networks of friends, churches, trade and professional unions, or women’s, sports, cultural and recreational clubs (Buchowski 1996, 2001: 117–36, 2012: 72–3; Kubik 2000). I argue in the historical section below that Yugoslav socialist system created a unique kind of civil society, which was partly organised from above but provided opportunities for mass participation in associational and deliberative practices. However, the late socialist discourse operated with a somewhat missionary understanding of what counted for civil society that excluded these insufficiently oppositional and often inconspicuous practices.

Civil society was meant to ignore and counterbalance the state rather than directly challenge it. Its purpose, expressed by tropes such as ‘anti-politics’ or ‘parallel polis,’ was to create and protect a sphere of social and moral, rather than explicitly political, autonomy (Kumar 1993: 386). According to Eyal, East Central European dissidents – intellectuals and often future statesmen – understood civil society as the major *ethical* component of the ‘neoliberal package’ of prescriptions for a transition to capitalism that

they formulated in close communication with their Western allies: 'It is in the name of civil society, its empowerment and well-being, that economic measures are justified, and state intervention is vilified' (2000: 52). The function of civil society and its institutions in the strongly moralist dissident discourse was akin to governmentality – self-government of individuals and populations 'from a distance,' as a capitalist alternative superior to state-socialist paternalism and authoritarianism (2000: 67–71).

These ideological compatibilities facilitated the transition to the postsocialist liberal discourse. After joining the government in 1989 and under foreign influence, even the elites of Polish Solidarity radically disassociated their idea of civil society from worker self-management, bottom-up activism, and social justice in favour of an emphasis on individualism and economic liberalism (Ost 2005; Zeniewski 2001). Continuing the tradition of sponsoring anti-communist dissidents (Wedel 2001: 95–6), foreign agencies shaped and funded the project of civil society building, leaving the execution to their local 'partners' and an army of well-paid (but often less well informed) Western consultants. As elsewhere, these interventions were informed by the ethnocentric and neo-evolutionist idea of replicating the 'universal' Western civilisational development in general, and the consolidation of capitalist society in particular (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 19). The civil society discourse had allowed Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Polish dissidents to exploit the entrenched symbolic geography of Europe (Trencsényi, Kopeček *et al.* 2006) to differentiate their countries from the rest of the socialist bloc as supposedly 'closer' to the West and claim for them, with important geopolitical consequences, a higher civilisational status of 'Central Europe' (Ivancheva 2011: 252). Logically, then, appeals to civil society in postsocialist party politics came to be symbolically equated with a 'return to Europe' and sharply counterposed to nationalism (Verdery 1996: 104–29). In these countries, parties positioning themselves, with varying emphases, as liberal, pro-Western and pro-market, often adopted the adjective 'civil' into their name. The Civil Alliance of Serbia, one of the forces of anti-Milošević opposition, is an example. The discourse of 'civility' thus assumed the significance of a ticket or at least an itinerary for faster integration to regional and global governance, security, and economic structures. The historical section below discusses this in detail in the Serbian context.

By the mid-1990s, the initial enthusiasm about a 'rebirth of civil society' (Siegel & Yancey 1992) was already being replaced by the laments of Western and domestic commentators over what had become of the much-celebrated idea in practice. Using quantitative measures like mean voluntary organisation membership per person,

political scientists delivered a harsh verdict – the region still suffered from a 'post-communist legacy' of weak civil society (e.g. Gibson 2001; Howard 2002, 2003) or even 'uncivil society' (for a critique, see Kopecký 2003). Instead of fulfilling the commentators' expectation of joining 'good' (voluntary, impersonal, value-based) associations *en masse*, people preferred 'wrong,' illiberal forms of affiliation – kinship, informal networks, ethnic and religious identities. Civil society building thus performed the characteristic liberal 'double gesture' of inclusion and exclusion – non-Western societies were implored to become like the West while simultaneously being marked as deficient in realising that ambition (Wilder 1999). As a result of this disenchantment, civil society has receded from its prominent position in the discussions of political and economic transformation in the region. By the early 2000s, this fall from favour was further accentuated in East Central Europe by the migration of donors with their civil society wisdom to places to the east and south which, they believed, needed their services more. Nevertheless, the hegemonic concept still informs much of academic writing and government, donor, and NGO policies and practices across postsocialist Europe. Much of the criticism of the concept formulated 20 years ago thus remains relevant.

Anthropologists agreed that civil society building in the region did not deliver on its promises but refused to attribute the failure solely to endogenous factors. They argued that the process was misleadingly and narrowly equated to what could be described as 'NGO-isation' or 'projectisation' – assistance to formalised and nominally 'nonprofit' and 'nongovernmental' organisations whose main activity was to 'implement projects' (Bruno 1998; Mandel 2002; Sampson 1996, 2002b, 2004; Wedel 2001: 85–122). Foreign donors largely dictated the generic liberal ideal as well as particular agendas of mushrooming NGOs dependent on their resources. The result was what could be cynically termed 'project society' (Sampson 2002b, 2004). Preoccupied with applying fashionable policy buzzwords and forcing complex realities into rigid log-frames, this pattern of donor-driven development focused on state-level issues, such as legal and institutional reforms, and abstract liberal agendas, like human rights, ethnic tolerance, rule of law, and so on. More often than not, it sidestepped issues that actually mattered to most citizens, such as general criminalisation and the destruction of the economy and welfare safety net amid 'shock therapy' and privatisation policies. If it did acknowledge such problems, it usually nurtured hopes that they could be rectified through yet another narrowly conceived 'project,' without addressing the underlying politics of transformation. More recently, this has been reflected by the tendency, in line

with the noted trend elsewhere, to promote civil society organisations and voluntarism as palliatives for further cuts in state welfare provision.

Beyond the level of conceptualisation, the exogenous models ran into another problem – they simply did not operate as expected in societies and political cultures which were shaped by decades of socialist government and mired in a legal and institutional 'free-for-a-few' (Wedel 2000: 34). They were often twisted beyond recognition by the enterprising, English-speaking and well-positioned locals who, acting as a kind of 'development brokers' (Mosse & Lewis 2006), took to translate them into practice. The very term 'nongovernmental' organisation often turned out to be a misnomer since many NGOs, for instance in Central Asia (Mandel 2002) or the Balkans (Sampson 2002a), were actually established by government institutions seeking to capture aid resources and increase their influence on foreign actors.

The distribution of the often significant economic, political and social benefits of civil society building was extremely unequal.[12] Alongside the advantages based on suitable personality traits, status and connections in the former system, most likely to benefit were the extant elites and well-educated people who were in their 30s in the early 1990s and lived in capitals, large urban centres and/or East Central Europe rather than the countryside, mono-industrial towns or, say, Siberia (Kalb 2002). Many NGOs were set up by impoverished civil servants or academics. A mixed but still socially exclusive lot – former dissidents, members of *nomenklatura*, and the downwardly mobile socialist middle classes – played the 'cooperation game' (Bruno 1998) in hope of expanding their economic, political and symbolic capital or, more modestly, conserving some of their status and surviving the transitional hardship. The sophisticated skills they developed under socialism – with managing public self-presentation while pursuing private agendas, or using highly official and technocratic linguistic codes – were often redeployed to serve new purposes in the 'civil society' field (Sampson 1996; Wedel 2001). The same went for informal social forms, such as cliques and networks, which used to help their members mobilise resources and navigate relationships across multiple functional sectors of the socialist system (Sampson 2002b; Wedel 1996, 1999). Anthropologists also noted that success in the 'world of projects' alienated many individuals from their societies in terms of skills, values and lifestyle and could eventually lead to their emigration. All of this points to

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[12] This is not an exclusively postsocialist phenomenon – the increasing levels of support for NGOs led to the worldwide 'proliferation of particular types of organizations with distinctive social and geographical characteristics' (Mercer 2002: 14).

the need to analyse civil society building in postsocialist Europe not only in terms of ideologies and discourses but also as part of broader processes of social restructuring. The next section suggests how these could be theorised.

Postsocialist transformation and the state

I suggested that the boundaries of the state and civil society are to be seen as blurred and contested; it follows that to study transformations of states is thus always already to study transformations of state-civil society formations. This thesis seeks to identify key trends of the 'reform' of one such formation *and* their relationship to the restructuring of an unequal society – both aspects of the same process of postsocialist transformation. If fractions of elites and middle classes were disproportionately more capable of benefitting from the flows of resources that comprised civil society building in the region, it is likely that the resultant forms and practices of civil society, including those revolving around state reform, were mutually constitutive with the interests of these groups. In this section, I proceed to explore the concepts evoked by these hypotheses – the state and postsocialist transformation. I argue that the currently dominant phenomenological and poststructuralist underpinnings of the anthropology of the state provide an inadequate framework for research projects such as mine and turn to Jessop's strategic-relational approach to the state and Gramsci's theory of hegemony to complement them.

Anthropology of postsocialism has stressed that a 'sudden and total emptying out' of one way of life and its substitution by another is impossible (Humphrey 2002: 12). Contrary to normative and teleological models of 'transition' that expected ex-socialist societies to undergo a predictable and rapid conversion to liberal capitalism and liberal democracy, anthropologists have empirically captured the diverse and unintended outcomes of path-dependent postsocialist trajectories in which socialist-era concepts, expectations and resources were often reconfigured through everyday practices to achieve present ends (Bridger, Pine *et al.* 1998; Burawoy, Verdery *et al.* 1999; Hann *et al.* 2002; Mandel, Humphrey *et al.* 2002; West, Raman *et al*. 2009). Inspired by this scholarship, I trace continuities with socialist state and civil society forms as actively and functionally reconstituted elements of social practice rather than, as the transition paradigm does, dysfunctional and anachronistic legacies which obstruct the smooth passage to a predestined future. This approach is all the more pertinent in Serbia whose

transformation deviated from such a preordained pathway even more than in most other cases.

I go further, however, in that I attempt to fill three lacunae left by the extant anthropological scholarship on postsocialism. The first corresponds to its relative lack of interest in a sustained exploration of the postsocialist state (Hann 2002: 5). Especially in the early years of transformation, metaphors like 'feudalism' were used to highlight such tendencies of state transformation as the 'parcelisation of sovereignty' or the (temporary) reversion to non-monetary economy (Verdery 1996: 204–28). Incidentally, Serbian commentators have also found feudalism useful for approximating the Serbian model of 'state capture' (see below). However, metaphors in general are of limited usefulness for a systematic analysis of what they purport to describe. Those with exoticising overtones, like feudalism, divert attention away from the fact that capitalism is by now firmly established in the region, though in varied and often idiosyncratic forms (e.g. Bohle & Greskovits 2007; Cernat 2006; Stark & Bruszt 1998). Some later attempts at an anthropological study of postsocialist states emphasised the governmentality prism, which is characteristically preoccupied with subjectivity, consumption, morality and so forth (Phillips *et al.* 2005). Questions about what kinds of capitalist states these states have become were relegated to the background of these micro-level enquiries. (Nevertheless, there is important anthropological and sociological scholarship on closely related issues, especially postsocialist privatisation and capitalist class formation; I discuss this in the historical section below). This brings us to the second lacuna in most of this scholarship: while it was successful in documenting 'paths through time,' that is, how prior conditions shaped everyday life and emergent futures in postsocialism, it neglected 'paths through space' – the 'spatial inter-linkages and social relationships that define territories and communities' (Kalb 2002: 323). How is postsocialist transformation in Serbia embedded in the major changes in the transnational regime of capitalist accumulation of the last two or three decades? Thirdly, and related to that, anthropologists of postsocialism paid little systematic attention to the issues of class. This was understandable in a period when various brands of postmodernism and poststructuralism dominated social science, but counterintuitive in the study of dismantling of a system based on an explicit class ideology. It was already suggested that the focus on postsocialist civil society building also raises these issues; I will further argue that they must have a central place in a theory of the state.

The essential point of departure for anthropological thinking about the state is that, contrary to an ontology that is still very much alive, it is not a unitary and clearly

bounded subject or thing but a historical and cultural construction. Having started from an inchoate recognition of this idea as a reason for *not* studying the state (Radcliffe-Brown 1940), anthropology of the state can now draw on several decades of its positive elaboration (e.g. Abrams 1988). In a programmatic chapter, Sharma and Gupta (2006: 8) argue that the task for anthropology is to understand how the state is ideologically and materially constructed, how it is differentiated from other kinds of institutions, and how this construction influences the operation and diffusion of power throughout society. As their repeated references to Foucaldian literature and concepts illustrate, Foucault was a major theoretical inspiration for these anthropological enquiries.

Following Foucault's call to 'cut off the King's head' (1980: 121), it was influentially suggested that 'the effect of the state' – its seemingly self-evident distinction apart from the society – is generated by a process in which 'mundane material practices' take on the 'appearance of an abstract, nonmaterial form' (Mitchell 1999: 77). This is because these practices become the object of knowledge and regulation by Foucault's 'disciplines': localised, dispersed, polyvalent techniques of the government of conduct. At the same time as these methods become 'internal,' thus producing modern individuality, they assume the appearance of external 'structures,' from concrete institutions to the overarching apparatus of the state. The intensification of regulation in modern societies, apparently driven by the rise of vertical state power, is in fact rooted in the horizontal 'governmentalisation' of these societies – the rise of 'governmentality.' This complex Foucauldian concept may be succinctly defined as a 'political rationality,' a 'conduct of conduct,' or 'the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics' which enable the government of a population (Foucault 1991: 102). It is closely associated with the rise of liberalism in Western Europe in the sense of a political rationality rather than an explicit ideology (Foucault 2008). Accordingly, Mitchell (1999) argues that a theory of the state should strive not to fix the distinctions between state and 'society' and state and 'economy' but historicise them.

Foucault's work was clearly seminal in overcoming the tendency to reify the state and connecting issues of power and knowledge. This explains its popularity in political anthropology and sociology in past two or three decades (e.g. Barry, Osborne, Rose *et al.* 1996; Collier, Ong *et al.* 2005; Ferguson 1990; Mitchell 2002). Breaking with the notion of the state as the top of a vertically organised apparatus of rule, the concept of governmentality provides a lens to see the exercise of power through a network of dispersed social arrangements. This conceptualisation has an obvious appeal for

anthropology poised to study the everyday, routine and banal practices of bureaucracies through which states are constituted in particular sites and particular people's lives (Sharma & Gupta 2006). Governmentality also emerged as useful for examining neoliberalism, as I will discuss shortly. I draw on the governmentality perspective to study the minutiae of legal and administrative technologies and the political rationalities which inform them, including assumptions about human nature and the ways of moulding it to achieve given value-ends.

Nevertheless, Foucault's theory only goes so far for research projects such as mine. Although he wrote a lot about how power is conceptualised and expressed in discourse, he did not write about 'power as a social reality in action' – about how discourses inform practice (Callewaert 2006: 91). Governmentality makes for an 'empirically weak and suspiciously functionalist' framework for anthropological analysis of planned interventions; it is too vague about the social location of ordering power while being too certain about its supposed effects (Mosse 2005b: 14; see also Gould 2005). Foucault's and his followers' focus on subjectless and discursive forms of rule, which supposedly operate 'behind people's backs' (Ferguson 1990: 18), evades questions about why and how certain individuals or groups of people benefit from concrete policy interventions (Cheater 1999). Governmental schemes consistently exclude 'political-economic questions – questions about control over the means of production and the structures of law and force that support systemic inequalities' (Murray Li 2007: 11) so as to define their field, method and purpose of intervention as technical. However, the limit of that strategy is politics itself – the ever-present possibility of a critical challenge to the governmental power/knowledge nexus by those whom it attempts to govern (Murray Li 2007: 7–12). Although Foucault did acknowledge the fact of resistance, he largely conceived it as dispersed and paired with power in a kind of universal dialectic, an almost mechanical relationship (Abu-Lughod 1990; Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001: 6, 32). This offers little guidance on why and how situated subjects become conscious of being dominated and get organised in response. For instance, when I argue that certain reforms that I studied put in place neoliberal governmentality, understanding why particular individual and collective actors supported or resisted them, or why they assumed the particular forms they did, requires situating them in a context of inter-institutional struggles, political commitments, social relationships, and organisational resources and interests.

More broadly, given his lack of interest in the state and politics (Hindess 1996: 96–158), Foucault failed to formulate an adequate theory of the state. As a result,

Foucaldian anthropological scholarship on the state narrows its attention to, on the one hand, processes and encounters through which the state is experienced at the micro level, and on the other, discursive representations of the state (Gupta 1995; Sharma & Gupta 2006). These are valuable and necessary lines of enquiry taken up also by this thesis, but their phenomenological and poststructuralist foundations do not provide adequate analytical instruments for some of the questions asked here, such as what role does the Serbian state play in broader processes of postsocialist social transformation, and how do these in turn impact on its cultural constitution and the redrawing of its boundaries and political alliances with civil society?

To start unpacking these issues, I turn to the strategic-relational approach (SRA) to the state (Jessop 1990, 2008), which elaborates on Poulantzas' (1978) elliptical statement that the state is a social relation. A good point of departure for a discussion of the SRA is Jessop's 'rational abstraction' of the state as a 'distinct ensemble of institutions and organizations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on a given population in the name of their "common interest"' (2008: 9). This preliminary definition usefully specifies *what kind* of reification the state is. However, it must be qualified in a number of respects. First, the integration of the state as an institutional ensemble pursuing consistent policies is deeply problematic. Second, statal operations depend on a variety of social institutions and dispersed 'micro-political practices,' and boundaries between the state and political, economic and other orders are contested and unstable. Third, the nature of statal institutions and practices, their mutual articulation, and state-society relations reflect the character of the social formation and its history. Fourth, the precise content of the 'socially acknowledged' function of the state is defined through political discourse. Fifth, the boundaries and identity of the society, rather than an empirical given, are often constituted through the same processes as those of the state, including the dynamics of the emergent international system. And sixth, the idea of 'common interest' is inherently illusory since all attempts to define it marginalise some interests while privileging others (Jessop 2008: 9–11). Beyond these assumptions fully consistent with the emerging anthropology of the state, the SRA takes another step toward a more explicit conceptualisation of the relationship of the state and the wider society. The key proposition is that the state can be analysed as 'system of strategic selectivity,' that is,

> a system whose structure and *modus operandi* are more open to some types of political strategy than others. Thus a given type of state, a given state form, a given form of regime, will be more accessible to some forces than others according to the

> strategies they adopt to gain state power; and it will be more suited to the pursuit of some types of economic or political strategy than others because of the modes of intervention and resources which characterise that system (Jessop 1990: 260).

Related to that, the state is not just an object but also a site of political strategies and struggles, such as those between its different branches. Furthermore, the current strategic selectivity of the state is in part the product of past political strategies and struggles. These could have been developed within and/or at a distance from the state system and could have been oriented to its maintenance and/or transformation. Finally, the subjects operating on the strategic terrain of the state are in part constituted by the latter's strategic selectivity and past interventions (Jessop 1990: 260–1).

In Serbia's recent history, two projects of state transformation (discussed in detail in the historical section below) lend themselves to this mode of analysis that highlights the both-way relationships between structural properties of the state and strategies adopted to seize and possibly transform state power. The first project was officially proclaimed to be a transition to multi-party democracy and capitalist economy. However, it was led by communist *nomenklatura* insiders who used nationalist and populist rhetoric to capture popular support amid the crisis of the Yugoslav federation. Initially enjoying strong legitimacy, they established an authoritarian regime dominated by the reorganised communist party, which was closely enmeshed with the state and abused its resources to stay in power. The state-centred formation of the new capitalist class, comprising the ex-*nomenklatura* and upwardly mobile businesspeople enjoying state patronage, generated a kind of 'political capitalism' based on a close linkage between political power and capital (Staniszkis 1991). At the same time, state redistribution was partially preserved in an effort to pacify the impoverished working and middle classes. However, the deepening economic downturn and inability of the state to perform basis functions, as well as a series of lost wars, gradually tilted the balance of social forces against the regime.

It was mostly middle classes that supported the anti-Milošević opposition by voting and large-scale popular protests. Because of the latter, many labelled or experienced the fall of the regime in 2000 as a 'revolution' and expected it to bring a *true* liberal democracy and capitalism. Liberal civil society, a middle-class fraction supported by Western governments and donors, played a crucial strategic role in preparing the opposition and the electorate for the decisive 2000 elections. Nevertheless, the opposition was also backed by the new capitalists and managers of key state institutions, both increasingly dissatisfied with Milošević's chaotic and

destructive rule. In the aftermath of the 'revolution,' the economic elites faced little issues with retaining and expanding their wealth while the turnover of political and especially state elites was limited. Statal processes constituting the political capitalist model weathered shifts in economic, foreign and other policies and extensive legal and institutional reforms. This contributed significantly to the uneasy relationship of liberal civil society and the post-Milošević state and the general sense of crisis described in the beginning of this introduction.

Thus, in both cases, the actual transformational pathways were over-determined by the extant statal structures, resources and processes as well as the political strategies adopted to selectively transform them, themselves shaped by the strategic selectivity of the state. The transformational projects were initiated by alliances of parts of the state system with political and civil society forces that purported to articulate the 'common interest' of Serbian society. Gramsci's work offers important insights into the construction of such hegemonic coalitions. We have seen that he implicated the (analytically differentiated) state and civil society in a joint enterprise of political and cultural domination. For him, the form of the state was but a reflection of the resources and will to power of the 'ruling' classes whose 'historical unity (...) is realised in the State.' Conversely, 'the subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State"' (1971: 52). Nevertheless, Gramsci did not consider the unity of the ruling classes (emphatically in the plural) through their control of the state as assured and unproblematic (Roseberry 1994). Their forging a unity and 'becoming the state' is a political and juridical challenge but also an issue of moral, cultural and intellectual hegemony negotiated in the sphere of civil society. '[T]he fundamental historical unity' therefore 'results from the organic relations between State or political society and "civil society"' (Gramsci 1971: 52). Subaltern groups are not necessarily paralysed by the fact that they have consented to the hegemonic ideology either. It is rather that their potential challenge to it is an innovation always within, rather than heroically on the outside of, the extant state-civil society formations and political languages and ideologies which delineate the very field of politics (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001: 26). All of this makes hegemony deeply political and fragile, a hegemonic project rather than hegemonic achievement. Hegemony constructs 'not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterised by domination (Roseberry 1994: 361).

Although Gramsci used the term ‘class,’ he understood it in a constructivist manner. He rejected the reductionist Marxist idea that politics can be reduced to class struggle and emphasised the crucial epistemological and ontological importance of ideology for defining the terms of political struggles, organising people into groups, and constructing their sense of shared interests (Gramsci 1971: 138). In an influential reading of Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe (1985; see also Laclau 1990) argued that ‘subject positions,’ or political identities, are discursively constructed. The possibilities of such construction for particular individuals are not endless but constrained by their structural positions in systems of domination and inequality. But discursive articulation is needed so that structural positions become subject positions identified with certain interests, which may become a basis for political mobilisation. Subjects positions are also defined as ‘points of antagonism’ since they are constituted through differential and equivalential relations with other subject positions (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 11, 93–148; Smith 1998: 55–63).

Furthermore, discourse and ideologies are essential for the formation of potential hegemonic projects – they must articulate the interests of multiple subject positions in a manner that neutralises or reduces their mutual antagonisms and joins them in a sufficiently broad coalition with a single hegemonic world-view (‘common interest’). Since the state is reified as the authority that legitimately acts in the name of the common interest, hegemonic world-views inevitably articulate visions of the state. It is in this sense that I talk about hegemonic struggles over state power and hegemonic projects of state transformation. I understand the various civil societies as points of antagonism that are individually and collectively inhabited (through practices like forming organisations, implementing, publishing, campaigning, cooperating, networking, protesting, rioting and so forth) and thus become actual social forces participating in hegemonic struggles. Obviously, discursively and ideologically articulated subject positions cannot be derived from or equated with structural positions in systems of inequality. But neither does the formation of political identities occur in an unstructured and limitless space of possibilities. As will become apparent in the historical section and throughout the thesis, people in Serbia identify, though often in a stereotypical and problematic manner, characteristic combinations of subjective identifications and objective interests when they talk about the various civil societies. Beyond discourse, the latter have particular organisational resources, requirements and modes of action. As a result, particular individuals and categories of people are more or less likely to embrace particular political identities and forms of political action.

In the beginning of this subsection, I identified the lack of attention to transnational aspects of postsocialist state transformation as one of the lacunae of the relevant anthropological scholarship. I have also repeatedly evoked the concept of neoliberalisation. In the next section, I follow the lead of other anthropologists and consider these issues as intimately related.

Neoliberalism and globalisation

The concept of neoliberalism has been recently the subject of much interest as well as controversy within anthropology. As the 2012 session of the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory showed, some anthropologists came to believe, presumably under the impression of its often sloppy usage, that it lacks a clear referent. In fact, neoliberalism, as an economic philosophy and a broader form of rationality, entails a set of clearly identifiable propositions that inform much contemporary thinking about, and practice of, government. As such, the analytical concept of neoliberalism 'draws meaningful conceptual interconnections among a range of historical experiences and contemporary problems' (Collier 2011: 247).

Three anthropological approaches to neoliberalism may be discerned (Hilgers 2011). The first is based on the idea of a neoliberal culture and purports to identify elements of a globalised culture, such as lifestyles, ethics or institutions, that reflect the neoliberal perspective on the world (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff 2000; Comaroff, Comaroff *et al.* 2001). The second, systemic or structural approach, aims to describe neoliberalism as a system which functions according to particular rules and follows certain logics and interests. A widely cited example is Wacquant's (2009, 2010) historical anthropology of the 'penal state,' which traces the expansion of incarceration in the US to the growth of inequalities after the neoliberal dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state. Harvey (2005) articulated another kind of systemic theory that interprets neoliberalism as the ideological framework of the intentional political project of 'accumulation by dispossession' aimed at concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a narrow global elite. Hilgers argues that this approach runs the risk of reducing the entire social world to a set of mechanisms controlled by a few omnipotent and omniscient individuals (2011: 357), but the recent consolidation of the power of the super-rich is a fact that still demands an explanation.

The final approach is by far most developed in anthropology and builds on Foucault's work, especially his 1978–79 lectures on biopolitics (Foucault 2008), to

which I would add his equally relevant 1977–78 lectures on security, territory and population (Foucault 2009). Foucault (2008: 317–9; 2009: 29–54, 333–62) understood neoliberalism 'technically' – not as a theory or ideology but a critique of 'too much government' and a method of rationalising government according to the 'internal rule of maximum economy' that dictates to minimise costs and maximise profits. Accordingly, the concept of neoliberal governmentality refers to two types of 'optimisation technology' (Hilgers 2011: 358). First, techniques of the self produce enterprising and 'responsibilised' subjects who optimise their individual choices through knowledge and perceive the world through the prism of competition (Barry, Osborne, Rose *et al*. 1996; Hilgers 2013: 83–5; Ong 2006; Rose 2004). Second, techniques of subjection regulate populations for optimal productivity. Anthropologists emphasised the mobility, flexibility and multiplicity of these techniques of government which coexist and develop 'parasitical' relationships with broader social formations and different governmental regimes, even those that they ostensibly oppose at the level of ideology (Collier 2005, 2011, 2012; Ong 2006, 2007).

At one level, I do adopt the governmentality approach. The cultural and the systemic anthropological approaches are more suited for comparative analyses that aim to construct global or regional models of a neoliberal culture or state. My concern is rather to develop a fine-grained analysis of a 'reform' of one particular state-civil society formation. Therefore, in line with the Foucauldian understanding of neoliberal governmentality, I analyse government and NGO activities which deploy the norm of cost-efficiency to critique the extant relationships of the Serbian state and civil society and reform them through corresponding regulatory technologies. I build on the extensive literature that analyses such redrawing of the boundaries of the 'state'/'public' sector and 'nongovernmental' sector as a characteristically neoliberal transformation of the state (Clarke 2004a: 91, 116–20, 2004b; Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Hemment 2009, 2012; Mercer 2002; Miorelli 2008: 95–128; Mitchell 2011). I also seek to contribute to the governmentality-inspired study of neoliberal subjectivities and dispositions (Freeman 2011; Hilgers 2013; Zigon 2011) by exploring how many in liberal civil society come to see and fashion themselves as highly flexible, efficient and competitive workers.

Nevertheless, I go beyond the governmentality approach to neoliberalism in multiple ways that reflect the critique of governmentality outlined above. First, following other anthropologists (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001: 3–5; Murray Li 2007: 19), I combine Foucauldian and Gramscian perspectives to underline that although

governmental interventions create and attempt to stabilise hegemonic 'positionings,' these intersect with other kinds of hierarchies and contingencies impacting on people's lives. The resulting contradictions and disjunctions may enable people to develop critical awareness of their common interests and mobilise to change their situation (Murray Li 2007: 26). I document such processes in the case of the members of 'traditional' associations of disabled people who were subjected to neoliberal reforms ignorant of their actual predicaments and needs. Second, I question the extent to which neoliberal reforms successfully displace existing forms of state-civil society relationships, such as those based on informal and personal relationships or socialist legacies. And finally, I am interested in how these localised reforms interlock with the broader project of neoliberal state restructuring. Lifting neoliberalism to this level of analysis requires recognising that it is, *pace* the Foucauldian insistence on its pure technicality (e.g. Collier 2011, 2012), also a fundamentally political project, and that the state is a central site of its enactment (Hilgers 2013: 76). It is a project 'that is justified on philosophical grounds and seeks to extend competitive market forces, consolidate a market-friendly constitution and promote individual freedom' (Jessop 2013: 70). And it is a project closely related to the final lacuna I identified in the anthropology of postsocialism: the impact of globalisation.

Some anthropologists treated 'transnational governmentality' and 'neoliberal governmentality' as synonymous (Ferguson & Gupta 2002) or spoke about a '(neo)liberalizing, transnational world' (Sharma & Gupta 2006: 5). This perceived association obviously requires some unpacking. Needless to say, the transnational capitalist order is not a uniform, coherent and stable neoliberal order. But neither are the 'actually existing neoliberalisms' in various jurisdictions singular and unrelated. 'Historical geographies' of neoliberalism correspond to a 'series of localised manifestations, the mutual referentiality and interdependences of which have deepened and densified with time, in the context of continued uneven development rather than simple convergence' (Peck & Theodore 2012: 183). Neoliberalisation is a polycentric but not free-floating process: it is permeated by a complex and, crucially, densifying web of influences and interconnections between the localised projects of neoliberal restructuring. As a result of this increasing interrelationality,

> [n]eoliberalism is no longer, if it ever was, an 'internal' characteristic of certain social formations or state projects; it has since shaped the operating environment, the rules of engagement, the *relationality*, of these formations and projects

> themselves. In Jessop's (2000) terms, it has achieved the status of *ecological* dominance (Peck, Theodore & Brenner 2009: 108, original emphasis).

To recognise this 'ecological dominance' of neoliberalism means to acknowledge that state forms and areas and modalities of state intervention change as global forces pressurise, constrain and energise national and local arenas (Kalb 2005, 2011; Kalb & Tak 2005). Broadly speaking, with the clearly identifiable movement toward an increasingly internationalised and flexible regime of accumulation and production (Friedman *et al.* 2003; Robinson 2004), the nation-state becomes more concerned with the 'international competitiveness' of the 'national economy' than with optimising and spatially equalising its performance within national borders. Social policy becomes subordinated to the exigencies of international competition. Subnational, regional, translocal and especially transnational state apparatuses and policy regimes are increasingly prominent and the role of the nation-state becomes to mediate between them. Despite its decreasing capacity to meet social demands, it remains their principal addressee and the site of political struggles more broadly (Jessop 1999).

Useful as these broad observations are, they express the experience of 'Atlantic Fordist' states. Serbia presents us with a completely different historical situation. Under Milošević, interactions between the regime's own policies and international responses turned it into a political and economic pariah. The anti-Milošević coalition was able to enlist both popular support and the backing of the Western powers by promising to integrate Serbia into the transnational order. This Western involvement, mediated to a great extent by liberal civil society both in the run-up to the regime change and its aftermath, was part of the 'development-security nexus' (Duffield 2001) – the policies and interventions to establish 'liberal peace' in the problematic peripheries of the transnational order, including the war-torn former Yugoslavia (Baker 2012; Sörensen 2009). With neoliberalism being the principal ideology of the two crucial circuits of globalisation in Serbia – the international aid system (Edelman & Haugerud 2005; Mosse 2005b) and the EU – the post-2000 neoliberalisation was a logical outcome. Moreover, confirming the observation that neoliberal adjustments produce cumulative effects which make a reversal ever harder (Jessop 2013: 71–2), the period of my fieldwork was a time where pressures for further neoliberal restructuring were intensifying.

However, this transformation took a quite specific, path-dependent form. This mirrors the fact that neoliberalism is as a restructuring ethos that is always socially embedded. It exists in parasitical relationships with the extant social formations that it

opposes at the ideological level (Peck, Theodore & Brenner 2009). Transformative dynamics can never be exclusively associated with neoliberalisation, as if it was active while its 'hosts' were inert and residual (Peck & Theodore 2012: 183). Neoliberal restructuring and its 'contexts' are co-constitutive of the actual transformative pathways. Therefore, while acknowledging the impact of foreign neoliberal policy advice and interventions, I also strive to 'grasp the endogenic production of neoliberalism' (Hilgers 2013: 79) – the ways it reflected the strategic selectivity of the Serbian state as well as the social struggles waged and political strategies adopted to transform it. I will argue shortly that neoliberal policies after 2000 transformed but not weakened the system of political capitalism, and perpetuated the importance of state-centred redistribution of wealth, mostly in favour of social forces that formed the anti-Milošević alliance. This thesis examines discursive and extradiscursive practices through which the various civil societies channelled struggles over this specifically Serbian pathway of neoliberalisation and interpreted them through the history of past struggles, political discourses, and identitarian narratives. These practices range from NGO projects that helped reorder the relationships of civil society with the state, economy and wider society in line with neoliberal principles to violent riots expressing fears connected to globalisation.

Methodological framework

I already indicated that this project led me to conduct participant observation in governmental and nongovernmental organisations as well as public, semi-public and private meetings, debates, training sessions, parties, protests and other kinds of situations and events in Serbia and abroad. It is an instance of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) which follows translocal relationships 'upwards and outwards' through participant observation combined with discourse analysis, analysis of secondary sources, and interviewing (Kalb & Tak 2005: 18–9). It is inspired by the extended case method that builds on pre-existing theory and employs ethnography 'in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro," and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future' (Burawoy 1998: 5; see also Burawoy 2009). For instance, in the case of the Slovak-Serbian project, I frequented the CDF offices as a volunteer, typically several days a week, and interviewed a number of involved people in Belgrade and Bratislava: most CDF employees, two workers of Pontis (the Slovak NGO), an official of the Slovak Foreign Ministry, nine grantees of

the project, and four people whose grant applications were rejected. But since the grantees were expected to research Slovak experiences with EU integration that could be useful for Serbia, I also accompanied two grantees on their study trip to Bratislava. And because the best grantees were rewarded with short trips to Brussels packed with meetings with people from EU and EU-affiliated institutions, I also joined one of these trips. More broadly, the project led me to study, through further interviews and secondary research, the recent history of contacts and exchanges between Slovak and Serbian NGO activists and political fractions, which the project continued. It also provided me with various opportunities for active participation: the grantees travelling to Slovakia asked me to help mediate their contacts with Slovak experts and look up and translate some information; Pontis approached me for my opinions on the project implementation and the political and social context in Serbia; and the CDF occasionally asked for my assistance with some minor tasks related to the project.

At the same time, in line with the theoretical and methodological assumptions of actor-oriented and social constructivist approaches in the anthropology of development, I closely study practices, interpretations, biographies, interactions and relationships of individual actors (Long 2001; Mosse 2005a; Mosse, Lewis *et al.* 2005, 2006; Murray Li 2007). I understand these as variously constrained or enabled but emphatically *not* determined by institutional, legal, political, economic and social structures, ideologies, policy and cultural narratives, and global forces. This means to reassert the centrality of human agency, the capacity of socially, historically and culturally situated actors to process experience, learn, develop individual and collective strategies with contingent outcomes and thus, potentially, transform those larger structures and forces.

Interviews

In the course of my fieldwork, I made digital records (always with the interviewee's permission) and full or partial transcripts of 93 semi-structured interviews. A vast majority of these interviews involved one individual, but occasionally there were two or more interviewees. Most interviewees were NGO workers in Serbia, but I also conducted interviews with nationalist leaders, members of associations of disabled people, government officials, politicians, academics, civil servants, public sector employees, and Czech and Slovak NGO workers. The average interview duration was about 73 minutes. The interviews typically combined specific and generic questions so as to enable comparability. Many interviews incorporated elements of 'life-work

history,' which means that the interviewees were invited to provide a brief account of their career (Lewis 2008b). I was also interested in their future professional aspirations and plans. The data thus obtained were especially important to understand the widespread pattern of 'boundary crossing' between liberal civil society and the state.

Discourse analysis

I collected and analysed a large number of textual, visual and audiovisual artefacts, including:

- various documents related to the studied NGO projects (concept papers, application forms, assessment sheets, reports, budgets, training agendas and hand-outs, PowerPoint presentations);
- other NGO documents (strategic plans, annual reports, press releases, organograms, leaflets, booklets, publications, newsletters, websites);
- government documents (strategies, policy papers, action plans, statistical, analytical and other reports, budgets, guidelines for NGOs applying for funding, attendance lists);
- laws and other norms;
- newspaper, magazine and online articles;
- nationalist leaflets, websites, social media contents, newsletters and magazines;
- similar materials produced by associations of disabled people;
- graffiti, billboards, posters and stickers;
- TV news, advertisements and shows;
- online videos;
- documentary and feature films.

Throughout the thesis, I treat these texts not only as sources of factual information but also, especially in the case of the various policy and programmatic documents, as 'cultural texts' – 'as classificatory devices, as narratives that serve to justify or condemn the present, or as rhetorical devices and discursive formations that function to empower some and silence others' (Shore & Wright 1997: 11–2). Nevertheless, I also believe that ethnography is needed to fully reveal the meaning or practical significance of discourse through which policy-makers and project-planners construct social reality and the desirable interventions in it (Blommaert 2005: 16). I study the social life of policy, legal and development discourses: how actors incorporate or challenge their constructions of the world in their practices and interpretations, and what responses do they elicit from

the people whom they purport to classify and govern (Long 2001: 53; Murray Li 2007: 27–9). The application Evernote proved an efficient way of storing, organising, tagging and retrieving most of these materials as well as typed-up field notes.

Historical context

This section discusses two hegemonic projects of state transformation in Serbia that were inaugurated by the regime changes in the early 1990s and in 2000. In each case, I seek to identify the key tendencies of these transformative projects and the relationships between the state and civil society that enabled, supported or resisted these transformations in a shared discursive and material context. The purpose is to develop a 'conjunctural' analysis that would show how a specific historical moment – the period of my fieldwork – was 'shaped by multiple and potentially contradictory forces, pressures and tendencies' (Clarke 2004a: 25).

A key point for the overarching focus of this thesis is that the political and organisational identity of liberal civil society has crystallised in an antagonism to the Milošević's populist and nationalist project. It articulated the interests and enlisted the support of social forces that lost most, absolutely and relatively, due to Milošević's rule: the socialist-period middle class of professionals and intellectuals. It therefore played an important role in the anti-Milošević coalition and participated in the hegemonic project of post-2000 neoliberalisation and transnational integration. But the actual pace and character of this restructuring was conditioned by the existing state form and the composition and strategies of the new hegemonic bloc. What appeared from a normative viewpoint as a (yet another) failed transition thus justified, at least in theory, the increased foreign support for liberal civil society and its interventions, such as those I analyse in this thesis.

Milošević's rise to power

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) had a lively civil society that enjoyed a degree of operative autonomy but was mostly politically pacified. Popular mobilisations in Serbia in the late 1980s represented a partial break with this pattern of state-society relations. Milošević's rise to power was aided by his co-optation of these multiple emergent positions of popular opposition to some aspects of the crisis-ridden Yugoslavia. Milošević, who had been the leader of the Serbian communist party since 1986, fused these positions into a broad narrative that purported to articulate the

common interest of Serbian society. The process had all the characteristic features of a populist movement: an antipathy toward the establishment; a proclivity for direct action, strong affect, and clear lines between 'we' and 'they'; and a cultivation of charismatic, paternalistic leadership (Comaroff 2011: 105). It affirmed Milošević as a strong and qualitatively new type of leader and set novel criteria for the legitimation of state power.

In the 1990s, it had become commonplace to argue that the SFRJ, like 'totalitarian' socialist regimes in general, was a *tabula rasa* when it comes to 'civil society.' An exception was typically only granted to Slovenia in the 1980s where dissident intellectuals and new social movements, in a lively conversation with Western intellectuals like John Keane, actively claimed the term for themselves (Blair *et al.* 1986; Mastnak 1991, 1994; cf. Stubbs 1996, 2001). In fact, civil society in a broader, anthropological sense 'thrived' in Yugoslavia (Stubbs 2001: 93). The unique features of the Yugoslav system – its 'corporatist structures, limited pluralism, relaxed cultural policies, a measure of charismatic leadership and highly selective repression' (Vladisavljević 2008: 49) – made it more tolerant and even encouraging of spaces of some social autonomy than other socialist regimes. While Yugoslavia was an authoritarian communist party-state, the power of the party and its fusion with the state were more curtailed than in the Soviet bloc, and increasingly so as the system evolved (Goati 1986; Vladisavljević 2008: 30–9). Following the break with Stalin in 1948, the official rhetoric and policy consistently emphasised decentralisation, economic liberalisation and de-etatisation expected to lead to the eventual 'withering away' of the state. The key idea bringing these visions together was 'self-management' – a democratic worker control of production, distribution and consumption processes that was never fully realised in practice (Liotta 2001; Lydall 1984; Woodward 1995b). Nevertheless, the system created, especially since the early 1970s, a corporatist kind of civil society, partly organised from above but providing ample space for participation in deliberation. Most workers acquired some experience of the self-management system (Vladisavljević 2008: 38).

Yugoslav civil society included worker councils in 'social' (nominally self-managing) enterprises, 'self-managing communities of interest' (see p. 176), 'local wards' (*mesne zajednice*) as well as large numbers of what could be retroactively described as 'NGOs' – 'associations of citizens' and 'social organisations.' Serbia had about 18,000 such organisations as of 1990 (Paunović 1997), of which about 4,200 were still active in late 2011 (Građanske... 2011: 13). Serbian NGO workers tend to

characterise these socialist-period organisations *en bloc* and without any evidence as 'governmental nongovernmental organisations' (NGO Policy Group 2001: 17; Paunović 2006: 42). My own data on associations of disabled people indicate that the state granted a considerable degree of autonomy and support to organisations whose purpose and activities were not openly political. From the 1970s, professional associations in the social and health sectors started to point to the inadequacies of service provision while women's and youth organisations, formally linked to the party, also assumed more autonomous roles (Stubbs 2001: 93–4, 2007: 166–7).

In the late 1980s, Serbia experienced a massive wave of worker strikes and popular protests whose scale and radicalism were unprecedented even in the relatively permissive Yugoslav context. The euphoric 'rallies' (*mitinzi*), which in some cases brought together hundreds of thousands of people, culminated in the so-called 'antibureaucratic revolution' in 1988–89 during which Milošević consolidated his power. Many accounts emphasised the ethnonationalist character of this broad social movement and sometimes linked it to the alleged hegemonic aspirations of Serbs within the federation (Cohen 2001: 57–88; Pavlowitch 2002: 184–98). The protests were also characterised as orchestrated by Belgrade nationalist dissidents and their allies in the Serbian leadership (Cohen 2001: 62–78; Gagnon 2004: 67). Vladisavljević (2008) offered a well-substantiated analysis that complicates both of these claims. The protests actually responded to two sets of issues: the problems of Kosovo Serbs and the deep economic crisis. It was only quite late (in the early spring of 1989) that a decisive shift to nationalist themes occurred. Furthermore, the protests were initially organised from bottom-up. Only during the 'antibureaucratic revolution' were there instances of top-down mobilisation when authorities provided logistical support for the protesters, instructed party-controlled media to publish positive coverage, and so forth.

Non-elite Kosovo Serbs, an ethnic minority in Serbia's Autonomous Province of Kosovo, have been protesting since 1985, initially by petitions and letters to authorities and later rallies, against the discrimination, intimidation and acts of violence that were being perpetrated upon them by Kosovo Albanians. This was a genuine problem that was nevertheless soon exaggerated by Belgrade media (Vladisavljević 2008: 86–7). Belgrade nationalist intellectuals were also supporting these complaints and demands (Bieber 2003a: 23; Dragović-Soso 2002: 115–61; Vladisavljević 2008: 98–9). The Kosovo Serbs' protests in Belgrade and across Kosovo grew larger, more frequent and more radical from 1986 onwards (Vladisavljević 2008: 91–4, 109–45).

The 1980s crisis, simultaneously economic and political, was one of the major contributing factors to the SFRJ's demise whose complex constitutional, institutional and historical genesis cannot be discussed here (see Dragović-Soso 2008 for a literature review). Faced with a massive and increasingly unmanageable foreign debt, the federal government, since 1982 and with International Monetary Fund (IMF) guidance, has implemented macroeconomic stabilisation policies of austerity, marketisation, and trade and price liberalisation (Woodward 1995a). Despite (or perhaps due to) these policies, the debt, unemployment rate and inflation rate continued to grow. Loss of jobs, price hikes, the return of long-forgotten shortages, and wage and income restrictions reduced living standards by one-third between 1979–88 (Vladisavljević 2008: 46). The increasingly heated discussions between the federal government and republican leaderships over systemic reforms exacerbated the already well-advanced political conflict. Both domestic and foreign actors increasingly framed the crisis and the real or perceived distributional inequalities between the republics and regions in nationalist terms, thus effectively ethnicising social discontent. In Serbia proper, unemployment hovered at 17–18%, that is, above the Yugoslav average (Woodward 1995a: 64). According to a 1983 poll, only 16% of Belgraders could cover their living expenses with their earnings while 46% said they could do so with great difficulty (Dragović-Soso 2002: 66). Although worker strikes had not previously been uncommon, the crisis provoked their dramatic escalation country-wide (Liotta 2001; Vladisavljević 2008: 112). In the summer of 1988, workers from Serbia and the neighbouring republics started to stage protests in Belgrade and address their demands to federal authorities. Participants demanded higher salaries and subsidies for their firms and called for measures against 'red bourgeoisie' – corrupt or unsuccessful enterprise directors and expansive bureaucracy within and outside enterprises.

Neither the workers nor the Kosovo Serbs challenged the legitimacy of the state or the party; to the contrary, they widely employed official symbolism. What they were calling for was a reform of the socialist order and Yugoslav federation. This remained true during the 'antibureaucratic revolution' that unfolded between September 1988 and January 1989 in Serbia proper, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro. While Milošević and his fraction in the Serbian leadership had been initially merely tolerant of the protests, they started to openly support them in September 1988. The ensuing rallies were even larger and often, though not always, (co-)organised by authorities. What motivated this support was that from the summer of 1988, the protesters targeted the leaderships of Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro because of their opposition to the

Serbian leadership's calls for the recentralisation of Serbia,[13] eventually forcing them to resign. The participants included Kosovo Serbs and their supporters, workers, students, and the general public with their various demands which came to be framed by the overarching populist theme of people struggle against the hated high officials, branded variously as 'bureaucrats,' 'careerists' (*foteljaši*, lit. 'armchairers') and, in the case of the Vojvodinian leaders, 'autonomists.' This was not only the lowest common denominator on which all the groups could agree, but also an idea that seemed to explain the underlying cause of all their various grievances, and conformed to the official Yugoslav mythology of people power (Vladisavljević 2008: 170–6). Milošević harnessed it for his own agenda of eliminating his enemies in the party and recentralising Serbia.

Milošević's expressions of sympathy for the protests and the demagogic addresses he delivered at some of them made him popular in a manner that few Yugoslav communist leaders (except Tito, of course) had enjoyed. Outspoken and exuding an air of sincerity, he perfected a populist posture of the charismatic protector of ordinary people against the alienated bureaucracy. This was a significant innovation on the formal and secretive style of erstwhile communists.

So was Milošević's embrace of nationalism that, aided by the parallel propaganda in the state-controlled media, reconfigured 'ordinary people' as ordinary Serbs. Unlike leaders in the other republics, Milošević could not adopt a nationalist position to criticise the federal government over the unpopular austerity measures because the antifederal rhetoric was simultaneously anti-Belgrade and anti-Serb. He therefore combined the populist opposition to 'bureaucrats' with a more subtle nationalist register of victimisation. Adopting the language of nationalist dissidents, he evoked huge sacrifices that Serbs had made for Yugoslavia in both world wars, only to be supposedly discriminated against afterwards. Since the republics were generally perceived as 'national homelands,' the fact that more than a third of Serbs lived out of Serbia and that the Serbian government could not impose its decisions on the provinces could be easily presented as an injustice to be rectified. The cause of Kosovo Serbs added to this

[13] The 1974 Constitution made Serbia the only republic that encompassed two 'autonomous provinces' (Vojvodina and Kosovo). These were 'granted their own constitutions, legislative, executive and judicial jurisdiction and party control almost identical to that of republics, as well as direct representation in all federal state and party organs, and effective veto power over federal policy' (Vladisavljević 2008: 36). In the 1980s, the autonomy of Kosovo vis-à-vis the government of Serbia became increasingly seen as one of the major reasons for the discrimination against Kosovo Serbs.

defensive and righteous brand of nationalism.[14] Milošević's earlier biography as a committed communist and his about-faces in the 1990s suggest that his nationalism was an instrument rather than a mission. His nationalist and populist strategies helped him construct a broad social coalition of

> Serb nationalists of all social strata, both anti-communist and communist [including elite nationalist dissidents – MM]; unskilled and semiskilled workers; police; junior army officers of predominantly Serbian nationality; anti-Titoists purged from the party in campaigns that included a hint of anti-Serb bias (especially in 1948–49, 1966, and 1972); country people; and local party bosses (Woodward 1995a: 93).

Milošević thus succeeded in articulating most forms of the emergent dissent – elite as well as popular, based on nationalist fears as well as socioeconomic grievances – into a single hegemonic project whose heterogeneous ideology is best described as 'national socialist.'[15] In a characteristically populist manner, differences and inequalities within the ranks of 'the people' – whose recognition and articulation is the prerequisite of any meaningful politics – were suppressed in the interest of a common identity and common sense of deprivation (Comaroff 2011: 104–7). The antibureaucratic theme 'did not provide much guidance about what should be done once the officials resigned. The focus was on the reform of Yugoslavia's authoritarianism and state' (Vladisavljević 2008: 205). Accordingly, after Milošević had created his Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) in 1990 as the heir to the communist party, it styled itself as a conservative, moderate and centrist force. In the campaign before the first multi-party elections in Serbia in December 1990, it delivered vague promises of stability, social security, and political change to 'modern federalism' and electoral democracy (Gagnon 2004: 88–102; Woodward 1995a: 121). Milošević comfortably won the presidential election with 65% of the vote while the SPS took 194 seats in the 250-seat parliament.

Milošević's Serbia

During the 1990s, state form in Serbia changed from a late socialist confederation to an authoritarian capitalist nation-state. In the absence of a coherent public narrative about

[14] The regime media likewise branded the mass rallies 'rallies of truth' and 'rallies of solidarity,' implying that they exposed a muted truth about injustices against Serbs.

[15] I use this term to highlight the fusion of left and right ideological elements, not to venture into analogies with early-20th-century national socialism (see Vujačić 2003 for a comparative discussion).

what kind of state and society Serbia was becoming, the transformation was a largely subterranean process defined by the composition and political strategies of the hegemonic forces, particularly the SPS that inherited the property, cadre and control of the state apparatus from the communist party (Pavlaković 2005: 23). This gave a strongly 'political' and informal character to the emergent forms of capitalism and nation-state. To maintain the loyalty of its predominantly working-class and state-dependent social base, the old-new elites continued to exploit the nationalist and populist modes of legitimation. This was facilitated by the inherited control of the media and much of the economy. But the initial legitimacy was gradually eroded as mass impoverishment deepened and Milošević further diluted his hazy ideological programme through pragmatic adjustments to the quickly evolving military and foreign-political context.

After the 1990 elections and the dissolution of the SFRJ (formally sealed in 1992), Milošević established in the rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), with Serbia (including Kosovo) and its satellite Montenegro as the only constituent republics,[16] a regime that most political scientists describe as 'hybrid' or 'competitive authoritarianism' (Gould & Sickner 2008; Levitsky & Way 2002; Pavlović & Antonić 2007; Vladisavljević 2010). A façade of democracy was preserved – there was political pluralism, some free media, and formal democratic procedures including partially free elections. However, Milošević's rule was highly personalised: he was the power centre, disregarding his formal office in any given moment. Security and intelligence services and regime-friendly criminal networks were used to intimidate and brutalise opposition leaders while the state-controlled media denigrated them. The regime also attempted, through the subservient judiciary, to rig elections in 1996 and 2000; I discuss the outcomes below.

The official rhetoric and symbolism expressed a great deal of continuity with socialism (Pavlaković 2005: 19), including relatively extensive social rights. Unlike the new Slovenian and Croatian constitutions, the 1990 Constitution adopted a decidedly non-ethnic definition of citizenship (Vasiljević 2011). However, a huge gap separated the law and rhetoric from everyday life. Formal rights meant little in the context of economic destruction and mass pauperisation. The new public culture emphasised themes of Serb national identity, rediscovered (or invented) traditions, and Serbian Orthodoxy (Blagojević 2006; Gordy 1999; Malešević 1996). Vojvodina and Kosovo

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[16] In 2003, the FRY was reconstituted as a loose confederation called the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The State Union ended in June 2006 when Montenegro declared independence.

were deprived of their autonomous status already in 1990. Serbia became the state of the Serb nation in all but name.

During the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (1992–95) and Kosovo (1998–99), nationalism, which had driven some of the spontaneous mass mobilisations in the 1980s, increasingly became the regime's instrument of demobilisation (Gagnon 2004). Serbian citizens did not exactly rush to fight for a 'Great Serbia.' In 1991, the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) transferred its allegiance from the preservation of a Yugoslavia to the Milošević regime. It fought on the Serb side in Croatia and BiH until it officially withdrew from both republics in 1992. But the mobilisation of JNA reservists in Serbia and Montenegro faced resistance from the very start: evasions and desertions were endemic (Backović, Vasić & Vasović 1998). By 1994, some 300,000 people, mostly young men, were estimated to have emigrated to avoid conscription and mobilisation (Aleksov 1994: 26). An unknown number of Serbian citizens did volunteer for Serb paramilitary formations operating in Croatia and BiH, but at least some were motivated by opportunities for looting rather than, or along with, nationalism (Woodward 1995a: 239, 249). The regime used nationalist rhetoric as a strategy of demobilisation when faced with popular (often anti-war) protests at home: it called for national unity against external enemies, stereotyped as '"separatist" Slovenians, "irredentist" Albanians, "fascist" Croats or "fundamentalist" Muslims' (Vasiljević 2011: 11), and delegitimised the opposition and protesters as 'traitors.' But when it needed to mobilise voters, it presented itself as moderate and preoccupied with the economy, welfare and peace. Although it had initially supported the Serb armies in Croatia and BiH, it started to abandon them by 1994. As a result, much of the opposition unwittingly adopted a self-defeating strategy of nationalist overbidding (Stojanović 2000).

The SPS orchestrated the transformation of Serbia's economic system to a patronage-based and criminalised 'political capitalism.' Transition to capitalism as such was largely legitimated by the reforms of the last Yugoslav government in 1989–90, which dismantled the system of self-management and legalised the privatisation of public property. However, although a new entrepreneurial elite would gradually emerge and command some political influence, it was largely the former *nomenklatura* that succeeded in entering the ranks of the new economic and political elites organised in and around SPS and its satellite, the Yugoslav Left (JUL) led by Milošević's wife Mira

Marković (Gagnon 2004: 118–9; Lazić 2000; Sörensen 2003: 74).[17] These people used their political power and links to capture social property through insider privatisation and primitive accumulation-like processes. In 1994, a Serbian law 'resocialised' those 'social' enterprises that had been fully or partially privatised following the federal reforms. Other social enterprises were directly nationalised (Lazic & Sekelj 1997). In both cases, the regime put itself into a position to appoint its clients as managers and executive board members and let them loot the enterprises (Miljković & Hoare 2005; Palairet 2001: 910–4). Clientelistic and criminal networks, linked mostly to the SPS and the JUL, also penetrated the public administration, judiciary and security forces. Serbia approximated the model of the postsocialist 'clan-state' in which 'clans,' defined as elite groups whose members promote their mutual political, financial and strategic interests, are so closely enmeshed with segments of the state that the agendas of the government and the clans become indistinguishable (Wedel 2003: 433).

Stanizskis (1991) coined the term 'political capitalism' for similar transformations in Poland in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley (1998) questioned the empirical validity of her interpretation for East Central Europe, but accepted it for Russia and China. Writing on Hungary, Stark (1990) argued that the transformation is not from plan to market but 'from plan to clan.' What these cases share is that even as communists-cum-capitalists drained the state's resources, they still preserved some of its allocative power (Verdery 1996: 213). In Serbia, this not only facilitated elite self-enrichment but also helped maintain the support or at least passivity of working classes. After the UN had imposed economic sanctions on Serbia, the government adopted a law which prevented the enterprises from laying workers off; instead, they had to send them on 'forced vacation' and continue to pay their salaries and social contributions (Pošarac 1995: 331). Its control of the economy also enabled the regime to keep down the prices of electricity, housing, heating and so on, and redistribute much of the national income to the population, often in non-monetary forms (Lazić 2011: 78).

Wars were not fought on Serbia's territory until the Kosovo War but significantly shaped its transformation nevertheless. The UN sanctions further deepened the informalisation and criminalisation of the economy (Andreas 2005). To engage in profitable embargo busting on a larger scale, criminal networks needed official patronage for which they paid 'tributes' to the regime (Sörensen 2009: 167–82). The

[17] Former dissident intellectuals split – some joined the SPS and some the opposition, both nationalist and moderate/anti-nationalist (Dragović-Soso 2002: 206–53).

NATO bombing, causing damage estimated at $30bn (Grupa 17 1999), completed the general devastation. Predictably, industrial output, employment, real wages, and the entire formal sector plummeted. By 2000, Serbia's real GDP was about a half of its 1989 level and the average net salary was 95 Deutschmark (Uvalic 2012).

What I call liberal civil society and what insiders often equate with 'civil society' as such (*građansko/civilno društvo*) has assumed its defining characteristics in opposition to the Milošević regime. As we have seen, there were organisations that could be retroactively described as 'NGOs' already in Yugoslavia. However, the type of organisations which people in Serbia recognise and describe as 'nongovernmental organisations' (*nevladine organizacije*) or, less often, 'organisations of civil society,' only originate from the 1990s onwards. I call them 'NGOs proper' to differentiate them from other kinds of organisations that outsiders might identify as NGOs but insiders would probably call 'associations (of citizens).'[18] The latter are mostly various interest-based (professional, sports, religious, cultural, recreational, self-help and so on) associations that had been either founded in the SFRJ or broadly conform to such patterns of association.

As elsewhere in postsocialist Europe, 'civil society' in Serbia came to denote formalised NGOs and, more rarely, informal groups and movements supported by Western donors. What was specific about it was its openly political agenda: anti-regime, anti-nationalist, anti-populist, liberal, cosmopolitan and pacifist. 'Civil society' became (self-)defined as a force that protested against the regime's involvement in the wars, documented human rights abuses, pointed to the violations of democratic rules, criticised nationalist or populist rhetoric, and often worked closely with the opposition. In response, the regime media stigmatised NGOs as 'enemies of the Serbian nation,' 'foreign mercenaries' or 'domestic betrayers.' This has left a lasting impact on how many ordinary Serbians perceive NGOs (see Chapter 6). During its terminal crisis, the regime would also raid offices of the most influential NGOs (for instance at the pretext of tax checks) to intimidate them.

'Civil society' thus came to denote a specific subject position that stood in an antagonistic relationship to the regime and other subject positions. Another sign of this was that its membership and political identity closely overlapped with social forces

[18] 'Nongovernmental organisation' has never been a legal subjectivity in Serbia. Until 2009, the field of association continued to be regulated by SFRJ laws (later repeatedly amended) which recognised 'associations of citizens,' 'social organisations,' 'foundations,' 'endowments' and 'funds' (Paunović 2006). Legal reforms in 2009–10 abolished social organisations and funds.

known as 'Other Serbia' or 'Civil Serbia.' These metaphors have some historical antecedents but were revived in the first half of the 1990s by a fraction of cultural, intellectual and political elites and middle classes that fought for anti-war, anti-nationalist, liberal and pro-EU politics – which, by transference, has itself become known as 'civil orientation' (Čolović, Mimica *et al.* 1992, 1993). This was equally a struggle *against* the politics and values of what the Other Serbia dubbed the 'First Serbia' of regime supporters. Here are the origins of the modern-day dichotomy of 'two Serbias' according to which Serbian society is divided into two camps by a deep but clean cut which is simultaneously political, social and cultural (Naumović 2002: 25–6, 2005; see also Jansen 2001). Since the Other Serbia faced a hostile and aggressive environment, it is perhaps understandable that it developed a missionary self-understanding that sometimes bordered on eschatological. For instance, in his preface to the reissue of seminal 'Other Serbian' talks, the philosopher Radomir Konstantinović wrote: 'The "Other Serbia," that is, the European Serbia, is a marginal Serbia even today, and precisely as such – marginal – it is the only possible future of Serbia' (2002: 11).

This implies that 'civil society' was also defined in class terms. The adjective *građanski* means 'civil' as well as 'bourgeois,' and similarly to its equivalents in other European languages, it derives from the word for 'city' (*grad*). There are thus strong semantic associations between civility, urbanity, and middle-class identity (Spasić 206: 222). A 1995 collection of works on *Repressed Civil Society* by eminent Serbian academics (some of whom were also active in civil society) illustrates this line of thinking. The introduction argues that the key constraints on the development of civil society in Serbia include

> the impoverishment of the urban civil (*urbani građanski*) and middle strata in general as the most important social base of the concept and practice of civil society (*civilno društvo*) [and] the strengthening of the elements of rural and patriarchal relationships at the expense of urban and civil ones (Pavlović 1995: 36).

Another chapter expands the dichotomy of two Serbias into a triad. The 'premodern' Serbia, about a third of the population, is predominantly rural, concentrated in the hilly areas in the southeast, least educated, elderly, and supports the SPS. The 'incompletely modern' Serbia, almost half of the population, corresponds to the working class, some peasants (those not included in the 'premodern' Serbia), and civil servants. It lives in the 'central area,' is of lower and middle education, 'dependent on the state,' and politically divided. Finally, the 'postmodern' Serbia of some 15–20% of the population

is younger, well-educated, concentrated in 'the north' (presumably Vojvodina) and big cities, especially Belgrade and 'other university centres,' and supportive of the 'civil' opposition parties. Predictably, 'the nuclei of civil society should be sought in the postmodern circles' (Pantić 1995: 96).

These analyses clearly draw on crude essentialism and dated modernisation theories. But they contain the proverbial grain of truth. A 2001 survey of NGOs proper found that more than two thirds of their activists had a university degree (NGO Policy Group 2001: 22). Empirical research in the mid-2000s showed that leaders of NGOs were predominantly recruited from middle classes (Lazić 2005: 61–98). They tended to be young or middle-aged, highly educated, experts or future experts (students), and female as frequently as male. A recent survey of the larger legal category of 'associations of citizens' came with very similar findings about their presidents and directors (Građanske... 2011: 48). These are striking figures for a country where only about 9% had university education in 2011 (RZS n.d.). Most NGO workers I knew had either obtained or were working toward a university degree. Nearly all had at least some proficiency in English, and many were fluent. Many, if not all, had attended a number of courses, trainings and seminars on a variety of skills and specialist knowledge deemed necessary for project work. Their taste in music, literature and visual arts tended to be of the 'global urban' kind characteristic for the 'upper classes,' one of the four theoretical classes in Serbia according to the sociologists Cvetičanin and Popescu (2011).

Anthropologists studying civil society building in the Balkans (Sampson 1996; 2002a; 2002b; 2004) and Serbia specifically (Vetta 2009, 2012; but cf. Vetta 2013: 140–2) tended to argue that the local NGO staff were a type of *elite*: intimately familiar with and loyal to Western or cosmopolitan ideas and values, equipped with project-management skills, typically younger, always anglophone, and paid well. However, this description does not entirely fit the contemporary Serbian context. There is a reasonably strong empirical case for considering NGO workers a *cultural* elite. However, it is debatable that they constitute an economic elite. As Sampson himself observes, 'this class has no resources of its own: they are wage earners working for foreign projects' (2002a: 310). Moreover, salaries in NGOs at the time of my fieldwork were far from spectacular. True, the staff of Serbian branches of international NGOs could expect to earn €1,500 or even more. But the far more common indigenous NGOs were a different story. Even in the largest Belgrade NGOs, only the top management would make about €1,500. Many workers earned salaries close to the national average of some €400. In

smaller NGOs and almost all NGOs out of the major cities, salaries were actually project-based 'honoraria' (*honorari*). When the NGO was having several different projects or one large project, people earned €400 or more, but in drier periods, they might make as little as €100. It is thus not surprising that many in these smaller or 'regional' NGOs held other primary jobs, typically in the public sector (education, health care, welfare, public administration), the income from which they complemented with the irregular honoraria.

Therefore, it seems to me that most NGO workers constitute a particular fraction of middle classes (Vetta 2013: 140–2). Their social and cultural capital predisposes them to intellectual labour that guarantees them a better material status than most of working classes but leaves them far behind political and economic elites. Although I am not aware of any 1990s research comparable to the aforementioned survey conducted in the 2000s, establishing NGOs under Milošević was probably an economic strategy embraced mostly by the old socialist middle class of professionals, intellectuals and experts, especially those younger and fluent in English (Sörensen 2003: 65, 73).

This is supported by the fact that the social opposition to the regime was also predominantly middle-class. Although workers and peasants suffered a lot in absolute terms, many continued to vote for Milošević in the latter half of the 1990s, together with housewives and pensioners (Slavujević 2006). These groups were especially dependent on state-centred redistribution for their basic survival. Moreover, labour unions remained passive (Lazić 2011: 66–8, 78–9). The old middle class declined in absolute *and* relative terms and was more likely to participate in anti-regime struggles. The first big victories of the opposition in the 1996 local elections occurred in larger cities, that is, settlements with a greater concentration of middle classes. The regime's attempt to steal the elections led to a sustained wave of protests over the winter of 1996–97. The protesters tended to have above-average education. Experts and students were heavily overrepresented whereas workers were notably absent (Babović 1999).

The growth of the NGO sector accelerated in the late 1990s. While about 500 NGOs had been established in 1994–97, more than 1,300 emerged over the next three years (Paunović 2006: 49). The increased availability of foreign funding contributed to this trend. The US government increased its funding for opposition forces (including NGOs) from $18m in 1998 to $53m in 1999 (Naumović 2006: 165). Between mid-1999 and late 2000 alone, the US government and private foundations spent $40m on 'democracy programmes' in Serbia (Carothers 2001). European governments and foundations probably spent about as much but were less likely to support NGOs. NGOs

were cropping up especially in opposition-led municipalities (NGO Policy Group 2001: 18). NGOs were major recipients or distributors of the 'democratisation' money since Serbian law forbade parties from accepting foreign funding (Vetta 2009: 29). The help from abroad was not just financial – in Chapter 1, I describe how the Slovak government and NGOs activists supplied the Serbian opposition and NGOs with know-how on regime overthrow. Other actors provided similar advice.

Many accounts of the regime change in 2000 attribute a significant role to liberal civil society which, as we saw in the case of the CDF, mediated the unification of most opposition parties into a broad electoral coalition, mobilised people to vote for change, and monitored the election process (Bieber 2003b; Bunce & Wolchik 2011: 85–113; Minić & Dereta 2007; see also Chapter 1). These efforts exemplify the building of a hegemonic project. They neutralised the ideological and personal disagreements between opposition politicians and the particularistic demands of various social groups in the name of one shared interest – ousting Milošević. However, the fact that civil society relied on funding driven by foreign interests gave rise to controversies. These can be illustrated by the example of *Otpor* ('Resistance'), the biggest anti-Milošević movement targeted by police repression (Božilović 2011). Some authors upheld Otpor's self-representation as a genuinely popular, indigenous and diffuse youth movement (Golubović 2007, 2008). More critical commentators generally acknowledged the importance of Otpor for overthrowing Milošević but pointed to its more conventional characteristics of a hierarchical political organisation (Ilić 2001); the extent of its personal, organisational and financial links with opposition parties and foreign, especially US, governmental, paragovernmental and nongovernmental bodies (Naumović 2006, 2007; Sussman 2012; Sussman & Krader 2008); and the Orientalist and neoliberal elements of its discourse (Marković 2001).

Similar debates surrounded the regime change itself (Dolenec 2011). After Milošević had attempted rigging a federal presidential election, hundreds of thousands of people flooded central Belgrade and stormed the parliament and the state TV on 5 October 2000. This so-called 'October Revolution' was variously interpreted as an 'electoral revolution' (Bunce & Wolchik 2007; Kalandadze & Orenstein 2009), 'unfinished revolution' (Pavićević 2010), 'betrayed revolution' (Pešić 2010) or negotiated settlement enabled by a 'switch' of business elites, mafia and some state security forces to the opposition (Gagnon 2004: 128, 185; Gould & Sickner 2008). In reality, it seems that multiple processes have resulted in a complex event whose final outcome was uncertain until quite late. The number and bravery of the protesters, in a

situation when violent response was not unlikely, was impressive. There is little doubt that it was the decisive final blow. But the opposition's contacts with the state security are also well-documented (Pešić 2010: 28–30).

It is also important to recognise that the regime became increasingly repressive, erratic and 'sultanistic' toward the end. This and the continuing economic decline, coupled with the international isolation after the Kosovo War, threatened the interests of the business elites, some of whom started to support the opposition (Lazić 2011: 65). It seems logical that they would recognise their interest in the kind of transformations initiated after the regime change. This is also true of the middle classes mobilised in liberal civil society and the Western actors who supported them. Although discontent with the regime was becoming more evenly spread in the society, some 36–38% of votes (the precise results are contested) in the 2000 presidential election were cast for Milošević. He still enjoyed the support of a sizeable minority of workers, peasants, pensioners, housewives, some civil servants and the regime's clients. The regime change was thus a victory of a hegemonic coalition of oppositional politicians, middle classes, and those business elites and segments of the state apparatus that switched sides. This shaped the character of post-2000 transformations.

Although the emergence of nationalist civil society under Milošević was a comparatively marginal phenomenon, it is important for the understanding of its political identity. While the few authors who wrote on this subject mostly dated this process to the post-2000 period (Byford 2002; Kostovicova 2006; cf. Bieber 2003a), it seems that it began in the late 1990s, as some examples mentioned in Chapter 2 illustrate. The regime's pragmatism about the Serb nationalist cause, its communist pedigree, and its tense relationships with the Serbian Orthodox Church made it hardly endearing to many radical nationalists. Nevertheless, the quoted authors are right in that the expansion of nationalist civil society occurred after 2000 in an opposition to the slow but steadily advancing liberalisation of the society, transnational integration, and the marginalisation of radical nationalism in institutional politics.

Post-2000 transformations

State transformation after 2000 was notoriously partial, uneven and contested. Reforms unfolded in incremental cycles of temporary equilibria, destabilisations and recalibrations, rather than as a planned, comprehensive and evenly paced process. However, it is possible to identify the hegemonic tendencies of these transformations. I

argue there were two such mutually closely related tendencies: a selective neoliberalisation and a deepening transnational integration. Liberal civil society mostly participated in these transformations and called for their intensification. Its rapprochement with the state brought it a number of political and economic opportunities but undermined its erstwhile unity and identity. Nationalist civil society expanded and assumed an increasingly counter-hegemonic position.

Although liberal economists were highly critical of the depth, comprehensiveness and consistency of restructuring (e.g. Prokopijević 2010), macroeconomic reforms have gone in a mostly neoliberal direction and enabled a deeper integration of Serbia into the global economy in a highly peripheral position. Most of the six defining economic policies of neoliberal projects – liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, market proxies in the public sector, internationalisation and cuts in direct taxation (Jessop 2013: 71) – have been implemented. Price and foreign trade liberalisation took place soon after 2000. The four largest state-owned banks were closed down and the rest were privatised so that 80% of banking assets were foreign-owned by 2012 (Uvalic 2012: 91). A major share of FDIs was indeed aimed at the banking and financial sectors rather than industry (Becker, Jäger, Leubolt & Weissenbacher 2010: 238). Although transnational corporations bought also some of the most profitable big industrial enterprises in sectors such as oil, metallurgy, tobacco or telecommunications, privatisation was limited overall. The private sector share of GDP grew from 40% in 2001 to 60% in 2010, less than in all postsocialist countries except BiH and some post-Soviet states (EBRD n.d.). By 2005, the corporate tax rate had been reduced to 10% – one of the lowest rates in Europe (Ranđelović 2010). These reforms and the favourable global environment allowed Serbia to reach impressive rates of GDP growth in 2001–08. Living standards improved and poverty rate fell while net wages increased more than fourfold. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that this growth was based on credit, import and consumption, and thus unsustainable in the long term (Arandarenko 2006; Upchurch & Marinković 2011; Uvalic 2012). Industrial output fell compared even to the late Milošević years. By 2008, real GDP had reached only 72% of its 1989 level. Persistently high unemployment rates and swelling trade and current account deficits signalled the limits of this mode of growth. These were to be fully revealed by the global crisis that hit Serbia in late 2008.

Although the IMF and the World Bank supplied consistently neoliberal advice, the anatomy of reforms suggests that domestic elites retained a decisive control (Arandarenko 2006). They have made those neoliberal policy adjustments that they, and

their social bases, considered necessary to maintain the benefits of the extant economic and social model. Such adjustments worked as a state-controlled machine for an extensive but inegalitarian redistribution of wealth (Arandarenko 2010). The chosen model of privatisation, based on politically controlled tendering and auctions, suited the interests of 'three interwoven elites – political, business and technocratic' (Arandarenko 2010: 79). The fact that a sizeable part of the economy remained state-controlled also enabled the perpetuation of the political-capitalist modes of elite formation and reproduction (see below). At the same time, GDP growth, FDIs, privatisation proceeds, and large flows of foreign aid enabled the government to maintain a high level of public spending. But its structure was such as to promote rather than reduce inequality. Social assistance spending as a share of GDP was about a half of the EU and OECD averages (Arandarenko 2010: 81) and lower even than in the neighbouring countries (Lakićević 2011: 125). A disproportionate share of expenditures was spent on public-sector salaries and pensions. Their recipients represented about a third of the population and much more with their dependents, including the army of unemployed young people living with parents. In 2010, some 750,000 people, about a third of the formally employed, worked in the public sector (UNECE n.d.). In 2011, there were 1.62m pensioners (RZS n.d.) who also helped their relatives get by with their modest but steady income. At the same time, the taxation of labour was, rather uniquely in the European context, regressive in 2001–07 (Arandarenko 2006, 2009). As a result, the salaries of public-sector employees were above average and less taxed while those in most productive sectors were below average and more heavily taxed. In sum, benefits of the post-2000 adjustment were redistributed from the working poor in the private sector to the middle-class public-sector employees and pensioners. The 2000s can be thus interpreted as a decade of elite consolidation and limited middle-class restoration relative to the position of working classes (Lazić 2011: 153–60).

The continued importance of state-centred redistribution reinforced the centrality of the nation-state as the focus and site of social struggles. This became even more apparent during the crisis when the size and privileges of the public sector became intensively problematised. The economy sank into a deep recession, many factories and private firms went bankrupt, and the already high unemployment almost doubled and reached 25.5% by April 2012 (RZS n.d.). The media, economists and politicians of all partisan allegiances started to talk on a daily basis about the 'huge,' 'cumbersome' and 'inefficient' public administration, the ever-smaller private and productive sectors 'supporting' the army of clerks and pensioners, or the many state-owned enterprises that

had been 'loss-makers' (*gubitaši*) for years but continued to be subsidised. Various surveys found that many dreamed about landing a public-sector job, provoking further critical commentary. Many NGO workers I knew were very direct in naming the problem – the government was 'buying social peace' by paying masses of civil servants for 'drinking coffee' and 'doing nothing.' Politicians were urged from all sides to introduce radical neoliberal reforms and shift to a 'new growth model' based on exports and budgetary discipline (Arandarenko 2011). In 2009–10, the government indeed 'froze' pensions and public-sector salaries according to the terms of an IMF stand-by arrangement. However, there were signs that public-sector salaries actually continued to grow. Some employment cuts occurred in public administration, but the latter employed only 13.5% of public-sector labour force (Avlijas & Uvalic 2011: 216). As a whole, the sector slightly expanded (Đaković 2011). Moreover, the growth of pensions and public-sector salaries was unblocked in 2011. Amid falling public revenues, the government turned to foreign borrowing to finance expenditures, resulting in a surge of the foreign debt. While an important effect of the crisis has been to lend the neoliberal reform proposals an additional sense of ultimate rationality and urgency, the government acted on them only partially, perpetuating the established pattern of piecemeal adjustments.

These developments must be related to the post-2000 transformation of the political-capitalist relationships and practices. While formal mechanisms of electoral democracy became established (Pavlović & Antonić 2007), a narrow focus on institutions obscures actual political practice. Post-Milošević governments were often ideologically bizarre combos. The same inconsistency characterised party ideologies, leading to a thorough relativisation of the economic dimension of the left/right classification.[19] The ideologically hollow parties, cooperating or directly encompassing business elites, adapted Milošević-era practices for purposes of a more open multi-party competition. This resulted in a systemic clientelism and what is often called 'state capture': an openly acknowledged and de facto institutionalised 'feudal division' of the state (Pesic 2007). On the one hand, leading 'tycoons' were widely assumed to fund parties or individual politicians to obtain preferential treatment. On the other, ruling parties 'split' the many state enterprises as well as public institutions between themselves. When a party had acquired a ministry, all the organisations under its

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[19] Apart from the inconsistent rhetoric and policies of individual parties, this is also because the terms 'left' and 'right' are rather pegged to the degree of nationalism and social conservatism. For instance, the Liberal Democratic Party is routinely described as leftist although it is probably the most consistent advocate of right-wing economic policies.

competence were also considered to 'belong' to the party. The parties then used these vertically integrated 'feuds' to do business with their financiers but also to provide jobs for their clients in exchange for various services, including electoral support or partisan activism. The pattern was replicated at the local level with its proliferation of public communal enterprises and often fiercely competitive politics (Avlijas & Uvalic 2011; see also Chapter 5). This system was particularly important in the numerous economically devastated municipalities where the public sector was the biggest employer. Even some private businesses were said to preferentially employ members of parties with which they were 'friendly.'

The media, but also my NGO informants and ordinary people dubbed the system 'partocracy' (*partokratija*). They often joked that not even a 'cleaning lady could get a job without the right party ID.' Stories about overemployment and non-meritocratic hiring were endemic. This was assumed to occur in cycles: many people got jobs before elections when parties sought to mobilise voters, whereas a change of government led to large-scale firing and hiring. Clientelism was also based on other forms of identity and loyalty, such as kinship, friendship, ethnicity or simply the all-pervasive 'links and little links' (*veze i vezice*). But parties were clearly considered extremely important. Young people were believed to join and volunteer for partisan youth organisations with a single purpose in mind – future career. Criticism of this system coloured the calls for reforms of the public sector. Apart from simple 'rationalisation' (i.e. downsizing), the demands were also for its 'depoliticisation,' 'professionalisation' or, most explicitly, 'departicisation' (*departizacija*).

The second hegemonic tendency of post-2000 transformations can be identified in the broad consensus among political and economic elites on the desirability of Serbia's EU integration (Lazić & Vuletić 2009). The first post-Milošević government of PM Đinđić defined the 'return to Europe' as a priority (Kostovicova 2004: 24). It moved quickly to improve Serbia's international relations and integrate it into organisations such as the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, the relationship of political elites to 'Europe' continued to be fraught with tensions, related especially to its handling of the issue of Kosovo (Di Lellio 2009) and the failure of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to deliver 'transitional justice' and 'reconciliation' in the region (Clark 2008; Hayden 2011). Politicians argued endlessly over these issues, for instance whether to extradite Serb war-crime suspects to the ICTY, which was also the EU's condition for further integration. Yet all the feelings of injustice yielded rather nationalist demagoguery than a realistic alternative vision of national development. As

elsewhere in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the various elite factions either actively pursued or passively accepted the EU accession as the 'only credible and realistic external objective' (Anastasakis 2005: 82) and as a 'political if not economic and geo-strategic escape mechanism' from the past (Pridham 2005: 12). While the process has more or less stalled under the incumbency of the nationalist PM Vojislav Koštunica in 2004–07, he and his allies, for all their rhetoric, never abandoned it. This deepening sense of inevitability contributed to the gradual marginalisation of nationalism in politics: since the regime change, nationalist parties have succeeded to enter the government only in 2004–07 and 2007–08. The government incumbent at the time of my fieldwork took crucial steps to accelerate EU integration and elevated 'Europeanisation' to its central policy.

The two tendencies were not unrelated. Apart from requiring cooperation with the ICTY and more recently the government in Pristina, the EU policy toward Serbia so far has focused on liberalising trade and the movement of capital. Serbia seems set for a rerun of the EU's eastern enlargement, which was characterised by a focus on neoliberal restructuring at the expense of 'social cohesion' goals (Bohle 2006, 2009; Drahokoupil 2008, 2009; Holman 2004; Rae 2011). The EU project itself has undergone a thorough neoliberalisation since the late 1980s that steered it away from the alternative neo-mercantilist and social-democratic concepts (van Apeldoorn 2002). The monetarism of the European Central Bank and the budgetary discipline of the Stability and Growth Pact lead the member states to adopt supply-side oriented national competitiveness strategies based on cutting taxes and public spending and deregulating labour markets (Scharpf 2002, 2010). Serbia's further integration is therefore likely to intensify the pressures for deeper neoliberalisation.

These transformations benefited liberal civil society in a number of ways. First, foreign donors, in an effort to consolidate the achievements of the regime change and lock in the new policy consensus, pumped vast amounts of aid into the country. According to OECD data, non-refundable multilateral and bilateral grants in 2000–11 equalled $12.2bn in current prices (OECD n.d.). More modest estimates talk about €4.3bn (Ćurković & Mijačić 2012: 1). It is not known how much of this aid was absorbed by NGOs, but the rapid expansion of the sector in the early 2000s is telling. From 2000 to June 2006, about 8,500 NGOs were founded in Serbia and Montenegro (Paunović 2006: 49), of which I would estimate some 80–90% were in Serbia. More resources must have been available also for NGOs that had been established already in the 1990s.

Second, the arrival of the opposition to power made it much easier for civil society leaders, activists and workers to switch to politics and/or the public sector. Such 'boundary crossing' might have been 'consecutive' (consisting of a single move) but probably more often 'extensive' – individuals extended their activities and networks to the state while maintaining their original base (Lewis 2008a: 126). This has been justified by the state's needs for specialist expertise and sophisticated human resources (Vetta 2009, 2012). The typical destinations of former NGO workers were various line ministries, like social affairs and education, and some newly created institutions and agencies. I encountered critiques within NGO circles of particular individuals considered to be overly motivated by power and money in their pursuance of state carriers. Some NGO workers proudly told me that unlike many of their colleagues, they did not see their NGO jobs as an 'elevator' to the state or politics.

Third, there were also cases of boundary crossing by entire organisations, especially in the early 2000s. Otpor transformed into a political party but merged with the Democratic Party after a debacle in the 2003 elections. Even then, scores of Otpor leaders and activists went into politics and/or civil service (Miladinović 2010). In 2002, G17 Plus, an NGO of economists which had built its credentials by formulating alternative economic policies in the Milošević era, morphed into a party with considerably more success than Otpor. It has managed to control important line ministries in nearly every government ever since, usually economy or finance-related.

Fourth, the regime change made state institutions more willing to fund and cooperate with NGOs, although NGO workers often argued that much of the public sector was still 'closed' to cooperation due to the lingering stereotype of NGOs as trouble-makers, a failure to recognise their values and importance, or a lack of democratic outlook. Even then, state funding has become increasingly important for NGOs as foreign funding started to peter out in the second half of the 2000s. As we will see, neoliberalisation and transnational integration promoted the expansion of such collaborative relationships at the time of my fieldwork. In turn, liberal civil society was supportive of the two hegemonic tendencies.

Nevertheless, the changing relationship of liberal civil society with the state was also a source of significant threats for the former. First, the rapprochement undermined its identity as autonomous and critical of the state. One way in which NGO workers often put it was along the lines of 'we used to be *against* something [Milošević] so we're struggling to find our place now that that something has gone.' This loss of negative unity occasioned much soul-searching and discussion of the acceptability of

cooperation. As we saw, liberal civil society as a whole continued to join the chorus of voices criticising the depth of reforms. However, various emphases in this critique gradually emerged. On the one hand, a group of influential, especially human rights-focused NGOs established in the 1990s remained highly critical of post-Milošević governments due to their, as they saw it, imperfect break with Serbia's nationalist past. By the time of my fieldwork, this group was losing ground as most NGO people argued for the desirability of what they presented as technical and pragmatic cooperation with the state. Some claimed that these autonomist NGOs were 'stuck in the 1990s' and even harmed the image of civil society by their obsession with anti-nationalism and the past. On the other hand, many saw cooperation as morally problematic due to the continued prevalence of corruption and clientelism in the state. It was argued that the rapprochement and reliance on state funding reduced civil society's watchdog potential. Others said that civil society went from one dependence to another, and as a result remained preoccupied with 'lounge' (*salonski*) themes at the expense of a closer engagement with its supposed beneficiaries – the citizens. Nevertheless, nearly all organisations accepted some forms of cooperation which they defined as pragmatic, as opposed to what would have been political involvement.

Second, the fact that individual boundary crossing was often party-mediated signalled that civil society, despite its criticism of the 'partocratic' system, was not immune to it. NGO people often joined or became 'close' to ruling parties as a result of which they obtained state jobs. Some individuals became active in politics without joining public administration. The parties in question were, as a rule, those of the 'civil' orientation: the Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, G17 Plus, and a host of smaller parties.

Third, the non-partisan self-image of civil society was also threatened by boundary crossing in the opposite direction, illustrated by the case of the CDF. It conforms to the pattern of politicians establishing NGOs as transitional or permanent instruments of doing politics by other means. Two other cases in the mid-2000s concerned two former Democrats who had so responded to their marginalisation in the party. There was also much talk at the time of my fieldwork about local-level 'party NGOs.' The media published a letter in which the Democrat youth organisation in Vojvodina instructed its local chapters to establish their own NGOs (Tomić 2011). At least 16 such NGOs have been indeed founded across Vojvodina and received funding from the Democrat-controlled provincial government and municipalities. Allegedly, this was really just the tip of the iceberg and most parties had their 'satellite NGOs' (Valtner

2011). The leaders in this discipline were deemed to be the Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and G17 Plus, but I also heard about satellite NGOs of the Democratic Party of Serbia and the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina. One of my close informants suggested that party NGOs started to mushroom especially after the 2009 Law on Associations had liberalised the process of founding an association. Through these NGOs, parties were thought to funnel public funds earmarked for civil society to 'their' people. These were cases of the integration of the NGO organisational form into the 'partocratic' system. Naturally, such publicity did little to improve the low standing of NGOs with many citizens.

The problematic rapprochement with the state might have contributed to the conspicuous emphasis that many in liberal civil society came to lay on their own technocratic competence, rather than the vilified 'partocratic' linkages, as a basis for their legitimate access to the state and its resources, including jobs and funding (see pp. 107–9, 156–7). This technocratic/'partocratic' dichotomy became an important discursive device with which liberal civil society attempted to redefine its identity, as well as the identity of its enemies, in the new post-2000 context. With most politicians now paying lip service to the agendas for which civil society was fighting in the 1990s, civil society increasingly shifted the focus of its critique from ideology to morality. It invoked the corrupt ways of the 'partocratic' elites and their clients to put in doubt their sincere commitment to the reformist agendas, while at the same time reinventing its own continued *raison d'être* in terms of a preoccupation with 'efficiency' and 'transparency' of the state's functioning (Part II).

Chapter outline

The rest of this thesis is divided into three thematic parts, each of which contains two chapters. Part I examines the contrasting relationships of nationalist and liberal civil societies to the hegemonic project of neoliberal transnational integration. Chapter 1 shows that liberal civil society helped build the cultural hegemony of EU integration by either actively reproducing or failing to challenge the government's narrative about 'Europeanisation' as the only possible path to modernity. This is because the same ideational frames of Balkanism and 'transition' underpin both this 'myth of modernisation' and the identity of liberal civil society. Moreover, civil society is increasingly materially dependent on the EU, which imposes further constraints on its autonomy vis-à-vis integration. Finally, the growing availability of EU funding and the

expanding scope of EU-related reforms stimulate demand for NGO workers in public administration and promote their active participation in the hegemonic project.

Chapter 2 shifts from 'Europeanisation' to a competing kind of mythology articulated by nationalist organisations and movements in the context of their struggles against the Belgrade Pride Parade. The Parade became the nationalists' entry-point for a populist articulation of the universal suffering of the nation caused by transnationalisation and neoliberalisation, and for mobilising popular support for their own counter-hegemonic project of ethnonational sovereignty and autonomy. The nationalist mythology called for a return to the spirit of medieval and early modern Serbian states idealised as harmonious, holy and sovereign polities of the nation. The Serbian Orthodox Church was to reclaim its authority to govern society while the nation was to regain its mythical unity in a holistic social order based on neotraditional forms of inequality. The Parade provided a framework for struggles over public space between the nationalists and their supporters (including the Church) and the alliance of liberal civil society with the state keen to consolidate its 'Europeanising' self-representation. While the nationalists challenged the sovereignty of the state in this context, their simultaneous efforts to enter institutional politics ultimately normalised state power.

Part II focuses on the recent interventions that sought to reform the 'interface' of the state and civil society: the ideological discourses, legal and institutional frameworks, and governmental technologies structuring their relationships and interactions. These reforms are also analysed as part of a larger effort to reinvent the state. Chapter 3 analyses the discourse and practice of state-civil society 'partnerships' which involve civil society in the performance of state functions. Continuing the theme of Part I, I first document that the agenda of partnerships was part of the hegemonic project of 'Europeanisation.' It was discursively and institutionally framed by EU integration and supported by the EU and other foreign donors, giving rise to hybrid (state/NGO) institutions that owed their allegiance to these actors and implemented their agendas. I then show that reforms *through* the interface – by expanding partnerships – sought to reform the state in line with the neoliberal critique and optimisation of government. Accordingly, reforms *of* the interface introduced a range of governmental technologies to subject partnerships to the norms of 'efficiency,' competition and 'transparency.' I argue that the group of influential NGOs that advocated for these reforms pursued political agendas related not to neoliberalism but rather access to public funding for which liberal NGOs had to compete with their nationalist and 'partocratic' adversaries. I further show that the reform advocates were part of a small group of organisations and

individuals who consistently dominated, in an informal and personalistic manner, recent instances of cooperation between the central state and civil society, thus themselves failing to meet the criteria of formalised competition and transparency.

Chapter 4 develops the themes of Chapter 3 in the context of 'traditional' associations of disabled people whose continuities with associational practices and the governance of disability in socialist Yugoslavia mark them as a 'post-Yugoslav' kind of civil society. The focus is on how these associations became objects of the double kind of reforms at the state-civil society interface. Reforms *through* the interface sought to involve them in the performance of state functions, especially provision of social services. However, their practices and the way the state funded them were found to be lacking in 'efficiency' and 'transparency.' This led to reforms *of* the interface that introduced the same governmental technologies as in Chapter 3. I again describe the uneven achievements of these reforms. I further show that a group of NGOs joined state bodies in the critique of 'traditional' associations – apart from the reform advocates from Chapter 3, these were 'modern' disability NGOs. They stigmatised the 'traditionalists' as prone to misusing public funds and lagging behind both the contemporary manner of work and the ideological shift to a 'rights-based' disability policy. I argue that these stereotypes glossed over a more complex range of articulations between socialist legacies and current exigencies, and served as an instrument in the political struggle between the two kinds of disability organisations. I also conduct a critical analysis of the new disability policy and the reasons why 'traditional' associations mobilised for the preservation of a 'paternalist' welfare system.

Part III shifts the focus from reforms of the central state to localised interventions of liberal civil society. Chapter 5 examines the discourse and practice of 'public advocacy' – a form of NGO intervention that aims at achieving policy changes in public interest and, in the long run, democratising local governance through the involvement of 'community.' However, I show that advocacy training sessions led the advocating NGOs to focus their attention on local formal institutions rather than 'community.' I juxtapose this understanding of local politics with actually existing politics in Vršac, a town where a BCIF-supported advocacy campaign was implemented. Local politics there was dominated by informal relationships that displayed a great deal of continuity with the Milošević period. I show how this intervention context transformed the blueprints of advocacy. To achieve a breakthrough in the local political stalemate, the NGO workers activated their own network of informal relationships and brokered between partisan, state and NGO actors in and out of Vršac. This required a degree of

accommodation to the 'partocratic' system and its clientelistic logic. However, the alliances that the activists made were not purely pragmatic but shaped by the political identity of liberal civil society and the larger history of local sociopolitical struggles.

Chapter 6 argues that this identity, together with a 'social gap' between the predominantly middle-class NGO sphere and the wider society, gave rise to suspicions that NGOs were 'anti-Serbian' and self-serving. This hampered their recent efforts to move from the financial dependence on foreign donors to a reliance on domestic individual and corporate donors. The chapter analyses a set of BCIF's activities with this aim, including advocacy for tax law amendments that were part of the reforms from Chapter 3. I argue that these proposals articulated a neoliberal vision of provision of public goods and services in which the role of the state is reduced at the expense of private-sector actors connected by 'market-like' relationships. The main focus is on BCIF's programmes teaching NGOs to fundraise from businesses and individuals in their local 'communities.' The key challenge was to overcome the suspicions toward NGOs. I show that BCIF found the solution in a *rational* approach to philanthropy, including procedures meant to ensure 'transparency.' However, actual fundraising campaigns incorporated elements of a more 'traditional' and emotional style of philanthropy that BCIF rejected. These also crept into BCIF's own efforts to popularise individual and corporate philanthropy. I argue that this use of emotional and moral appeals is an organic part of a new, neoliberal 'culture of giving.' Finally, I highlight the ways in which the fundraising NGO workers sought to make liberal civil society more indigenous, loyal and popular. I argue that these strategies reveal the nature of the political and social divide between NGOs and the national society as well as the possibilities of transforming this relationship.

Part I:

Civil societies and transnational integration

Chapter 1:
Liberal civil society and the hegemonic project of 'Europeanisation'

In April 2011, the whole team of BCIF spent four days in a Belgrade hotel developing their strategic plan for the next five years. At the close of the first day, they analysed political, economic, social and technological 'forces' that might impact on the organisation's ability to pursue its mission. Several people argued that EU integration is a positive 'force' that opens up space for BCIF to pressurise the government and participate in policy-making. Some hoped that the EU would eventually enable re-granting. Since large EU funds earmarked for re-granting in Romania and Bulgaria had been embezzled in the late 1990s, the Union was refusing to support the practice, which prevented foundations like BCIF from redistributing EU money to smaller organisations.

Yet just a few hours earlier when we split into groups to draft the organisation's 'vision,' Davor, a member of my group, wondered whether we should refer to the EU. 'Serbia might become a member, but what kind of EU it will be by then?' he asked rhetorically. He added that France and Italy now want to 'cancel the Schengen Agreement,' implying that such a Union might not be all that desirable. We decided not to mention it. Another group did, and wrote that Serbia should become an 'equal and respected member of the EU.' But Ratko who presented the draft commented: 'We were in a bit of a doubt here... I mean, there's no doubt that it *won't* be a respected member.' This provoked a spate of cynicism: 'And frankly, not equal either.' 'And what about a member?' 'Well, we thought about it as a utopia,' Slavica, member of Ratko's group, said with a grin.

The argument that integration was something from which BCIF could benefit was not unfounded. Post-Milošević governments tended to see civil society as inherently supportive of integration and potentially useful in advancing it. PM Đinđić noted in a 2002 speech that NGOs were important for building a broad support for a 'modern system and a European Serbia' (Đinđić 2007: 12). In 2005, the government's European Integration Office and a group of thirty NGOs signed a *Memorandum on Cooperation in the European Integration Process*, which stated that the parties would 'cooperate in organising activities whose goal is to promote European values and the European integration process' (Kancelarija... 2005a, 2005b). The 2011 strategy of presenting integration to the public likewise expected 'organisations of civil society' to participate in 'communication activities' and provide 'constructive criticism' of reforms

undertaken on the 'path to the EU' (Government... 2011b: 13). These policies clearly articulate an intention to use civil society as an instrument for building consent to the hegemonic project.

All of this would seem to confirm that liberal civil society was the same clearly 'pro-European' social force it had been in the 1990s as well as in 2000 when it allied with the opposition in order to initiate Serbia's 'return to Europe.' However, the discussions at the BCIF's strategic planning suggested that the issue was surrounded with tensions and ambiguities that are typically glossed over. So why did BCIF workers adopt a positive stance on integration despite their doubts and reservations? To answer this question, this chapter interrogates the relationship between liberal civil society and integration at several different levels.

The first section interprets the hegemonic narrative of 'Europeanisation' under the 2008–12 government as a 'myth' of modernisation that derives its truth-value from the deeply entrenched ideational frames of 'transition' and Balkanism. Since these frames also inform the identity of 'civil society,' they may impose cognitive limits on the ability to question 'Europeanisation' in those inhabiting that identity. The second section discusses an ethnographic case of the Slovak-Serbian EU Enlargement Fund that explicitly aimed at harnessing liberal civil society for the hegemonic project of integration. The formation of the project network followed the pattern established in the late 1990s when the Slovak government and NGO activists exported their experiences from Slovakia's 'electoral revolution' to the anti-Milošević opposition and its allies in 'civil society.' The project thus connected pro-EU elite coalitions in both countries, extending across the porous boundaries between government, political parties, and 'civil society.' Though the project supported Serbian NGO workers and journalists to 'transfer' Slovakia's integration know-how, their visits to Slovakia, ironically, led some of them to *question* the modernising impact of integration.

The analysis of interview data in the third section shows how many NGO workers argued that integration had so far brought Serbia little in the way of modernisation, but nonetheless, rather than doubting the idea overall, continued to call for a 'genuine' Europeanisation. This kind of 'constructive criticism' further reinforced the hegemonic project. Nevertheless, a number of my interlocutors did question and reject its key assumptions. And yet such commentary was extremely unlikely to be voiced in the public sphere, where it might have challenged the hegemonic project from progressive, democratic and cosmopolitan positions, and was instead confined to private and informal situations.

To understand why, the fourth section proceeds to examine the EU's place in the political economy of liberal civil society. Advancing integration was assumed to stimulate donor flight from Serbia, which made NGOs increasingly dependent on EU funding. Furthermore, the EU promoted the expansion of state-civil society 'partnerships.' Importantly, these economic and political opportunities were largely accessible only to well-established organisations like BCIF that stood a better chance to shape public discourse about the EU than those NGOs unlikely to get EU grants or cooperate with the government. Finally, integration and the associated reforms also offered career opportunities for individual NGO workers. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the balance of all these ideological, discursive, political, social and material conditions was conducive to the active participation or at least passive consent of liberal civil society to the project of 'Europeanisation.' Whether it acted as a *comprador* bourgeoisie or a 'constructive critic,' it helped reproduce the ideological and cultural hegemony of neoliberal transnational integration as the only imaginable path to modernity.

'Europeanisation' as a myth of modernisation in the transitional Balkans

At the time of my fieldwork, the discourses of Serbian politicians, media and NGOs overflowed with references to 'Europe' equated with the EU and 'Europeanisation' equated with EU integration. On Serbia's 'path to Europe' (*put u Evropu*), the daily subject was not just the mundane whens and hows of EU integration, but also how 'European values' – typically unspecified, but clearly superior – were being, or failing to be, promoted, introduced, accepted, and adopted. RTS, the state TV, branded itself as the 'public service of a European Serbia'. Obviously, there would be hardly any need for all of this if the Europeanness of Serbia could be taken for granted. Rather, it was meant to signal that it was just becoming or, more precisely, *being made* European.

While EU integration had been a key foreign-policy goal since 2000, this narrative of European Serbia assumed a truly hegemonic status with the victory of the 'For a European Serbia' coalition, led by the Democratic Party (DP), in the May 2008 parliamentary elections. With billboards claiming that 'Europe means jobs for 200,000 unemployed' or 'Europe means a safe future,' the coalition clearly made EU integration the centrepiece of its programme, in contrast to the anti-EU stance of its main contender, the Serbian Radical Party. Accordingly, the elections were interpreted both at home and abroad as a historical choice between 'pro-European' and 'nationalist'

forces (Pond 2009). The same applied to presidential elections a few months earlier which resulted in the re-election of Boris Tadić, the DP leader and, by a general consensus, the true head of the DP-led government of 2008–2012. The Democrats' signature catchphrase became the categorical statement that 'There is no alternative to Europe/EU' (*Evropa nema alternativu*) which they repeated in the run-up to the elections and later (*Istinomer* 2011). It resonated so strongly that an informal group which organised several protests against Serbia's slow progress toward the EU called itself the There Is No Alternative to Europe Movement, and two opposition leaders Vojislav Koštunica and Tomislav Nikolić felt compelled to jointly declare that 'There *is* an alternative to Europe,' though they failed to clarify what it was (Milenković 2010).

The government did not stop at rhetoric and pursued EU membership more energetically than its predecessors. During its incumbency, three major Serbian war-crime suspects were arrested and extradited to the ICTY, which had long been a key precondition for any advance in the process of integration. In September 2008, the parliament ratified the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the Interim Agreement (IA) with the EU, signed a half year earlier. Serbia started unilaterally to implement the IA from the beginning of 2009, thus partially liberalising its trade with the EU. In December 2009, the EU also started to implement the IA and abolished visas for Serbian nationals traveling to the Schengen Area. Serbia officially applied for membership in the same month. In October 2011, the European Commission recommended that Serbia be granted the status of a 'candidate,' which the European Council did in March 2012. In 2008–12, more than 800 new laws and other norms were adopted or amended in order to meet the EU 'recommendations' and harmonise the Serbian legal system with EU law (SEIO 2012b). And although the accession talks had not even begun, the EU was already stimulating and supporting institutional transformations of the state.

Addressing the nation, the politicians typically emphasised, in rather vague terms, the supposed economic benefits of integration in common interest – EU funds, jobs, FDIs. Nevertheless, they often identified it also with a reform of the state and society as such. Policy circles interpreted the process, to use a formulation I repeatedly heard at the government's Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, as the 'engine of reform.' *Serbia 2020,* a policy paper which defined developmental goals to be reached by 2020, was modelled after the *Europe 2020* strategy 'so as to secure a complete coordination of socio-economic and political goals of the country with the process of acceding to the [EU]' (Government... 2010b: 1). At a DP conference in 2011, President Tadić equated

EU integration to a 'project of the modernisation of Serbia' (*Press Online* 2011). The 'European Integration' section of the parliament's website read:

> The road to EU is seen as a road to a more modern society, a stable democracy with a developed economy, while political and economic requirements set by the European Union – since they coincide with preconditions for a successful political and economic transformation – are viewed as means instead of an end to development (National Assembly... n.d.).

My analysis of this narrative starts from the anthropological recognition that policies contain implicit or explicit articulations of models of society and are, in that sense, akin to 'myths' (Shore & Wright 1997: 7). This metaphor is useful precisely because of the double sense of the term myth. In the popular understanding, it is a false or factually inaccurate account of things that has nevertheless come to be believed, while anthropologists stress its social function of a cosmological blueprint which sets categories and meanings for the interpretation of experience (Ferguson 1999: 13–4). Following the first of these meanings, the policy of Europeanisation was hegemonically interpreted as a unilinear and teleological societal movement toward the preconceived ('European') model of affluent, advanced and better-governed society, and was thus a classic modernisation myth. As I will show, many of my research participants saw it as empirically false and yet ideally truthful, in line with the second approach. The reason for this must be sought in the way it plays on and perpetuates some deeply ingrained ideational frames.

The dominant representation of Serbia in the 2000s was one of a 'transitional' country in at least three different senses – it was 'post-conflict,' 'post-authoritarian,' and 'postsocialist.' Here as elsewhere in postsocialist Europe, the grand explanatory scheme of 'transition' served to instil the teleological and evolutionist idea of a predetermined movement toward a single destination: Western-style free-market capitalism and liberal democracy. As we saw in the introduction, the political and economic transformations in Milošević's Serbia deviated significantly from these assumptions. The transitological way of thinking about these processes led to their revealing, if misleading, labelling as 'blocked transition' (Bolcic 2003) or 'blocked transformation' (Lazić 2011). The ruin to which the country was brought by 2000 lent additional weight to the 'obvious' conclusion: that after the regime change, the only progressive option was to embark on the familiar path of 'transition,' if a 'belated' one (*zakasnela tranzicija*) (Vuletić, Stanojević & Vukelić 2011). This was represented as

inevitably entailing political and economic integration with 'Europe' and the mimesis of its institutional, legal, social, and moral models.

Even before the 1990s, a similar equation of 'Europeanisation' with modernisation proved appealing in peripheral Southern European countries such as Greece (Featherstone 1998) and Italy (Giuliani 1999) where it helped secure a broad societal support for EU membership. Similar ideational dynamics were more recently replicated in the ten postsocialist Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Here, the transition framing was coupled with the established 'Orientalist discourse that assumes an essential difference between Europe and Eastern Europe, and frames difference from Western Europe as a distance from, and a lack of, Europeanness' (Kuus 2004: 474; see also Wolff 1994). The (self-)representation of these countries has been and continues to be that of diligent disciples – still requiring much tuition – of Western European norms.

At the time of writing, the EU's most likely next expansion is to the region of 'Western Balkans' – a label it has itself invented for the former Yugoslavia (minus Slovenia, plus Albania). The hegemonic discourse on the Europeanisation of the region rehearses the familiar themes. In much academic writing, the EU is portrayed as acting benevolently as a 'magnet and source of inspiration' for these countries' 'efforts to build modern states and societies' (Bechev 2006: 23; see also Anastasakis 2005). However, specific to the Europeanisation discourse in this region is how this process is often contrasted with, and portrayed as superseding, the previous stage of 'Balkanisation' which is made to refer to the violent and authoritarian nation-state building that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s (e.g. Fotev 2004; Jano 2008). This kind of framing clearly derives its self-evident truth-value from the deeply entrenched discourse of Balkanism that marks these former Ottoman territories as Europe's Orient – backward, irrational, violent. Balkanism has shaped the self-understanding of Balkan peoples themselves and the hierarchical dichotomy of Europe/Balkans has been reproduced on an ever-smaller scale between and within Balkan societies (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Bakić-Hayden & Hayden 1992; Boškovic 2005; Todorova 2009).

Serbia has not escaped the influence of Balkanism (Živković 2011: 42–93). As the modern Serbian nation-state was forming and gradually achieving independence in the 19th century, its position changed from one of a border province of the Ottoman Empire to the rural periphery of industrialised Europe. 'Europe' (meaning Western and Central Europe) served as the constant frame of reference against which Serbs calibrated their

own (lack of) economic, political, institutional, technological and cultural progress, and the model after which they sought to advance their laws, institutions, way of life and material culture (Daskalov 1997; Stojanović 2003, 2008; Stokes 1990: 25–6, 162–6). The habitus of self-scrutiny through the 'European gaze' sat uneasily with the Romantic celebration of the Serbian authentic and unique way of being (van de Port 1998: 83–6). This ambivalent relationship with 'Europe' or the 'West,' which informs the ways Serbs think and talk about themselves (van de Port 1999; Volčič 2005), came to the fore in the 1990s with the resurgence of nationalism and neotraditionalism. It became one of the organising elements of the ideological dichotomy of 'two Serbias' (see p. 69) according to which the First Serbia looks up to Russia while the Other Serbia to 'Europe.' Those identifying as the Other Serbia (a group closely overlapping with 'civil society'), as well as many foreign commentators, interpreted the wars and nationalism as the return of Balkan primitivism, thus Orientalising their opponents and the Milošević regime.[20] They discussed the events 'as if they felt constantly under European scrutiny and had to justify their actions to Europe' (van de Port 1998: 74) and expressed disappointment that 'Europe' did not intervene against Milošević (Jansen 2000: 402).

As for everyday discourse, anthropologists working in Serbia and other post-Yugoslav countries documented how many talked about their expectations of 'normal' life in terms of a 'return to Europe' or used other similar metaphors of collective movement. Greenberg argued that the student activists she worked with in the early 2000s saw Serbia's EU membership 'as a mechanism to circulate the entire country into Europe through a collective relocation that promises normalcy (...) on a national scale' (2007: 99; see also Greenberg 2011). Jansen (2009, 2012) made similar observations in BiH and Serbia. Both emphasised that 'Europe' was associated especially with 'normalcy.' Opinion polls conducted in late 2011 showed that the most common positive associations with the EU – 'more employment opportunities' and 'path to a better future for young people' – were indeed related to better life (SEIO 2012a).

Finally, the dominant emic understanding of 'civil society' (and the closely related Other Serbia) as a 'pro-European' force has remained stable despite the post-2000 expansion and diversification of the NGO world it described. Several factors contributed to this, including the aforementioned government discourse. As the case of the There Is No Alternative to Europe Movement illustrates, liberal civil society itself

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[20] Internationally, Serbs tend to be seen as particularly responsible and even 'collectively guilty' for the Yugoslav wars (Clark 2008). As a result, they ended up being more 'Balkanised' than the other belligerents.

occasionally engaged in acts of outright veneration of the integration policy. Since 2000, the European Movement in Serbia (EMinS), a well-endowed pro-EU NGO close to the government, and another NGO called the First European House Čukarica, have been awarding an annual 'Greatest European of the Year' prize for 'strenuous and successful work oriented to a faster and more comprehensive integration of our country to Europe' (EMinS n.d.). A number of politicians, typically Democrats, received the award.[21] Even the domestic adversaries of liberal civil society and the Other Serbia helped reproduce this homogenising ideology (Antonić 2007, 2008; Kalik 2008; Radojičić 2006). Antonić (2007), for instance, accused these 'Euro-Serbs' of an uncritical admiration and unbridled submissiveness in relation to the EU (even at the expense of Serbian national interests) combined with a disdain for 'ordinary Serbs' whom they considered primitive and uncivilised. While these authors have primarily targeted the Other-Serbian elites and their friendly Liberal Democratic Party, they occasionally did not hesitate to take the next step toward generalising about the 'globalism[22] of our civil society' (Lalić 2011) or ironically branding the 'civilist (*građanistički*) NGO sector' as one of the 'self-declared "European forces"'(Antonić 2011). The next section examines a project based precisely on such assumptions about Serbian 'civil society.'

Slovak-Serbian EU Enlargement Fund: limits of 'transfer of experiences'

Despite the title, the Slovak-Serbian EU Enlargement Fund was actually a one-off project implemented in 2009–11 and worth about €100,000 (Pontis n.d.). The Pontis Foundation, one of the leading Slovak NGOs, developed the project in 2009 and successfully applied for most of the funding from the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SlovakAid). It then approached the Centre for Democracy Foundation (CDF) to act as a project partner, tasked with administering more mundane aspects of implementation in Serbia. The aim of the project was to

[21] EMinS pulled out of the project in 2008, explaining that it was impossible to agree with the First European House on 'clear rules, procedures and structure of organs which choose the awardees' (EMinS 2008). However, the other organisation continued to award the prizes, including to a number of (mostly Democrat) ministers.

[22] The original uses the word *mundijalizam*, which (together with the more common *mondijalizam*) is a nationalist pejorative term (Klajn 2001: 103). The ideology of 'civil society' was being described as *mondijalizam* already in the 1990s (Kostovicova 2006: 28).

> support at least 12 Serbian domestic experts, journalists and researchers from the younger generation (up to 35 years old) with the aim of rejuvenating and reviving the [nongovernmental] sector in its goal of disseminating arguments *examining the benefits* of EU membership for Serbia (Pontis n.d., emphasis added).

Thus, a pro-EU bias and an assumption that Serbian NGOs share such a bias were built into the project's concept. The stated aim was to be achieved by supporting competitively chosen grantees to write case studies – either a policy paper or five magazine articles – on various aspects of Serbia's integration, building on the relevant 'experiences of Slovakia.' While the calls for grant applications specified that the purpose was 'research and analysis of the Slovak experience (positive and negative),' it also left no doubts that the 'general goal of the project is Serbia's progress toward the EU' (CDF 2010). With this assumption that the desirability of integration is a non-issue, the project is a further example of the conscious mobilisation of the NGO sector for building ideological hegemony.

In January and August 2010, there were two calls for applications which the CDF published on its website and sent to people and organisations it deemed likely to apply. Each call defined four topics of expected outputs. Eligible to apply were Serbian citizens up to 35 years old and NGOs, universities, research institutes and media registered in Serbia; in the latter case, the 'main researcher' had to be younger than 35. NGOs were by far the most common kind of applicant and grantee in both calls. Grantees were chosen by the five-member Evaluation Board with representatives of Pontis, CDF, the Serbian NGO International and Security Affairs Centre (see below), the Slovak Foreign Ministry, and the Serbian European Integration Office. After the decision, one-day trainings for grantees were held in Belgrade. Pontis representatives covered topics such as EU integration, public outreach, and policy-paper writing. Grantees then had about three months to write their papers. In most cases, they travelled to Slovakia to interview people in various government bodies, research institutes, and civil society organisations. Their English-language papers were published on the Pontis website and disseminated, through the media and grantees' own social networks, to expert audiences in Serbia. The best grantees in each call were rewarded with the trips to Brussels. The project was concluded by a final conference in May 2011 in Belgrade, which was actually a special session of the Democratic Political Forum, CDF's debate series (see p. 25). The modalities of my intensive engagement with the project from September 2010, when the second call for applications had just gone out, until its completion, are described in the introduction (pp. 56–7).

The project was the most recent instantiation of more than a decade of Slovak support for regime change and reform in Serbia. To understand the role of 'civil society' in this relationship, political struggles in the 1990s Slovakia must be brought into the analysis. Under the semi-authoritarian rule of Vladimír Mečiar, Slovakia had been 'lagging behind' its postsocialist neighbours in economic transformation as well as integration into the EU and NATO. A turnaround in foreign policy came after Mečiar's defeat in the 1998 parliamentary elections that brought a pro-EU and pro-Western right-wing coalition to the government. An abundant literature documents the key role of 'civil society' in this shift. Supported by foreign donors and working closely with the opposition, NGOs conducted a massive 'pro-election' campaign to mobilise people to vote 'for change,' and developed mechanisms to ensure the elections would be fair and free. This strategy pioneered in Slovakia has been since dubbed the 'electoral model of democratisation' or 'electoral revolution' (Arias-King 2007a; Bunce & Wolchik 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2011). In the space of a few years, some of the same tactics (typically combined with mass street protests) have been replicated in Croatia, Serbia, Moldova and the 'Colour Revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The spread of the model was underpinned by, as the practitioners call it, 'transfer of knowledge' or 'transfer of experiences' – while Slovak activists trained Croats and Serbs, the Serbian leaders of Otpor travelled to Georgia and Ukraine (Naumovic 2006: 190–1). This idea also informed the Slovak-Serbian project.

The leaders of Serbian NGOs which organised the *Izlaz 2000* (Exit 2000) pro-election campaign, such as Miljenko Dereta, co-founder and long-time Executive Director of Civil Initiatives, one of the leading Serbian NGOs, or Nataša Vučković of the CDF, told me about frequent contacts with Slovak activists in 1998–2000 (see also Arias-King 2007a, 2007b; Minić & Dereta 2007: 85–7; Paunović *et al.* 2001: 9–13). Without intending to overestimate their significance for the eventual outcome in October 2000, these conferences, workshops, informal trainings and translations of reports on 'Slovak experiences' provided at the very least an inspiration and know-how. Working closely with Slovak NGOs, the first post-Mečiar government of PM Mikuláš Dzurinda also got involved. Jointly with the US-based East West Institute, the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) launched the so-called Bratislava Process in July 1999. This was a series of meetings in the Slovak capital, Strasbourg and Belgrade in 1999–2000 which brought together Serbian opposition leaders, NGOs, unions, student organisations and independent media, and mediated between them and the 'international community' (multilateral organisations and various international donors) (Mathews

2001: 12–3; Minić & Dereta 2007: 89; Mojžita 2003: 112, 122–3, 144). Such mediation might have had an important financial aspect since funding the opposition via NGOs was used as a way around the Serbian legal ban on foreign funding of political parties.

After the ousting of Milošević, Serbia became one of the biggest beneficiaries of Slovak official development assistance (ODA). Slovakia's first medium-term ODA strategy for 2003–08 defined the then State Union of Serbia and Montenegro as the only top-priority country (MFA 2003b). The 2009–13 strategy reconfirmed Serbia as one of three top-priority countries (MFA 2009b). Peter Michalko, Director of the Department for Southeast European States at the MFA, told me that Serbia was also one of the priority targets of the Centre for the Transfer of Experiences with Integration and Reforms, an on-demand mechanism of intergovernmental knowledge transfers started by the Ministry and SlovakAid in 2011. This focus was explained by 'friendly ties' between the two countries, the presence of a Slovak minority in Vojvodina, the similarity of recent transition to 'full democracy,' and the recent history of Slovak humanitarian aid and NGO activities in Serbia (MFA 2003a: 3). Slovakia took it upon itself to teach Serbia about 'developing a market economy,' 'reforming the public sector' and, indeed, becoming a EU member (MFA 2003a: 14–6). These efforts were to be coordinated with the EU and EU experts stationed in Belgrade (MFA 2003a: 19). The 2009 National Programme of ODA, the year when Pontis received SlovakAid funding for the project, reiterated that transfers of experiences to Serbia involved a focus on EU integration (MFA 2009a: 11).[23]

Thus, Slovakia's aid for Serbia was clearly linked to its EU membership, and the preoccupation with 'transferring' integration know-how articulated its bid for international relevance. The historical, ethnic and linguistic ties and similarities evoked by Slovak policy documents (MFA 2003a: 6) seemed to make Serbia a particularly promising student of Slovak transitional lessons. With such mediating activities toward Serbia and other postsocialist states in the EU's neighbourhood, Slovakia, acting as an autonomous but loyal arm of the EU, hoped to raise its profile with both the Union and these countries. The present case further illustrates how relationships forged between and within the two countries in the 1990s continued to be activated for such endeavours. The project network connected members of national pro-EU and pro-Western coalitions – people who often straddled or circulated between government and NGO positions and co-operated with like-minded individuals across both spheres (see Lewis 2008a, 2008b).

[23] In the indicative ODA budget for that year, Serbia received by far the biggest allocation of all priority countries – €1.6m out of the total of €7.56m.

Pontis started as the Slovak branch of the US-based Foundation for a Civil Society founded by Wendy Luers, the wife of an American ambassador to Czechoslovakia in the 1980s.[24] The branch became independent in 1997 and changed its name to Pontis in 2001. In the Mečiar period, it distributed more than $3m of US funding to Slovak NGOs (Bunce & Wolchik 2011: 75). It was a member of the NGO coalition that coordinated the 1998 pro-election campaign. Its activist Marek Kapusta directed the campaign's youth-oriented prong (Bunce & Wolchik 2011: 68, 362). In the aftermath of the 'electoral revolution,' Pontis became engaged in transfers of experiences to Serbia. Kapusta travelled some dozen times to Serbia to train Otpor leaders (Arias-King 2007a: 44; Jennings 2009: 16–7) while Pontis participated in the Bratislava Process (Vladár 2010: 56). As the Serbian NGO leaders of that period told me, actively involved in these Slovak activities toward Serbia were also members of the first post-Mečiar government, such as the Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan and the Director of the Foreign Minister's Cabinet Miroslav Lajčák.

Pontis continued to work in Serbia in the 2000s. Serbia was one of the target countries, along the likes of Belarus and Cuba, of its programme called Democratisation and Development Abroad. Pontis projects in Serbia often focused on 'transferring experiences' with EU integration (Pontis 2006: 17, 2007: 12, 2009: 28) and were closely coordinated with government policies. Several were funded by SlovakAid, a branch of the MFA (Pontis 2005: 38, 2006: 17). In 2003, Pontis even helped draft the government strategy of ODA for Serbia (Pontis 2004: 13). But the relationship between Pontis and the government was apparently more than purely institutional. Precisely in 2003, Milan Ježovica, adviser of PM Dzurinda, was a member of the Advisory Committee for the NGO's Democratisation programme (Pontis 2004: 14, 2005: 47). In turn, Milan Nič, Pontis Programme Director for most of the 2000s, went to serve in 2010–12 as an adviser to the State Secretary at the MFA who was then – Ježovica (CEPI n.d.). Nič's appointment at the Ministry coincided with the remarkable success of all seven Pontis applications for SlovakAid funding in 2011 (Kováč 2011). At that point, the government was again led by the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS), the right-wing party that formed the backbone of the two post-Mečiar governments in 1998–2006. Dzurinda, the party's leader and former PM, served as the Foreign Minister and personally appointed Ježovica, a SDKÚ-DS member.

[24] There was also a Czech office which later grew into the VIA Foundation (Chapter 6).

The government-friendly attitude and partisan alignments of Pontis pervaded the project. Michalko, the MFA official I interviewed, told me that he helped conceive the project. He also sat on the Evaluation Board. Ježovica and Nič attended the final conference. These links had also dawned on me when I accompanied the grantee Stevan Veljović and CDF and Pontis representatives on their trip to Brussels. Addressing our EU interlocutors, Lucia, the Pontis worker, repeatedly made statements like 'Slovakia has a clear opinion about where Serbia should be heading which is why we established this [EU Enlargement] Fund.' Her tendency to fuse the positions of Pontis and the government was perhaps understandable in the light of her biography. After the regime change, Lucia, then a fresh university graduate, served in the Office of the Government and later in the parliament; both positions were EU-related. She nostalgically remembered the 'enthusiasm and excitement' of that period. After a (nominally) left-wing government had been formed in 2006, she could not stand 'all the scandals' so she took maternity leave and then joined Pontis. In Brussels, she organised meetings with two Slovaks. The first was the aforementioned Eduard Kukan, an SDKÚ-DS member and one of the right-wing politicians whom a leaked cable of the US Embassy in Bratislava identified as the 'figures friendly with Pontis' (WikiLeaks 2012). The other was a diplomat whom Lucia clearly knew from earlier. She complained to him that some Belarusian opposition activists supported by Pontis had liaised with socialist members of the European Parliament without consulting them. Lucia said she knew why – 'that wouldn't be kosher with Pontis.' Finally, in a meeting with an official of the European Economic and Social Committee, she objected to his critical observation that Slovakia had opted for a neoliberal rather than the (alleged) 'European' social model by declaring that she is 'personally happy about it.' All of these details point to an ideological proximity and personal links between Pontis and Slovak right-wing political elites, particularly those in the SDKÚ-DS.

Political considerations apparently also guided the search for a Serbian project partner. I described the intimate relationship between CDF and the Democratic Party in the introduction (pp. 23–6). Lucia demonstrated her awareness of this when she told one of our Brussels interlocutors somewhat imprecisely that the CDF was 'an organisation... let's put it like this, it was a cradle for the Democratic Party.' However, the partner was originally supposed to be another NGO, the International and Security Affairs Centre (ISAC) which 'promotes and serves the transformation of Serbia towards EU and Euro-Atlantic membership' (ISAC n.d.). The Pontis contact was Milan Pajević, then the Chairman of the ISAC International Advisory Board. His biography is highly

illustrative of the porous boundaries between 'civil society' and politics in post-Milošević Serbia. In the 1990s, he co-founded the already mentioned European Movement in Serbia and served as its Vice President. More importantly, in 1999 he co-founded G17 Plus – the influential NGO of economists which transformed into a political party in 2002 and held key positions in each government ever since (see p. 79). In the aftermath of the regime change, Pajević became the Foreign Policy Adviser to Deputy PM of Yugoslavia, Miroljub Labus, who was also the President of G17 Plus. Pajević ran on the G17 Plus candidate list in the 2003 elections and continued to advise Labus until 2005. From 2004, he also directed the G17 Institute (another NGO in the G17 family) until he co-founded ISAC in 2006 (SEIO n.d. a, b).[25] But ISAC, Lucia told me, was found to lack 'administrative capacities' for project implementation, which is why Pontis turned to the CDF and Pajević remained a member of the project's Evaluation Board.

Thus, all seemed set for a smooth 'transfer of Slovak EU accession know-how' (Pontis n.d.). Yet the endeavour yielded somewhat ironic results. The grantees who made study trips to Slovakia (all but one in each call) typically returned with mixed impressions. Commenting on the condition of public buildings they visited, the professionalism of people they interviewed, or the functioning of institutions they studied, they told me that they 'expected more.' Some were surprised by all the complaints about lack of funds, adequate rules and other preconditions for improvements that their Slovak interlocutors hurled at them. This led them to question the extent and nature of improvements brought by EU accession on its own.

I participated first-hand in the Slovak experience of two second-call grantees, Sonja Avlijaš and Stevan Veljović, when I accompanied them to a series of meetings in Bratislava in January 2011. Sonja, researcher at the Belgrade-based expert NGO Foundation for the Advancement of Economics, originally wanted to investigate inter-municipal cooperation in social service delivery, but having found the practice undeveloped, she ended up writing about social services reform more broadly (Avlijas 2011). Stevan wrote a series of magazine articles about measures for reducing unregistered work.

[25] Pajević's retreat to 'civil society' ended in August 2012 when the incoming government appointed him as the Director of the European Integration Office. It also appointed Suzana Grubješić, another G17 Plus member, as Deputy PM for European Integration. The former Slovak PM and Foreign Minister Dzurinda became her adviser.

Sonja's first call in Bratislava was at Socia, an NGO focusing on social policy and services. Socia's director and former director painted a rather bleak picture of reform achievements. For instance, the responsibility to fund some social services, such as elderly care, had been decentralised to local governments, but their budgets were often too small for an adequate service provision, save innovation. For political and financial reasons, municipalities with large old-age homes strove to maintain these institutions and resisted funding non-residential care which would allow elderly people to live independently in their homes. Despite years of discussions about 'deinstitutionalisation' and 'diversification' of social services, alternative services remained underdeveloped and NGOs served only about a fifth of clients.

Our second meeting was with Lýdia Brichtová, Director of the Social Services Department at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Brichtová continued the critique of decentralisation that, as she argued, left many municipalities with insufficient funds for all the services for which they were made responsible. Since the crisis had begun and municipal revenues had shrunk even further, the Ministry of Finance had to step in to fund these services. Brichtová hoped that the criteria for distributing money to various levels of government would change. She mentioned a new Act on Social Services that provided for an equal access of all service providers (including nongovernmental) to public finance, but was sceptical that it could be fully implemented because of the general lack of funding. When Sonja asked her whether EU funds might be used to fund social services, Brichtová told her that the only relevant EU programme was the Regional Operational Programme, and that this money may be only used for 'social infrastructure.'

After we left the Ministry, we went for lunch and were soon joined by Stevan. It transpired that the two had been in touch a few years ago when Sonja wrote a column for Stevan's magazine. Having mentioned some common acquaintances, they started discussing impressions from their study trips. Sonja said that the situation in social services reform in Slovakia is even worse than in Serbia. When I asked her what specifically was worse, she opined that deinstitutionalisation progressed further in Serbia since it started sooner. The good thing about this project is that one gets to see how a country like Slovakia actually is not light years away from Serbia just because it is in the EU, she told us. She then addressed me specifically: 'Sorry but now I have to be a bit insolent – how did Pontis even come to think that Slovakia had some lessons to teach Serbia?' Logically, the point of the project must be to share Slovak 'good experiences,' she reasoned, but the reality on the ground does not seem like there is a lot

of that. I suggested that EU membership itself might boost self-confidence. Picking up on this, Stevan told us he had just seen an EU flag displayed at an elementary school. In Eastern Europe, people seem to be much prouder of their EU membership, even in Bulgaria that is not better off than Serbia, he added. Sonja concluded that all of this shows how EU enlargement is always very political, which is why Romania, Bulgaria and to some extent Slovakia are in while Serbia is not.

However, the written project outputs tended to adopt positions more in line with the hegemonic interpretation. Only two papers explicitly rejected the claim that EU integration led to improvements in the studied fields, namely social services (Avlijas 2011) and customer protection (Peškir 2010). Stevan argued in his first batch of articles that EU integration merely provided a beneficial historical moment for the government to push through macroeconomic reforms that he considered useful (Veljović 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). One paper pointed to both positive and detrimental impact of EU accession on meat processing in Slovakia (Stamenkovic & Otovic 2010). Most authors, however, treated the link between Slovakia's accession and development as a background assumption or eschewed the issue altogether.

To unpack this diversity of views in liberal civil society, the next section analyses relevant interview data.

Liberal civil society and critiques of Europeanisation

When I asked my research participants for their opinion on Serbia's EU integration, a recurring motif in their replies was that in order to harmonise the Serbian and European legal systems, a swath of laws had been adopted, often 'in a sped-up procedure,' but not actually implemented. Politicians adopted the laws because they wanted to please the EU and create an 'illusion of reform,' as one NGO worker called it, not because they cared whether citizens would benefit from better laws. The transposition from European to national legislation was described as 'mechanical,' 'copy and paste,' without necessary adjustments to the Serbian law and conditions being made.

The establishment of 'independent regulatory bodies' (*nezavisna regulatorna tela*) was another frequently quoted example of formalist quasi-reforms conducted for the EU audience. The EU recommended and welcomed the establishment of these institutions but it also criticised their lack of resources and the insufficient follow-up to their recommendations and decisions (EC 2009: 9–10; 2010: 8–9; 2011: 15–16). I heard time and again how these bodies had been established but not given adequate offices or

even furniture for years, or how other institutions refused to cooperate with them. Some participants speculated that politicians had probably only agreed to set them up because they expected to find ways of marginalising them later.

Another point over which there was a clear consensus was that the integration process was advancing too slowly. Given that it was hegemonically interpreted as the 'engine of reform,' this observation overlapped with the general discontent with post-2000 reforms. Many interlocutors opined that deep, systemic changes were needed to bring about a speedy transformation, but these were not the priority for political elites preoccupied with 'daily politics' (*dnevna politika*) in order to stay in power. Two NGO workers from a south Serbian town argued that the government was focusing on meeting EU criteria that were 'marginal' and 'not a priority,' such as the harmonisation of vehicle registration plates, instead of addressing the 'main things' like corruption.

Also targeting the politicians' orientation to 'politicking' (*politikantstvo*) was the disapproval of their frequent announcements of when Serbia should join the EU, described as 'bidding with deadlines/years' (*licitiranje sa rokovima/godinama*). Since several such timeframes had already proven unrealistic, the interviewees argued, the practice was only making people frustrated and apathetic about the whole matter. It was also taking the need for reforms out of focus. Closely related to this was the claim that politicians were primarily using the accession as an 'election slogan' to mobilise voters.

> It's an election topic with which people can be mobilised, and it's again that possibility to sell them a better life. Masses then believe in that. People don't realise at all that you first have to work on yourself and on the state so that you live better, and it's again that story, like, 'we'll enter and it'll be better right away.' (consultant working on EU-funded projects, Slovak-Serbian fund grantee in his 20s living in Belgrade)

As an NGO worker from a mid-sized western Serbian city put it, 'an average citizen of Serbia, when you say "EU" or "European integration," in his head he has an idea he's driving a jeep, and nothing else.' Such a citizen was not aware of 'more important aspects,' such as that 'everyone cannot throw garbage wherever they please.' For my interlocutors, the problem with this was that it devalued the truly significant benefits of integration, which they described with words like 'order' (*red*), 'discipline' or 'system.' They argued that this was a chance for Serbia to 'put itself to order' (*da se uredi*), to become a 'legal state' and 'orderly society' (*uređeno društvo*) where 'laws and rules are being respected.' Here was the 'normalcy' talk in a different key – one prioritising the government of society and oneself over affluence. Underpinning this perspective was,

of course, the assumption that Serbian society was backward and that the elites were unable – or unwilling – to lift it into modernity. What they did instead was to mimic reform. Such a perspective was by no means marginal: liberal public intellectuals of all kinds moralised relentlessly over this insincere Europeanisation (Mikuš 2013), which a journalist dubbed 'European values, Serbian-style' (Lapčić 2011).

Thus, while my interlocutors saw the myth of 'European Serbia' as false for the time being, it continued to inform their expectations – they did not abandon their hope for 'genuine' Europeanisation (see also Kostovicova 2006: 30). For its success, they argued, both politicians and 'people' would need to undergo an inner, rather than just superficial, metamorphosis. As individuals, they would have to start thinking critically about their society and 'working on themselves.' As a polity, Serbia would need to have and pursue its own 'strategy' of development – a point echoed by the grantees sobered up by their visits to Slovakia. Therefore, they argued, accession was important for Serbia as a 'means' of modernisation, not the 'goal' in itself. But it was, they believed, an *indispensable* means, given the lack of domestic capacity for self-transformation. Even one of the very few interviewees who identified herself as Eurosceptic commented that Serbian politicians spend too much time on the 'requirements of the EU,' but considering their (the politicians') 'quality,' it is perhaps only for better. Another interviewee applied a similar reasoning to 'ordinary people':

> I advocate the kind of stance that if we, every one of us, put our own backyards to order, houses, parks and the like, and that applies also to the state, its enterprises, the whole system, we wouldn't even need Europe. But unfortunately, we evidently aren't capable of putting the situation in the society to order ourselves. That's why Europe is more than necessary for us.
> (male NGO worker living in a mid-sized western Serbian city)

While my research participants underlined that individual and national agency was crucial if Serbia was to modernise, they also routinely noted that such agency was lacking. Thus, it was better to have the corrupt politicians and unruly citizens under the watchful eye of the EU. And, as some of my interlocutors argued with a resigned optimism, even all the laws adopted and institutions established 'because of the EU' would incrementally, 'little by little,' move Serbia to modernity. This type of criticism clearly reinforced the hegemonic project and, as I argue below, legitimated the participation of the NGO class in the pro-EU bloc.

However, a significant number of my interlocutors also voiced more radical critiques unlikely to be encountered in the liberal media. Many felt that the dominant discourse about integration obscures the issue of the costs that it would entail:

> In me, it produces a... frustration, an aggression, that someone is now telling me 'yeah, it should be like that,' and why? 'because it should be like that... it should because it should.' I mean, there's no critical perspective, no distance, no higher-quality analysis, how much the EU accession costs us, how much we get from it, how many years must pass before we get something from it...
> (NGO worker in her 30s living in Belgrade)

This woman likened the present situation to the NATO bombing of Serbia. Then, one could not be against the bombing as well as against Milošević (Jansen 2000). Today, the absence of a political party which would be 'reform-oriented' but 'approaching reforms critically' turned EU accession into yet another of such 'false choices' where one is forced to choose 'the lesser of two evils.' Other people complained that 'nothing is being explained' to people. A former NGO worker who became a civil servant told me that if I asked someone in the street why Serbia should enter the EU, they would answer 'because we have to.' Some interviewees also took issue with the slogan 'Europe has no alternative' when I mentioned it. They found it 'unthinking,' 'too aggressive' and bound to produce 'revolt' (*bunt*) even in people who otherwise supported integration. In sum, these people thought that the process was marred by a lack of public debate involving experts and the general public – in effect, a democratic deficit.

Perhaps most radical critiques of the EU integration challenged its presentation as a panacea for the country's problems. I was struck by the large number of people who mentioned Bulgaria and Romania, two neighbouring countries, as examples of countries whose situation did not improve with accession:

> You say that some Romanians, some Bulgarians have entered the EU, you go there, people complain again, they're unsatisfied, you go to Slovenia, you see it's not all roses for them either, they're unsatisfied too, in Bulgaria there were big strikes because of salaries and all the rest, so what did they get from it? Sure, good roads, strong economy or whatever [would be nice], but that's not the same for each country in the EU.
> (female NGO worker living in a south Serbian town)

> I don't know if people even have any illusions that something's going to happen. Really, what you can hear in public transport is 'we're going to work for H&M like

> Bulgarians and Romanians, for €200 a month, we're going to be happy.' I mean, when all the tax breaks for foreign investors will be implemented...
> (NGO worker in her 30s living in Belgrade)

The novelties that my interlocutors noted in Romania and Bulgaria – badly paid jobs created by foreign multinationals attracted by low taxation and cheap labour, and 'the possibility that they all go to Germany to work' – failed the expectations. The accession of these countries led to their selective economic, rather than comprehensive, development.

As these comments show, the political identity of 'civil society' did not prevent some of those who inhabited it from questioning the hegemonic narrative of Europeanisation. But the more radical critiques presented here were voiced in private situations – during conversations with an ethnographer. The reason why one was unlikely to encounter them in the media or various public events was certainly at least partly due to the limitations imposed on such discursive spaces by the hegemonic narratives already discussed. Nevertheless, to fully appreciate this public invisibility of liberal *and* Eurosceptic voices, it seems important to also examine the doing, not just the knowing and talking.

EU integration and the political economy of liberal civil society

From 2005 to 2010, the share of EU funding in overall ODA flows to Serbia grew from 15% to 44%, due especially to the diminishing total ODA (OECD n.d.).[26] In the same period, the EU has also become one of the biggest, if not the biggest, of all multilateral, bilateral and private donors supporting 'civil society.'[27] Organisations could apply for EU funding directly, either individually or as members of national and transnational networks.[28] The EU's language of state-civil society 'partnerships' and its explicit demands that the government institutionalise its cooperation with civil society (see Chapter 3) helped open up more spaces for NGOs to participate in various ad hoc

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[26] In 2001–11, the EU has allocated €6.5bn of ODA to Serbia (€3.2bn of soft loans, €3.2bn of non-refundable grants, and some humanitarian aid) and thus become its largest donor (Ćurković & Mijačić 2012: 2). The government expected the EU to provide 83% of ODA in 2011–13 (Government... 2011a: Annex IV).

[27] In 2010, for instance, the EU Delegation to Serbia disbursed ca. €3.2m to Serbian NGOs. Additional funds were available for those participating in NGO 'regional thematic networks' (BCSDN 2012).

[28] The grants were big compared to other donors. They typically ranged from €50,000 to €150,000 but could be up to €500,000. Transnational NGO networks could receive from €500,000 to €800,000.

bodies debating EU-oriented reforms or to implement policies and perform state functions on a project basis. All of this could increase their political clout as well as 'sustainability.'

Nevertheless, the EU's discursive and material support for 'civil society' was entangled in a contradiction: integration presented liberal civil society also with threats which were far more serious for some NGOs than others. One of the concerns I often came across was that the rapprochement and eventual accession to the EU would give an additional impetus to the departure of foreign donors from Serbia. This was a process that had already started by the time of my fieldwork and was expected to soon accelerate. Pointing to such experiences of other countries, people reasoned that the donors would conclude that NGOs in an EU member state did not need their funding anymore. The problem was that the EU would not really fill the gap. The funds for which NGOs could apply were considered extremely difficult to get. Minimum grants were quite big, subject to very demanding administration, and requiring a large share of co-funding from other sources. Therefore, it was typically only well-established, large and rich organisations that stood a chance.[29] People also complained that most EU funding was captured by private consultancies[30] and that transnational NGO networks were usually led by large EU-based organisations while Serbian organisations were only junior partners. Pointing to the experiences of the neighbouring new member states like Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, NGO workers mentioned in various meetings that 'the EU has killed the sector' there and that only a handful of strongest organisations 'survived.' In one case, a female NGO worker mentioned how only one women's NGO stayed in Hungary after accession, and the result was that the government restricted access to abortions.[31] These concerns led to demands that the state provide the co-funding needed to get EU grants, which the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society has indeed started to do in 2012.

The donor flight would certainly make state funding even more important but there were reasons to expect that it would be also unequally accessible for various NGOs. Informal and political relationships were still important for access. Moreover,

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[29] Unequal accessibility of EU funding was documented also in BiH (Fagan 2006), Poland (Sudbery 2010: 151) and across 'Central and Eastern Europe' (Carmin 2010; Kutter & Trappmann 2010: 60–1).

[30] It is impossible to verify such assessments because no breakdown of EU assistance to Serbia according to type of recipient is available.

[31] Sympathetic commentators found that EU-centred attempts to empower 'civil society' to shape public policy in 'Central and Eastern Europe' achieved mixed results (Börzel 2010; Kutter & Trappmann 2010; on Poland, see Gąsior-Niemec 2007, 2010).

the system of funding was being reformed according to the principle of 'efficiency' that introduced new inequalities (Part II). Related to that, while the EU-supported agenda of 'partnerships' and 'dialogue' promised more leverage for NGOs vis-à-vis the state, the examples of such processes in Chapter 3 suggest that only a small number of organisations and individuals were able to benefit. Finally, the attempts to develop fundraising from citizens and businesses – sources independent of the state and the EU – were very much in the beginning and only seemed an option for particular kinds of organisations and initiatives (Chapter 6).

On the one hand, then, the EU's ascent to dominance on the donor scene was associated with an overall drop in available funding. On the other, it was likely to deepen the already existing inequalities between NGOs and introduce new ones. Such inequalities resulted from their varying 'capacities' (understood in a managerial manner) that privileged some organisations and handicapped others in their ability to access EU-related resources. Such ability was also conditioned by the organisations' conformity with the EU's instrumental approach to 'civil society' as service providers and suppliers of policy-relevant information (Chapter 3). Indeed, strongly represented in the list of NGO projects funded by the EU Delegation to Serbia in 2003–11 are projects on various 'European' themes; well-established and professionalised NGOs; and expressly pro-EU organisations like EMinS (EU Delegation... 2011).

The final thing to mention is that the quickening pace of EU-driven reforms provided career opportunities for NGO workers as individuals with the kind of skills and knowledge getting into high demand in public administration – such as those related to 'projects,' EU funding, and integration-related reforms. Biographies such as the three examples in Box 1 were part of the broader pattern of 'boundary crossing' that I identified in the introduction (pp. 79–81).

Sofija, Uroš and Đorđe clearly had a lot in common. They were all highly educated, in their 30s, inhabitants of large urban centres, English-speaking and cosmopolitan in outlook. In the 1990s, their formative period, Sofija and Đorđe were involved in anti-regime NGOs and movements – Sofija in an independent student organisation and Đorđe in an NGO which he argued was 'the predecessor of Otpor' as well as in G17 Plus which, as we have seen, became a key element of the post-Milošević political establishment. All three started their professional careers in NGOs (Sofija and Đorđe even co-founded some) and later crossed to public administration. Through their education and NGO activities, Uroš and Đorđe accumulated expertise in EU funding that they used in their present state jobs; Uroš even started a project

Sofija, in her 30s, mid-tier project manager in a large Belgrade NGO. Studied international relations. Active in an independent student organisation at her university in the late 1990s. After 2000, worked briefly in a large NGO and became a high officer for international relationships in a national student union. Spent a year in Brussels working for the European Students' Union. Co-founded an NGO specialising in educational policy. Worked as a consultant in the Ministry of Education on a World Bank-funded project. Found there were two kinds of people in the ministry – stupid and lazy ones and very ambitious ones intriguing to advance their careers. She was climbing up the ladder, going to 'meetings in Brussels,' but 'knew it was shit' so joined her present NGO. She's used to working independently and focuses on being efficient. Checks several UK news websites daily. Would consider going abroad again to work or do a PhD but it gets harder with years.

Uroš, in his 30s, project coordinator in the administration of X, a municipality in the city of Q. Still doing a degree in economics. Used to write and manage projects, especially EU, in a large NGO in Q. Founded a consultancy with his brother that provided the same services for NGOs, local governments, businesses. Then a friend recommended him to some officials of the X municipality who needed help with a project proposal. Cooperated with them ever since. Municipalities engage young NGO workers as they lack capacities for EU projects. His team in the municipality is quite 'flexible' but often held back by the 'inert structures' and rigid bureaucratic rules of the Q city government. Works as he used to before – plans his schedule, stays overnight in the office if necessary, 'has results' without somebody telling him what to do. Many civil servants in Q don't do anything useful, they just come to sit in their air-conditioned offices, drink coffee and use the internet.

Đorđe, in his 30s, EU funds coordinator in a reform-oriented government body that implements, *inter alia*, integration-driven policies. His father worked abroad as a diplomat. Studied law, specialised in EU law. In the 1990s, co-founded an NGO which was 'the predecessor of Otpor.' Attended courses on civil society and EU integration in the Belgrade Open School, the meeting place of 'politicians, professors, the intellectual elite which worked on overthrowing Milošević.' Here offered an 'engagement' with G17 Plus. In the early 2000s, worked as a journalist covering EU issues, including in an integration-focused NGO. In the second half of the decade, worked in a ministry, again focusing on integration. Critical of the excessive partisan influence on public administration. Believes integration can modernise Serbia but so far it has been too slow. He'd like to feel as an 'equal citizen' of the EU and 'influence the building of Europe, not just Serbia.'

Box 1. EU integration and lives between the state and 'civil society.'

consultancy. The EU played a more marginal role in Sofija's career: she briefly worked for the European Students' Union in Brussels, which represents the interests of students towards the EU and other organisations. Upon return to Serbia, she co-founded an NGO where she developed herself as an expert in education policy, which qualified her for a project-based job at the Ministry of Education.

All three were highly critical of civil servants in a manner indebted to the widespread discourse about 'partocratic' and clientelistic state capture (see pp. 76–7). Sofija and Uroš commented on their incompetence, laziness and preoccupation with office politics. Đorđe mentioned the politicisation of public administration. In contrast, they displayed a positive 'technocratic' identity of efficient, work-focused, self-managing and flexible experts ready to work extra and unusual hours. Especially Uroš

felt that his skills and style of work stood out in the local government where he worked. These three cases are illustrative of a broader pattern in liberal civil society. In response to my direct question, most NGO workers whom I interviewed told me that they would consider offers of state jobs. However, many said they could hardly imagine that 'now,' 'for this kind of state' that was full of incompetent and uneducated party nominees and, as one person put it, 'idle old women.' They perceived that many of these people enjoyed excessive and undeserved privileges, especially job certainty (despite bad performance), very light workload or easy promotion based on clientelism. In contrast, they understood themselves as a new kind of workers: diligent, competent and competitive experts who rely on their knowledge and skills rather than political links, and are prepared to accept flexible (project-based or fixed-term) forms of employment. Apart from their role in the technocratic/'partocratic' antagonism, these norms of the self also implicated NGO workers in the characteristically neoliberal 'effort to fashion themselves as flexible, self-aware, and innovative actors in a new era' (Freeman 2011: 355). To the extent that these norms succeed to shape everyday practices and, ultimately, subjectivity, they characterise these flexible 'boundary crossers' as harbingers of a new social order in making.

But more relevant to the present argument is the place of the EU in these three work biographies. What they suggest is that the various interrelated trends discussed in this chapter, such as the growing availability of EU funding, the departure of civil-society donors from Serbia, and the broadening scope of integration-related reforms, make the EU increasingly central to the livelihoods of a growing number of (former) NGO workers. This represents yet another constraint on their critical autonomy in relation to EU integration. However, it is also important to recognise that concrete outcomes are contingent on individual values and priorities. For instance, Đorđe came to dream about leaving Serbia and working in Brussels, which he described as one of his favourite cities, 'exceptionally rich' and 'open.' Sofija's was a different case: she had been advancing through her state job to the level of 'Brussels' and international consultancy, but she was clearly not impressed and preferred to return to the NGO sector which she considered more meaningful and fulfilling.

Conclusion

For Gramsci, civil society was the part of an extended state where consent with hegemony was organised by permitting subaltern groups to express their grievances and

aspirations in a 'reformist' manner that did not threaten the status quo. However, he also conceived of it as a space of potential revolution: the emergence and spread of alternative consciousness and the formation of counter-hegemonic institutions (Buttigieg 1995). I argued that the relationship of liberal civil society to the hegemonic project of European integration was fraught with tensions that reflect this double-faced nature of civil society. In private and informal situations, its members often demonstrated critical awareness and diversity of views which subverts the ideological straightjacket of the native notion of 'civil society.' However, the hegemonic narratives about 'Europe' and modernity, as well as the political identity and political economy of liberal civil society, imposed cognitive, social and material limits on such radical critiques in public. Instead of initiating critical analysis and discussion of economic, political and social consequences of neoliberal restructuring that EU integration imposes on candidate and member countries, these organisations and people were more likely to reproduce familiar symbolical geographies and dogmatic claims about the self-evident benefits of accession. The 'constructive criticism' of integration that they typically voiced actually called for its deepening ('genuine Europeanisation') or entailed pragmatic demands (such as for co-funding of EU projects) that the state seemed willing to accommodate. Moreover, the class background and characteristics of NGO workers and the opportunities and constraints presented by EU integration led many of them to actively participate in the hegemonic project: either as an increasingly instrumentalised and EU-dependent 'civil society,' or as a new, flexible and nomadic kind of labour force working on integration-driven agendas. The pro-EU alliance of liberal civil society and elites as well as the cultural and ideological hegemony of 'Europeanisation' were thus maintained. This conclusion confirms and adds a politico-economic dimension to the earlier findings about a close symbolic association between the figures of 'civil society building' and 'return to Europe' in postsocialist Europe (Verdery 1996: 104–29). In the next chapter, I turn to the other side of the same coin: the attempts of the 'uncivil society' of nationalist and populist groups and movements to articulate a counter-hegemonic project of national sovereignty and neotraditional identity.

Chapter 2:
Nationalist civil society and resistance to the Pride Parade

At the time of my fieldwork, nationalist organisations and movements were very visible in media and urban landscapes in their efforts to achieve political clout. Their highly controversial status was evident already from the struggles over their naming, with their proponents branding them as 'patriotic,' 'national' or 'popular,' and their opponents, including NGO workers, as 'right-wing,' 'extremist,' 'fascist' or 'clerofascist.' One of their most visible activities was their determined struggle against the Belgrade Pride Parade. Because the latter was discursively embedded in the government's agenda of European integration, but also due to its character of a claim to the recognition of the particular, it became the nationalists' entry-point for talking about what they framed as the *universal* suffering of the Serbian 'people/nation' (*narod*)[32] in the face of transnational integration and neoliberalisation. Kindling and exploiting the resistance to the Parade was part of their efforts to build a broad popular movement for an alternative transformative strategy of ethnonational self-sufficiency and retraditionalisation.

Although such organisations started to emerge already in the Milošević years, their number and activity has been growing sharply since 2000. Their expansion therefore seems to be provoked by the nature of post-Milošević developments. Anthropologists related the growing receptivity for ethnic and religious neo-nationalism in Western Europe to identitarian fears and social insecurity linked to immigration, precarious employment and other transformations promoted by globalisation (Gingrich, Banks *et al.* 2006). More recently, Kalb (2011) criticised the dominance of explanations based on culture and identity in most research on neo-nationalism and nationalist populism, and argued that these ideologies and movements actually announce a 'return of the repressed' – that is, of the European working classes dispossessed and disenfranchised by neoliberal globalisation, and denied the possibility to articulate their interests in the language of class. He further suggested, *pace* Gingrich and Banks, that the conditions in Eastern Europe are not radically different from those in Western Europe: one can find here the same impact of globalisation and an even more pronounced delegitimisation of class politics (see also Kalb 2009a, 2009b; Ost 2005).

[32] As if to facilitate the fusion of nationalism and populism at the semantic level, *narod* (and the rarer *nacija*, used more or less synonymously) denotes, depending on the context, (ethnic) 'nation' as well as 'the people.'

A peripheral mode of integration into the transnational order has been indeed a major feature of Serbia's post-2000 transformations (see pp. 74–5). This restructuring failed to generate a healthy economic recovery and reduce the persistently high unemployment, and presumably even intensified the impact of the global crisis by exposing Serbia to the effects of the world economy. Kalb's analysis thus resonates with the discourse of Serbian nationalists who oppose the country's economic, political and cultural globalisation. It also captures the elite-sponsored abandonment of the socialist register of class in favour of ethnonationalist mobilisation that occurred from the late 1980s onwards. But the account must be qualified to account for Serbia's specificities. First, the country's postsocialist devastation brought impoverishment and insecurity also to many middle-class people. This must be considered to understand whose interests the nationalists endeavour to articulate and whose support they attract. I will argue that urban middle classes comprise a significant share of the nationalists' social base.[33] Second, and related to that, I am more sceptical than Kalb (2011: 14) about the psychoanalysis-inspired interpretations of working-class populism as a symptom of the 'return of the repressed,' a traumatic event that surfaces in a distorted form (e.g. Žižek 2008). Apart from my general doubts about the usefulness of such language in accounting for collective action, I question whether its implication of class as the one hidden truth lurking behind nationalist populism does justice to the Serbian case. While I agree with Kalb wholeheartedly that dispossession needs to be brought into analyses of such movements, it seems to me that this case points to a complex imbrication and mutual irreducibility of socioeconomic disenfranchisement with a sense of geopolitical subalternity, not found with such an intensity in most European countries.

This chapter situates the nationalist groups in the context of post-2000 hegemonic struggles. The first section argues that nationalist 'uncivil society,' as it has been termed, is best conceived as one of a plurality of 'civil societies.' The second part analyses the case of the Pride Parade as a symbolic struggle over public space between liberal and nationalist civil societies that articulated and performed mutually antagonistic visions of social order. The interactions between the state and nationalists involved a complex mixture of repression and tolerance, resistance and cohabitation. Despite their radical anti-regime rhetoric, nationalists, with their efforts to enter

[33] In the edited volume containing also the discussed Kalb's contribution (Kalb, Halmai *et al.* 2011), Vetta (2011) makes similar observations about the constituency of the Serbian Radical Party, until recently leading nationalist force in Serbian institutional politics, in the town of Kikinda.

institutional politics for which the resistance to the Parade served as a springboard, actually normalised state power. I relate this to the continued supreme authority of the state, in a both politico-economic and symbolic sense, and to the nature of hegemony as 'a common material and meaningful framework for living through (...) domination' (Roseberry 1994: 361).

From 'uncivil society' to a plurality of civil societies

Nationalist organisations challenge the hegemonic notion of 'civil society' in Serbia as referring to NGOs and movements promoting liberalism, cosmopolitanism, and anti-nationalism. They clearly depart from that political identity and as such have been excluded from the native category of 'civil society.' But neither do they show much interest in being included – their self-presentation is one of authentic popular movements, as opposed to liberal NGOs stereotyped as elitist and 'anti-Serbian.' Instead of civil society, nationalists sometimes collectively self-ascribe as a 'patriotic bloc.'

In anthropological and other writings, the recognition of the phenomenon of illiberal NGOs and movements contributed to an understanding that value-based definitions of civil society are empirically inadequate (Blom Hansen 1999; Chambers & Kopstein 2001; Haddad 2006, 2007; Kopecký, Mudde *et al.* 2003; Rahman 2002). The concept of 'uncivil society' has been often used for organisations and movements that promote 'non-democratic' and 'extremist' ideas, advocate the use of violence, and/or lack the spirit of civility and tolerance. These attributes suggest that this is yet another inherently normative, and therefore problematic, term. As Kopecký (2003: 12) notes, 'a sense of "rightfulness" and "exclusivity" is inherent to virtually all political demands, and certainly to all ideologies, including of course liberalism.' Furthermore, actual ideologies and practices within both 'civil' and 'uncivil' society, and often in a single organisation in various stages of its evolution, are highly diverse. It is therefore not obvious that we should indiscriminately demonise all nationalist organisations while assuming that all liberal organisations are benevolent and, indeed, 'civil.'

Nevertheless, there is still the fact of an emic political difference between nationalist and liberal organisations that the two parties accept, although they seek to construct and valorise it in different and self-serving ways. The analytical concept of civil society outlined in the introduction can account for this difference without accepting its value-laden constructions. I argue that nationalist groups represent one of a

plurality of 'civil societies' – scenes of associational practice that mediate the relationship of the state and society and negotiate cultural and ideological hegemony, but do so in a mutually antagonistic manner. I will now briefly discuss the conspicuous convergence of the organisational forms and practices of nationalist groups and liberal NGOs to support this claim, while the rest of the chapter discusses the parallels and differences between their respective relationships with the state.

As Kostovicova (2006: 30) observed, Serbian 'illiberal civil society' emulates the practices of 'liberal civil society.' Indeed, I found that many nationalist groups registered with state authorities as associations of citizens, just like most NGOs. Some have not registered and remained 'informal,' but possessed, at least nominally, decision-making structures typical for NGOs, such as management boards (*upravni odbor*) and the like. Although many of these groups designate themselves as 'movements' in their names, their representatives often referred to them as 'associations' or 'organisations' during interviews[34] and public speeches (but never as 'NGOs').

Like their liberal counterparts, all major nationalist organisations regularly update their websites, and many run email newsletters and busy Facebook accounts (Maksimović 2009, 2010). They use these channels to advertise their activities, present their political agendas and comment on current issues. They organise public lectures and discussions (*tribine*), demonstrations, and more recently even 'walks,' a genre of protest marches through central urban spaces originally associated with the anti-Milošević opposition (Jansen 2001: 39–40). A lot of effort is spent on 'campaigns,' consisting of putting up posters and stickers with a political message as well as the organisation's logo and name (also spread through graffiti, badges and apparel). This mirrors the observance of visual identity rules by liberal NGOs, but also the protest strategies of Otpor (Aulich 2011).

The interviewed nationalists claimed that their main source of funding was donations from their activists and sympathisers. The groups invited their supporters through newsletters and website banners to send donations to their accounts. The diaspora was also targeted. Dveri worked with the Serbian Orthodox Church eparchies[35]

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[34] I interviewed high-ranking members of the 1389 Serbian National Movement, the Dveri ('Doors of the Iconostasis') Serbian Assembly, the Naši ('Ours') Serbian National Movement, the Nomokanon ('Nomocanon') Association of the Students of the Faculty of Law, and the Obraz ('Honour') Fatherland Movement. I refer to these organisations, in keeping with the convention in Serbia, by the non-generic part of their names, e.g. Dveri.

[35] In the Eastern churches, an eparchy (Serbian *eparhija*) is a territorial diocese governed by a bishop.

in Western countries to organise visits to Serbian communities, with fundraising being one of the goals. Naši and 1389 sold apparel with their logos and other 'patriotic' motifs, while Dveri published books and an occasional magazine.

Finally, these groups resembled NGOs (rather than movements that they claimed themselves to be) in that the core group of activists in most places where they worked tended to be relatively small, as was obvious from the modest turnout at the meetings that I attended. In interviews and meetings, the leaders complained that often only a fraction of Facebook 'attendees' actually came to a rally. Large crowds were more likely to attend protests that addressed burning issues of the day, and the participants of which often do not consider themselves members or supporters of any particular nationalist organisation.

Naturally, there are many ways in which nationalist groups differ, in an ideal-typical sense, from liberal NGOs. Their work is much more openly political: they do politics by means of protesting, organising talks, and spreading what they call *propaganda* through posters, stickers, graffiti, banners, fanzines, magazines and the internet. Because they typically do not implement projects like NGOs (and obviously because of their politics), they do not receive funding from foreign donors. The nationalists I interviewed claimed to work in their organisations voluntarily, unlike the employees of NGOs who usually work for salaries or honoraria.

Apart from the noted pragmatic and formal similarities, nationalist civil society shares with liberal civil society a preoccupation with articulating and promoting particular visions of a legitimate social order and state. As I hinted in the introduction (see p. 73), nationalist organisations had already started to emerge, on a modest scale, under the Milošević regime – which they also opposed, though for different reasons than their liberal counterparts. These can be illustrated by a 1999 issue of the clerofascist magazine *Nova Iskra* ('New Spark') that announced the establishment of *Dveri*, another magazine that would later grow into the organisation Dveri discussed below. In the same issue, one of Dveri's leaders interpreted the then pending NATO bombing as a punishment for the sins of the Serbian nation:

> [A] multi-party, a-national, atheist, profiteer company – the state. Serbia [that is] a mixture of a-national citizens, the coat of arms and the anthem are not Serb, the national dynasty is abroad, the Church spurned by the state, the school without religious education, the army Yugoslav, the University alien, the Academy of Sciences communist, the Radio-Television of Serbia – a lie, the economy – a lie, the opposition – a lie, politics – politicking, parties – business organisations, souls

> divided, hearts ambivalent, characters undetermined, lives without Orthodoxy… (Obradović 1999: 20).

While liberal civil society saw the Milošević regime as undemocratic, rabidly nationalist and traditionalist, those in emerging nationalist scene saw it mainly as insufficiently Serb and authoritarian. Nevertheless, the fact is that their organising and expansion took place mostly after 2000. This points to Milošević's successful use of nationalist policies and rhetoric to demobilise opposition, a strategy that was only compromised in the latter half of the 1990s as his pragmatic approach to nationalism became increasingly obvious. But it might also suggest that the reservations that nationalists had at the time were almost trivial compared to how they would experience, and oppose, the post-2000 developments.

The rest of the chapter analyses the case of the nationalist opposition to the Pride Parade (hereafter 'the Parade'). Ever since the first attempt in 2001, the Parade provided an opportunity for the articulation of struggles over public space, especially the symbolically valuable central Belgrade. The 2010 Parade, organised by a group of liberal LGBT NGOs with strong security backing from the state, took place under the slogan 'Let's walk together' (*Da šetamo zajedno*). This was a subtle reference to the aforementioned 1990s protest 'walks' (*šetnje*) of the anti-Milošević opposition that had elevated walking into a highly political act. As a claim to an open and legitimate presence of LGBT people in public space, the Parade represented a challenge to the hegemonic aspirations of nationalists, but also a highly publicised opportunity for them to have their ideals seen and heard and mobilise supporters. They responded with symbolic and physical violence against the Parade and held their own 'walks' and other performances of the occupation of public space. The Parade is thus a major site of the broader hegemonic struggle between nationalist civil society and the post-Milošević state which has increasingly, though hesitantly, come to embrace some of the political aspirations of liberal civil society.

Nationalist hegemonic struggles: the case of the Pride Parade

Interviewing the nationalists, reading their texts, attending their rallies and collecting documentation of their activities, I soon noticed the enormous amount of attention they devoted to the state. Whether they set off to discuss the economy, the status of Kosovo or threats to the Serbian tradition, they routinely concluded that the causes and solutions

of these problems rested with the state.[36] Moreover, their practice vis-à-vis the state struck me as curiously contradictory, perhaps even hypocritical. While they radically renounced the authority of the state, they also fetishised it and, more discreetly, allowed it to co-opt them. As the case of the Parade shows, these interactions of the state and the nationalist scene resulted in a degree of mutual accommodation and ultimately in a normalisation of state power.

Resistance and reverence

The 11-year long history of the Pride Parade in Belgrade is paradigmatic of the politics of nationalist organisations that histrionically opposed it as a negation of their own visions of a legitimate social order. This section shows that these hegemonic struggles revolved around the legal and factual sovereignty of the state. While the nationalists openly contested the state's enactments of sovereignty (when that state protected the Parade and opposed the nationalists' hate speech and violent actions), they also interpreted the law as actually criminalising the Parade and sanctioning their own actions.

The participants in the first Parade of June 2001 were beaten up by a thousand-strong crowd of young men, some severely. Footage of the incident shows vastly outnumbered and disorganised police intervening, but the attackers clearly dominate the scene. One of them was Mladen Obradović, secretary-general and de facto leader of the Obraz Fatherland Movement (Gligorijević 2010). The police reported that the attackers included football hooligans and Obraz members (*B92* 2001). Due to the virulent opposition by the nationalists, the next two attempts to organise a Parade, in 2004 and 2009, were both called off. Days after the September 2009 cancellation, the Republic Public Prosecution Office made an unprecedented request that the Constitutional Court ban Obraz, the 1389 Movement, and Nacionalni stroj ('National Formation'), an organisation atypical in its explicit neo-Nazism. A month later, the Prosecution also requested a ban on 14 'extreme fan subgroups' of three Belgrade football clubs. It reasoned that all these groups were 'oriented to the violent overthrow of the

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[36] Nominally, the nationalists blamed the 'regime' (*režim*) or 'government' (*vlada*, *vlast*) rather than the 'state' (*država*), but in fact they considered all governments since 2000 as one 'regime' which has, moreover, fully captured the state. The differences between these concepts were thus collapsed, disregarding that there have been four parliamentary elections in 2000–11 internationally recognised as 'free and fair,' and that different multi-party coalitions assumed power.

constitutional order,' 'breaking guaranteed human and minority rights,' and 'inciting national, racial and religious hatred' and sexual discrimination (Gligorijević 2010). In March 2011, the Court rejected the latter request, arguing that hooligan groups are not legal subjects and so cannot be banned. However, it did ban Nacionalni stroj in June, making it the first nationalist organisation to be treated in this way. In October, the Prosecution submitted a new request for a ban on the original 1389 Movement, as well as the new 1389 Serbian National Movement and the Naši Serbian National Movement.[37] The Constitutional Court banned Obraz in June 2012 but refused to ban 1389 and Naši in November 2012. Mladen Obradović of Obraz and Miša Vacić, the leader of 1389, were judged guilty of inciting hatred against LGBT persons before the cancelled 2009 Parade.[38]

The first Parade since 2001 took place at the time of my fieldwork in October 2010. On that sunny Indian summer morning, I entered the designated downtown area through the calmest of the three 'entry points' with a group of friends from BCIF. Normally busy boulevards were hermetically closed and eerily vacant, patrolled by a helicopter and 5,600 (Helsinki… 2010: 3) policemen, gendarmes and military policemen who formed three concentric 'rings' around the zone. We saw few opponents of the Parade, but our seemingly relaxed conversation barely masked the tension. In the safe zone, I heard distressed participants sharing the news – inaccurate as it turned out – that 'they broke through the blockade.' A 1,000 of us listened to mostly formal and dull speeches, walked the distance of about 800 metres from the Manjež Park to the Student Cultural Centre, where the closing party, I suspect, never really took off, and finally boarded armoured police vans which transported people to their respective neighbourhoods. Simultaneously, the biggest riots in recent years were unfolding throughout central Belgrade. An estimated 6,000 young men (Helsinki... 2011: 57–8), who split into smaller groups but coordinated via cell phones and messengers on motorbikes, were fighting the police. A man who joined them incognito recounted that his group had its leaders who told people where to go (Kuzminović 2010). They set ablaze vehicles and bins, looted shops, attacked the seats of three political parties in

[37] The 1389 Serbian National Movement (hereafter '1389') is a larger organisation than the rump of the original 1389 Movement from which it splintered off in late 2008. In August 2010, 1389 united with Naši, an organisation founded in 2006 in Aranđelovac, a town about 75 kilometres south of Belgrade. The unified Naši 1389 Serbian National Movement dissolved in June 2011 and the two organisations again started to act separately.

[38] The Court of Appeal in Belgrade later overturned the ruling against Obradović.

power, and even pushed two abandoned trolleybuses downhill. The police reported that they were even more 'persistent' than in the massive riots against the Kosovo declaration of independence in 2008 (*Press Online* 2010a).

Before the Parade, the nationalists repeated for the media, with a prophetic matter-of-factness, that 'there won't be a gay parade' but avoided explicit calls for violence. Posters reading 'We're expecting you!' and depicting a rowdy crowd waving Obraz flags appeared in downtown Belgrade (Fig. 3). Other organisations had their own

FIGURE 3. Obraz posters ahead of the 2010 Parade. Source: obraz.rs.

'campaigns' limited to posting stickers. Numerous anonymous graffiti read 'Blood will pour on the streets / There won't be a gay parade,' 'Death to faggots,' or 'Stop the Parade.' After the Parade, the nationalists blamed the 'regime,' the organisers and attendees for 'provoking' the righteous anger of patriotic youths. In April 2011, Mladen Obradović and three other leaders of Obraz were found guilty of planning and coordinating the riots, and ten more people (including Obraz members) of taking part.[39] Given that little information about the evidence raised became public, and the rioters neither wore symbols of nationalist groups nor were so identified in the media (with the exception of Obraz), the exact relationship between the organisations and the riots is

[39] The Court of Appeal later overturned this ruling too.

largely unknown. However, the publicly available information as well as ethnographic data discussed below suggest that at least some nationalists took part. For many, their widely publicised discourse about the Parade served, at the least, to legitimate the riots.

In this and many other contexts, the state interacted with the nationalists primarily through its systems of law enforcement. The legal sphere was a particularly important field where the nationalists resisted the 'regime.' If the law 'constitutes, organizes, and legitimates positions of authority' (von Benda-Beckmann, von Benda-Beckmann & Eckert 2009: 4), it is clearly a key element of state sovereignty. Factual sovereignty, manifested in the legitimate use of violence by states (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2006), was also at issue. The state's material involvement in the Parade through police and security forces, which physically separated the paraders and the rioters, reified the antagonism between liberal and nationalist forces and placed the state on the side of the liberals. The nationalists challenged the state's sovereignty as they questioned the lawfulness of its protection of the Parade and attempted physically to overturn it. In response, the state arrested and prosecuted some nationalists, but the lawsuits were selective and slow to conclude, and penalties were given at the legally prescribed minimum (Helsinki... 2011: 449–52).[40] Moreover, as we saw, most of the rulings were later overturned. Tellingly, government officials commented on the riots in the particular kind of 'technical languages of stateness' that asserts factual sovereignty of the state (Blom Hansen & Stepputat 2001: 7). The spokesman of the Prosecution, for instance, declared that 'nobody is stronger than the state.' A state secretary at the Ministry of Justice promised a 'severe response of the state.' President Tadić noted that the assault on police officers constituted an attack on the state that was fully prepared to bring the rioters to justice (*B92* 2010a).

In interviews I conducted with the nationalists, as well as in their articles and public appearances (e.g. Naši 2010; SNP 1389 2011a, 2011b), they invariably argued that none of their members had ever committed a crime. They bemoaned, unprompted and at length, their supposed victimisation. All the arrests, lawsuits and rulings against them, including those Parade-related, were 'illegal' and 'unjust.' They were victims of 'political persecution' and their rights were being traduced. They also vowed to defy all attempts to ban their organisations (e.g. SNP 1389 2009, Zarković 2010).

The nationalists implicitly accepted the legitimacy of the law in the abstract, but not the legitimacy of its actual enforcement by the state. Moreover, they would also directly legitimate the riots, as Ivan Ivanović, leader of Naši, proved in the brotherly

[40] The vast majority of the 250 detained rioters were eventually released without charges.

atmosphere of an evening meeting of several nationalist organisations in November 2011. Naši called the meeting in a Belgrade café to discuss 'whether the patriotic bloc could at all unite.' The crowd consisted of smaller groups of men and some women, mostly in their teens and 20s and sporting diverse signs of identity. While some youths wore hoodies and sweatpants, associated with football hooligans, a boy at the next table was clutching his Orthodox prayer rope. As we waited for the talks to begin, the speakers blasted Yugoslav rock classics by Serbian, but also Croatian and Bosnian bands – not exactly 'traditional' and nationally purist choice.

In their speeches, the leaders of Obraz, Naši and two rather obscure organisations, Serbian Libertarians and the Movement for Serbia, deplored the situation in Serbia and called for more unity in the fragmented 'patriotic bloc,' though with few specific proposals for action. Ivanović, a primary-school teacher of religious education in his 30s, criticised the fact that the organisations arranged their own events which attracted fleeting media attention but did not 'contribute anything concrete.' Mladen Obradović of Obraz intervened: 'Don't say that, brother, what about the Parade?' He referred to the cancellation of the 2011 Parade a month earlier, which the nationalists experienced as their grand victory. Ivanović conceded: 'That's an example of when we all united for a joint action.' Shortly afterwards, all the speakers were asked to answer the same set of questions, including which organisations they considered 'patriotic.' Ivanović responded:

> [P]eople who came to the [2010] gay parade and clashed with the cordons of police and were ready to die in the defence of Serbhood (*srpstvo*) and Orthodoxy, those are real patriots. Every organisation that showed up on that day and brought its people on that day specifically, and which wasn't embarrassed and afraid to come out on the street, those are patriotic organisations.

This statement made in an insider situation obliterated any concern with legality in favour of the ethical framework of 'patriotism' that glorified rather than simply justified the riots as a virtue of 'patriotic organisations,' among which Ivanović undoubtedly counted his Naši. It seems appealing, then, to dismiss the pleas of 'not guilty' as manoeuvres to avoid sanctions, but there are good reasons to go beyond such purely utilitarian assumptions. Ivanović said in the same meeting:

> None of us here or in any other patriotic organisation advocates going to fight against the regime like some anarchists or I don't know what. We simply fight for our state, we fight for all the holy Serbs who lived before us, and we fight for all

> the Serbs who will come, for our future, our children. That is our responsibility before God.

The references to the past, future and God will be revisited later, but here I want to emphasise that Ivanović had switched rapidly from battling the state to fighting for it, virtually in the same breath. Similarly, in their rants against the Parade, the nationalists would mention, almost hysterically, the banner reading ‘Death to the state’ that I had also seen held up by an anarchist group at the 2010 Parade. Stefan Stojkov, member of Nomokanon and a law graduate, told me:

> [T]hat is an explicit call to overthrow the state, a criminal offence from Chapter 27 or 28 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia which sanctions exclusively these criminal offences against the state. So, that is an attempt to violate and overthrow the constitutional order of the state of Serbia.

Ivanović with some other nationalists even compiled ‘evidence’ of the ‘unconstitutional’ and ‘illegal’ nature of the 2010 Parade itself in a document dramatically named after the anthem of Serbia – *God of Justice* (ECSD & SNP 1389 2010). In an article opposing the 2011 Parade, Naši repeated that the Parade was ‘unequivocally subject to a strict ban according to the Constitution and multiple laws of the Republic of Serbia’ that protect ‘morals’ (Naši 2011).

If the nationalists did not perceive the apparent contradiction between these seemingly parodic legalist and hyper-statist claims, on the one hand, and their glorification of attacks on the police who protected a crowd exercising the constitutional right of assembly, on the other, the reason must be sought in their disarticulation of the ‘state’ into its actuality and ideality. Their resistance to the actuality of the state sat side by side with their reverence for its ideal vision. While state apparatuses such as police or the law arguably have a material reality, they are also signs that the nationalists endow with their own selectively interpreted meanings and functions to match their idea of the state, so that, for instance, the law is imagined as prohibiting the Parade. I will now discuss the notional content of both this ideal state, and what it was opposed to.

Actuality and ideality

The discourse of the government and the organising NGOs linked the 2010 Parade to the hegemonic project of ‘Europeanisation’ analysed in the previous chapter (see also Mikuš 2011). When I interviewed the organisers from LGBT NGOs, they hinted that this link enabled them to form a political alliance with the state keen to demonstrate its

commitment to EU integration. That the Parade promoted Serbia's acceptance of 'European values' was reiterated in the media, by speeches at the event (mostly by representatives of European institutions), and by the subsequent European Commission report and European Parliament resolution which expressed satisfaction over the state's support for the event. Predictably, the multicultural discourse of recognition of diversity and the liberal discourse of individual freedom and equality also framed the event. The event thus, albeit tentatively and for a brief moment, consolidated the state's liberalising and 'Europeanising' self-representation.

The nationalists seized on this association. Being already opposed to EU integration, this link only expanded their lengthy list of grievances against the Parade. In one of their talks, members of Naši 1389 described legal sanctions against their comrades, including those incurred as a result of their anti-Parade activities, as 'the regime's attempt to break the last resistance to the Euro-Atlantic integration of Serbia' (SNP 1389 2011b). The defence lawyers in the trial with Obraz members claimed that 'this Orthodox youth will fall victim to Serbia's entry to the EU' (Koalicija... 2011). The nationalists clearly perceived the EU-driven Parade as an assault on Serbia's sovereignty that they took to defend. As such, it resonated with one of the central tropes of their discourse that branded the present 'regime' as 'betrayers,' 'puppet government' or 'occupation government.' This government, as the nationalists believed, not only extradited Ratko Mladić[41] and other 'Serbian heroes' to the ICTY, but it also 'betrayed' Kosovo, allowed foreigners to enter all state institutions and decide about everything, and so forth. By resisting this state of geopolitical subalternity, which they variously described as 'occupation,' 'colonisation' or 'national humiliation' (*nacionalno poniženje*), the nationalists were fighting for 'freedom' equated with collective ethnonational sovereignty.

While the anti-Parade resistance was arguably reactionary, it was not purely reactive – the nationalists acted out themes of their own political and social ideals beyond those imposed by the discourse of the state and the organisers. One of these themes was the central role of Orthodox Christianity and the Serbian Orthodox Church in the governance of society. The nationalists portrayed the Parade, using quasi-clerical discourse, as a 'sinful,' 'shameful' and 'satanic' attack on the Orthodox values of the 'vast majority' of Serbs, and a negation of the will of the Church. The Church itself

[41] Mladić was the commander of the Bosnian Serb army during the 1992–95 war in BiH. One of the key war-crime suspects wanted by the ICTY, he had been at large until May 2011 when he was arrested in Serbia and extradited to the ICTY.

encouraged such invocations. On the eve of the 2010 Parade, Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović, one of the highest Church dignitaries and notorious homophobe, described the Parade as 'Sodom and Gomorrah' and 'violent propaganda.' The Holy Synod, the executive body of the Church, released another statement hours later in which it called for non-violence but also condemned those who 'threaten public morality' and publicly express their sexual orientation that should remain private (*Blic* 2010). On the day of the Parade, several priests wearing black cassocks and carrying crosses led groups of the rioters, and in some cases even used their special status to get through police cordons. Some of the rioters also carried crosses and Orthodox icons and sang religious songs. Churches served as rallying points from where the rioters launched their attacks on the police and where they hid to avoid arrest.

The very limited claims of tolerance for non-heteronormative practices that the nationalists articulated[42] were also compatible with the position of the Church, and point again to the nature of the Parade struggles as a conflict over public sphere. In interviews, the nationalists claimed that they 'had nothing against' such practices in private (except that they were sinful) and 'did not care' and 'did not ask' what anybody's sexual preference was. Vladan Glišić of Dveri even vowed that Dveri would support legislation banning discrimination against LGBT persons in employment, and pretended that Russia gave them such rights while banning their 'propaganda.' What Dveri (and other nationalists) supposedly opposed was 'homosexualism,' their own idea of what the Parade was about – public shows of homosexuality and a diabolic conspiracy to destroy the traditional family by imposing a gay 'ideology.'

Instead of suggesting that there is something inherently 'Orthodox' about this purported 'tolerance' of non-heteronormative practice 'within four walls' (*u četiri zida*), I argue that such specificity may rest in the *secular* authority of the Church invoked and performed by the nationalists. While such ideas are generally promoted by right-wing groups, in Serbia they have a long historical continuity, only relatively briefly punctuated by the ascendancy of socialism. Similarly to other Orthodox churches, the Serbian Orthodox Church has, since being granted ecclesiastical independence (autocephaly) in 1219, closely intertwined with Serbian royal dynasties whose members served as Church dignitaries and/or were canonised as national saints. This reflected the Orthodox Christian principle of 'symphony,' evoked by some of the interviewed

[42] Of course, even these claims must be treated very sceptically. They were articulated during interviews and public statements rather than insider situations, and there was much in nationalist rhetoric and practice that contradicted them.

nationalists under that name, according to which the church and the temporal power 'should work together for the common good' (Ghodsee 2009: 228). When the Ottoman Empire conquered Serbia in 1459, the Church started to undertake some functions of the former Serbian state. Soon after Serbia gained de facto independence in 1817, it was legally defined as the state church subordinated to the government (Pavlovich 1989). Its liberation from repression in socialist Yugoslavia was coeval with the Serbian national 'awakening' and rejection of Yugoslavism.

Socialist secularisation was replaced by two decades of a dramatic resurgence of religiosity (Blagojević 2006, 2011) and the rapprochement of the Church and the state, particularly since 2000 (Drezgić 2010; Perica 2006; Vukomanović 2005). According to its Constitution and laws, Serbia is a secular state where all churches and religious communities are independent from the state and equal before law. The nationalists detested such arrangements, seeing them as amounting to the debasement of the Church. However, others, such as many of my liberal informants, thought the actual governmental and social practice, including in the case of the Parade, reflected an excessive secular influence of the Church. The state's relationship with the Church clearly became one of the main fronts of the struggle over the nature of social order in Serbia.

Orthodox symphony, invoked as a core element of the nationalist ideal of the state, brought cyclical temporality to bear on the country's contemporary predicaments. Cyclical conceptions of time's passage are characteristic of nationalist thought structured by the life-cycle metaphor of birth, growth, decay and death of the nation (Verdery 1999: 115–27). This temporal ideology preoccupied with the glorious past contrasts with the linear temporality of liberal civil society and the present regime which implements a seemingly endless series of reforms so as to reach the elusive target of modern 'European' future. Serbian nationalists fear the death of the ethnonation in the biopolitical sense of demographic extinction, but also in the sense of 'occupation.' To regain collective national sovereignty equated with 'freedom,' they call for a rebirth of the spirit of medieval and early modern Serbia, and often quite literally demand the restoration of monarchy and feudal 'estates society.' They imagine the past states as inherently harmonious, prosperous, holy, and sovereign polities of the ethnonation, ruled by Serbian rather than foreign dynasties. The autocephalous Church plays a key role in this myth, as it accompanied the nation through most of its life cycle. In the cyclical time frame, then, ethnonational rebirth presumes a return of the Church to its former prominence. Moreover, as the next section demonstrates, the Orthodox bond

between religion and ethnonational belonging is an important element of the nationalist myth of the nation on whose behalf they claim to act. The key to who and how Serbian nationalists try to address lies in this myth.

In the name of (a myth) of the nation

In an interview for a nationalist magazine, Mladen Obradović, the Obraz leader, claimed that 'there wasn't an ordinary man who would support that the [2009] Parade is held. Obraz has only expressed in a clear and direct way what the nation thinks' (Zarković 2010). On the eve of the 2010 Parade, Dveri told the media that '[i]nstead of the problem of white plague [i.e. demographic decline] and whether there is bread and milk,[43] our state is concerned with [trivial] problems of one aggressive minority group' (*Press Online* 2010b). The nationalists constructed the Parade, an outgrowth of demands for individual rights and the inclusion of the particular, as an elite political agenda imposed by the 'a-national regime' to please the EU and the 'aggressive' LGBT minority (Greenberg 2006; Mikuš 2011). They counterposed it against the universal values and collective rights of the 'nation,' such as employment, social justice, and biological survival and reproduction. This was an example of a successful populist strategy that exploited pre-existing resentments and anxieties (Mudde 2000). More than 400,000 people lost their jobs in 2008–10 and the already high unemployment rate soared (RZS n.d.). The 2011 census only confirmed what was generally assumed – Serbia (without Kosovo) had lost almost 5% of its population since 2001 (RZS 2011). Swaths of rural areas and most provincial towns were being depopulated as people flocked to Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš in search of subsistence. This was generally considered alarming, but the nationalists especially were spreading the fear that the 'white plague' would eventually lead to the extinction of the nation. They discussed these issues in apocalyptic terms as being on the 'brink of catastrophe' or the 'complete collapse of the state and society,' and attributed them to the 'regime' that was looting and destroying the economy with a vicious disregard for the nation. The Parade, framed as an undertaking of the state/regime, thus went far beyond the issue of LGBT rights. Through resisting it, and being subsequently supposedly victimised, the nationalists aligned themselves with the innocent ethnonational masses, oppressed by the corrupt anti-Serbian elites serving their colonial overlords.

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[43] This refers to food shortages which, however, were episodic, localised and limited to a very few foodstuffs at the time of my fieldwork.

The Parade was but one context in which the nationalists claimed to act on behalf of the nation, and indeed as its organic part. They would tell me that they 'were educated that the interest of the community is above the interest of individuals,' which is why they joined their respective organisations that variously designated themselves as 'National Movement,' 'Fatherland Movement' or 'Movement for Serbia.' The nation that they mythologised was first and foremost exclusively Serb in that its properties, as their ancient origins proved, were natural for Serbs. Sharing such an essence, the nation was 'united' and 'harmonious'. Although some 'divisions' (*podele*) were acknowledged, these were constructed so as to fit the myth. The elites were considered as self-excluded from the nation by their actions and often marked as 'anti-Serbs' and 'Serb-haters.' Other than that, divisions were relatively recent aberrations imported from 'the West' or 'Europe.' Speaking at the meeting on the unification of the patriotic bloc, Mladen Obradović, the leader of Obraz whose juvenile appearance clashes with his highly stylised clerical rhetoric, warned against looking for 'human, earthly' solutions, especially 'ideologies,' for the problems of Serbia:

> [T]hat way, we will keep going around in the same vicious circle in which the Serbian nation, unfortunately, finds itself since almost a century and a half ago [when] two evils had been imported to this space – one evil, that's sects, and the other, that's [political] parties.

In that period of emancipation from the Ottoman Rule, Obradović continued, Serbs made a key historical mistake – instead of turning to Russia, they turned to the West and thus 'divisions' reached Serbia.

> Why did the Serbian nation in all its glorious and holy history, until most recent times, not know social unrests, peasant rebellions, worker uprisings and so on? We never had that, especially not in the time of the holy Nemanjić.[44] Why? Because the whole state and society was imbued with that which is the holiest, the most important – the Orthodox belief...

The solution was for all Serbs, and especially all nationalists, to 'gather around a single idea,' namely Saint-Savaism (*svetosavlje*), suggested Obradović. He concluded with a number of quotes from the work of Bishop (and, since 2003, Saint) Nikolaj

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[44] The House of Nemanjić ruled medieval Serbia in its period of expansion (1166–1371). It is known as 'saint-bearing lineage' (*svetorodna loza*) because many of its members were canonised. Saint Sava, son of the founder of the dynasty Stefan Nemanja, was consecrated in 1219 as the first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which by this deed has achieved autocephaly. The Nemanjić thus epitomise the symphony of the Church and the state.

Velimirović, one of the godfathers of Saint-Savaism. Speaking next, Ivan Ivanović of Naši reiterated: 'There aren't any ideologies for the Serb, as Mladen said, the only ideology at this point is Orthodoxy and Saint-Savaism.'

In general, the nationalists, with Obraz at the forefront, proclaimed Saint-Savaism or 'Saint-Savaist nationalism' their most important or even only ideology. This fuzzy blend of messianism and anti-Western, Slavophile nationalism had been articulated in the interwar period by mostly church-affiliated nationalist intellectuals who stressed the importance of Serbian Orthodoxy and the Church for the entire Serbian national being (Falina 2007). This resonates with the vernacular ideas of Orthodoxy. Most Serbs who declare themselves 'Orthodox' understand Orthodoxy primarily as a 'political religion' which sacralises the Serbian nation, rather than something necessitating an intense personal relationship with God or frequent public displays of piety (Ilić 2009; Malešević 2006; see also Ghodsee 2009 on Bulgaria). It is in this context that 'sects' and 'ideologies' threaten the unity and welfare of the nation.

As Obradović's comments already implied, this amalgam of religion and nationalism was invoked as the ultimate solution for all kinds of problems, including social ones. Since the nation was constructed as inherently internally solidary, all of this would wane once it reclaims its complete political sovereignty, and cultural and economic autonomy. EU integration, and transnationalisation more broadly, was 'colonisation' destructive not only for the identity of the Serbian nation, but also its welfare. Vladan Glišić of Dveri thus explained their 'Saint-Savaist approach' to me:

> [T]o be Christian in the Serbian nation [today] means to take care of a nation which is disempowered, (...) socially humiliated, (...) nationally ruined and defeated and subjugated and enslaved, and when you put it all like this, then to be Christian today and to be socially active means to fight for national freedom and social justice in Serbia.

The nationalists argued that poverty and 'social differences' in Serbia had never been so great and shameful as today, and emphasised that 'social justice' was one of their main priorities. Igor Marinković even told me that Naši could be as well considered 'leftist.' However, one would struggle to find anything leftist in the nationalists' programmes. Class almost never features in their discourse, unless they talk about the 'political' or 'ruling class.' Social inequalities and struggles are reduced to the populist dichotomy and collective subjugation of the Serb nation by the anti-Serb elites and colonisers. Once the nation is liberated, the interests of capitalists and workers, men and women, parents and children, and LGBT people and homophobes

will be all effortlessly reconciled. Inequalities will not disappear – they will be normalised by an organicist social order in which everybody knows their rightful place. The nationalists did not see any contradiction between the supposed social justice of the ideal (medieval and early modern) Serbia and its relationships of inequality, which they would style as the 'spiritual vertical of God in heaven, king in the state, and [male] master (*domaćin*) in the house.' The Saint-Savaist fusion of Orthodoxy and ethnonational statehood predetermined and naturalised clerical, feudal and patriarchal forms of domination intrinsic to one's position within the holistic order of the nation. It legitimated the premodern political and social relationships and provided a critique of the deepening and increasingly individualised inequalities and particularistic 'rights' (minority, women's, LGBT and so on) emerging in the liberalising Serbia.

This understanding of social justice guided frequent 'humanitarian actions' when the organisations collected aid from members and sympathisers and delivered it, in almost all cases I know of, to Kosovo Serbs. These were clearly defined as beneficiaries by their ethnicity combined with material deprivation and symbolically charged residence in Kosovo. The 'actions' were often framed in terms of Christian charity and coincided with Christmas; Dveri tended to approach prospective donors through Serbian Orthodox eparchies in the diaspora. This contrasts with the provision of aid and assistance by NGOs which targeted particular categories of people disadvantaged by their gender, minority ethnicity, health issues, orphanhood, and so on.

'Family' and 'family values' were constructed as natural cornerstones of solidarity and social justice within the nation. The nationalists evoked 'family,' with recurrent epithets like 'numerous' and 'patriarchal,' as the prerequisite of the nation's biological survival, and professed to plan such families themselves. Family was to become the primary welfare beneficiary in the ideal state, in contrast with its woeful neglect by the 'regime.' Although the nationalists claimed not to oppose the involvement of women in public life, they had no doubts that their natural purpose and wish in life was to be a 'woman of the family' (*porodična žena*). Dveri, who transformed from an association of citizens into a party in 2011, consistently styled themselves as a 'family' and a 'movement of family people' rather than a party. Their relatively elaborate election programme did not include a section on social policy, but it talked at length about 'family policy' (Dveri n.d.).

The nationalists also implied the primordial idea of the nation as a family in which the conceptual difference between the family and the nation is largely one of scale (Simić 2002). Thus, they would address their audience in meetings and protests,

and the readers of their texts, as 'brothers and sisters,' often preceded by the rather archaic greeting 'God help you' (*pomaže Bog*), to which the audience would ritually respond 'God help you as well' (*Bog ti pomogao*). Ivan Ivanović's references to 'all the holy Serbs who lived before us' and 'our children' were but one of many instances when the nationalists constructed their own actions as guided by feelings of shame and duty toward their 'ancestors' and 'children.' In these instantiations of the generic theme of nation-as-family (Verdery 1996: 63), kinship served as a model for both past- and future-oriented responsibility and solidarity that collectively and metaphysically obliged Serb contemporaries to their ancestors, including very distant ones, and descendants.

With their gestures to poverty, unemployment and inequality, the nationalists would appear amenable to Kalb's interpretation of nationalist populism as articulating the grievances of the working class. But the Serbian case seems to me somewhat different. It is not so relevant that the nationalist leaders were mostly highly educated middle-class urbanites – university students and professors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, professors, entrepreneurs, IT specialists, and even an odd official of the Milošević regime. Neo-nationalist and populist elites in Western Europe also often come from different backgrounds than 'the people' that they purport to represent (Gingrich & Banks 2006). It is perhaps more revealing that some of the organisations had been established and/or enjoyed significant memberships and institutional support in institutions of higher education, especially the Faculties of Law (Nomokanon), Mechanical Engineering and Philology (Dveri), and Philosophy and Theology (Obraz) of the University of Belgrade.

But what I really want to emphasise is that the nationalists' overriding emphasis on family, coupled with silence on the issues of class and social policy, addressed and attracted the support of an audience whose anatomy did not neatly overlap with the working class. It neither had much to offer the elderly, nor those younger people for whom having an idealised heteronormative family was not the (main) aspiration. It was bound to appeal to the many young and productive-age people frustrated by their inability to start a family, or those who already did but struggled to make ends meet. Young people were particularly hit by unemployment and many, if not most, were forced to live with their parents. Through the emphasis on a 'patriarchal' family, the nationalists addressed especially those young men whose breadwinner self-image clashed with their disenfranchisement. The nationalists endeavoured to articulate and channel their anger. For instance, Serbian Action, a lesser-known organisation, posted following stickers throughout Belgrade before the 2011 Parade which was eventually

called off: 'Youth without hope / Work's waiting / And the regime walks faggots through Belgrade / Now that's been enough!' Many of the anti-Parade rioters were believed to be recruited from 'extremist' football hooligan groups that are considered an alternative means of subsistence for unemployed young men. Organised as little armies, they are available for hire for all kinds of criminal activities – racketeering, drug dealing, and perhaps, as popular conspiracy theories claimed, the riots.[45]

It is possible that many of the rioters came from working-class families; in the absence of any relevant research, we can only guess. But in a context of generalised impoverishment and destitution, it seems unlikely that they were the only, or even the principal class attracted by the nationalist movements. The nationalists' metropolitan presence, their university strongholds, and their deft use of the internet and social networks all point in this direction. Some further supporting arguments are presented in the next section which looks at the case of a nationalist organisation, already mentioned, that expanded into a party: the case of Dveri.

Normalising state power: from the Family Walk to the elections

In September 2009, eight days before a Parade was to be held, Dveri organised the first of a series of events called 'Family Walk' (*Porodična šetnja*). In hindsight, it marked the beginning of their expansion from what other nationalists still perceive as a rather elitist association of citizens to something that, in everything but name and legal status, was a fledgling populist party. The Dveri Serbian Assembly was established in 1999 by a group of students of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade. These people now constitute the leadership of both the association of citizens and its political permutation, a movement called Dveri for the Life of Serbia.[46] As trademark activities, they used to publish a fanzine and later magazine *Dveri srpske* ('Serbian Doors of the Iconostasis') and organise 'debates,' mostly at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Belgrade. They enjoyed exceptionally close ties to the Serbian Orthodox Church whose high dignitaries attended and spoke at their events. Until late 2010 or early 2011, prominent Dveri members worked in the editorial team of *Pravoslavlje* ('Orthodoxy'),

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[45] In Serbia, similar instrumentalist explanations, typically supported with little evidence, surround all violent clashes in recent years.

[46] In my understanding, Dveri as a movement has no legal subjectivity separate from Dveri as an association of citizens. Instead of registering as a political party, they ran in the 2012 elections as a 'group of citizens,' which is less demanding both bureaucratically and financially.

official magazine of the Patriarchate of the Church. With Church-affiliated youth organisations, they co-organised a number of 'assemblies of Orthodox youth.' In February 2011, Dveri revealed ambitions to 'enter politics' which culminated in their participation in the general elections of May 2012. In this context, the first (2009) and second (2010) Family Walks may be interpreted as their reorientation to new kinds of practices, suitable for the purpose of mass political mobilisation, and a launch of the discourse on family as the leitmotif of their election campaign.

The 2010 Walk replicated many of the pragmatic, discursive and iconographic elements pioneered by the 2009 Walk, and exemplified the role of 'walks' in the Parade-related struggles over public space. Turnout was estimated at between a few hundred and 2,000 according to the media, and 15,000 according to Dveri. At 1 pm on that Saturday, the plaza near the centrally located Faculty of Philosophy was teeming with waiting people listening to Serbian and Yugoslav rock as well as Beogradski sindikat, a hip hop band known for their aggressive political lyrics. Men and women of all ages and social backgrounds, including many children who received colourful balloons, gave an impression of a truly popular crowd. Apart from many Serbian flags, several banners provided by Dveri could be seen in the crowd, reading 'We defend the family,' 'The movement for the family' and 'Life is on our side.' A large banner hanging above the improvised podium assured onlookers that 'We are not a party, we are a family.' Srđan Nogo, member of the Dveri management board, welcomed everyone at 'a family protest in the defence of the family and for the cancellation of the Gay Parade.' He yelled that nobody asked 'us' whether we agree to pay the costs of 'this shameful event' that is against the Constitution, public morals, and the opinion of the 'majoritarian Serbia' and the Church. Miroslav Parović then blamed the Parade on the anti-family 'system,' in addition to unemployment, bad economy, the privatisation of enterprises and natural resources, and food shortages. The audience booed, shouted and whistled in support of his points, and some broke into football-style chants of 'kill, kill the faggot' and 'the faggot won't walk through the city.' After two more addresses, Vladan Glišić concluded in his priestly, theatrically tranquil diction:

> Brothers and sisters, we are the majority of Serbia. We don't need violence, we are strong and there is the quiet decisiveness of this nation behind us that represents a strong river, a river that will change Serbia. We are not a party, we are a family!

The crowd then marched by the National Assembly and the state TV, covering a much larger section of the downtown than the hermetically segregated Parade would on the next day. People chanted invitations for President Tadić to 'kill [himself] and save

Serbia' and the refrain of a rap song about the police: 'You are the regime's servants / You defend the rich / Beat the people for peanuts / Protect thieves,' with some singing 'faggots' instead of 'thieves.' After they had returned to the same plaza, Škabo of Beogradski sindikat joined by other rappers played a short gig.

Despite this anti-systemic rhetoric, Family Walks were events tolerated and policed by the state. 'Public assemblies' (*javni skupovi*) are subject to the authorisation of the Ministry of Interior that does not shy from using its prerogative to ban protests, ostensibly for 'security reasons.' Further, unlike the Parade rioters who physically negated state sovereignty, Dveri demanded verbally that the state ban the Parade, thus confirming its ultimate authority. In 2011, they started a petition against the Parade and released a joint statement with the Police Trade Union of Serbia which advised 'all citizens who wish to oppose the Gay Parade to do so in a peaceful and non-violent manner and avoid any clashes with the police' (Dveri 2011b). As a sign that Dveri succeeded in positioning themselves as a non-violent (and thus somehow 'civil') opposition to the Parade, influential liberal media such as the B92 TV and the *NIN* weekly invited Vladan Glišić, the only nationalist to whom such an invitation was extended, to discuss the subject together with LGBT activists and major politicians.

It bears noting that Dveri, unlike most other nationalist organisations, never faced legal action. Quite to the contrary, in 2008 and 2009 they received project funding totalling 1m dinars (then about £9,000–10,000) from two ministries of the same 'regime' that they so vehemently criticised (CRNPS n.d.).[47] They also received 4.2m dinars from the state-owned Kolubara coal mine in 2008, a fact that surfaced in the context of the scandalous revelations of large-scale looting in the company under a government-appointed management (*B92* 2011). Finally, they received funding from the cities of Čačak and Vranje and the municipalities of Knjaževac and Voždovac (*B92* 2010b). Institutional politics were not absolutely new to them either – Glišić, at the time of my fieldwork the Deputy Public Prosecutor of the Belgrade municipality of Rakovica, served as the vice-president of the local organisation of the Democratic Party of Serbia in Aranđelovac until early 2000s.

This de facto rapprochement with the state is most obvious from Dveri's participation in the general elections of May 2012. In the spring of 2012, Family Walks in about ten Serbian cities were openly incorporated into their election campaign.

[47] I know of no evidence that any other of the organisations I mentioned would receive state project funding. However, the state funds some associations of war veterans, some of which maintain ideological and social links with nationalist organisations.

'Family' was a key campaign buzzword as Dveri pledged to help young families and thus biologically save the nation, but also framed themselves and their supporters as 'one family.' In their pre-election *Letters to the Voters,* they pledged to 'speak in the name of small and medium entrepreneurs, family companies, household production, the village, agriculture and all socially threatened categories' (Dveri 2012). Their *Economic Manifesto* presented a mercantilist and protectionist vision of national capitalism, studiously avoiding, in line with the assumption of national unity, any mention of labour unions, worker rights or even workers themselves (Dveri 2011a). In the elections, Dveri achieved a respectable result for a newcomer – they narrowly missed the 5% threshold for entering the National Assembly while securing seats in 12 city and municipal assemblies. The characteristics of these municipalities suggest a predominantly urban and middle-class social base. They captured more than 15% of votes in Čačak, the fifth largest Serbian city from where one of the Dveri leaders comes and which is known for an economy based on small and medium private enterprises (SMEs). They further passed the census in one Belgrade municipality, Novi Sad (the second largest city), two municipalities in Niš (the third largest), two relatively wealthy Vojvodinian municipalities (Sremski Karlovci and Bačka Palanka), and in Arilje, another town with a proliferation of SMEs. They failed to pass the census in the biggest industrial centres, such as Kragujevac, Bor, Pančevo, Šabac or Smederevo. It thus seems likely that Dveri mobilised, alongside the aforementioned demographic groups, especially the many small private entrepreneurs hard hit by the crisis.

Dveri's participation in elections and institutional politics shows that they are becoming a 'normal' political movement competing for state power. For some time, they may succeed in representing themselves as 'a family, not a party,' but their radical rhetoric is a resource bound to be eventually spent on legitimating non-radical practice. Dveri effectively normalise the state as something that can – indeed, should – be transformed by its own rules of the game. They may continue to articulate their alternative visions of the state, but these now actually reinforce the ultimate authority of the state which is strong enough to tolerate – and even incorporate, by guiding them into legal and institutionalised channels – radical challenges to itself.

Dveri also subverted the ideal of the nationalists as united, mutually and with their 'nation,' against the elites. As the meeting on unification showed, the nationalists deplored the fragmentation of the 'patriotic bloc' in general. However, many identified Dveri as the most flagrant case of this lack of solidarity. Igor Marinković of Naši told me how Dveri joined Naši and other groups to co-organise a 'joint rally' on the day of

the 2010 Parade. Preparations were well-advanced when Dveri suddenly backed out and simply announced to the others that they would again hold their Family Walk, as a result of which their relationships grew much colder. Marinković claimed not to be surprised. Dveri had always acted as 'an elite, very smart [and] educated' but 'afraid to support us in street happenings,' and soon after the incident they would begin their transformation into a political movement. Critical comments about Dveri could be also heard in the meeting on unification where Dveri were notably absent. The quoted definition of 'patriotic organisations' by Ivan Ivanović, leader of Naši, was clearly meant to exclude Dveri on the grounds of not joining the riots. Some nationalists, such as Miša Vacić of 1389, publicly accused Dveri of being sponsored by the 'regime,' especially the ruling Democratic Party. Questions arose about how Dveri paid their campaign expenses.

Dveri might seem a special case, different from other nationalist organisations, but if there is a difference, it is one of degree rather than kind. Other organisations also aspire to a place in institutional politics. For instance, 1389 ran as a 'group of citizens' in the 2012 local elections in Novi Beograd, their stronghold, but received only about 2% of the vote. Members of Naši were more successful on the candidates list of the Democratic Party of Serbia in Mladenovac. Moreover, since 2010, Ivanović represents the New Serbia party in the Municipal Assembly in Aranđelovac. In an interview, Igor Marinković commented on this in a strikingly casual manner: 'So we passed the [5%] threshold in elections.' However, while the nationalists, evidently lacking interest in public self-reflection, presented such practices as perfectly legitimate and maintained that they were the moral and political anathema of all other actors of institutional politics, this did not shield them off from critiques by their nationalist rivals and potential supporters. Rumours accusing individuals and organisations of even worse forms of co-optation than those publicly known were easy to find in nationalist internet discussions or hear from particularly embittered rivals. The loss of radical populist credibility was a price to pay for the rapprochement with the state.

If I have argued that certain practices of the nationalists normalised the state and compromised their own alternative visions, many citizens and commentators with broadly liberal and progressive views saw this process rather as a 'de-normalisation' of the state, or more accurately its persistent abnormality. They believed that the state made a show of its regulatory weakness and ideological indeterminacy by allowing the 2010 riots to happen and insufficiently condemning and prosecuting the perpetrators and 'extremists' more generally. Conspicuously, the government officials condemned

the riots as an attack on the state and the constitutional right of assembly, and mostly avoided mentioning or even actively rejected their ideological character. They referred to the perpetrators as ‘young people’ or even ‘children’ who were ‘manipulated,’ or more harshly but still apolitically as ‘hooligans,’ ‘vandals’ or ‘troublemakers’ (*izgrednici*). One of the Parade organisers whom I interviewed described the state’s soft treatment of the rioters as following ‘that principle, like, the Pride’s fine, but you’re fine too.’ The cancellation of the 2011 Parade was then interpreted as the state’s surrender to the nationalists. From the liberal perspective, all of this destabilised the state’s hegemonic discourse of liberalisation and ‘Europeanisation’ and suggested the continuing legacies of nationalism and state dysfunctionality.

However, at least two analytic objections must be raised to this narrative. First, the Serbian state, like any other, is a heterogeneous and dispersed assemblage of agencies. The central government, courts and opposition parties all belong to the state but their interests and positions fundamentally diverge. The state’s ambiguous relationship to the nationalists more likely ensues from these actors’ differences and conflicts than from an intentional action of the state as a unitary subject. Second, and more tentatively, the tacit tolerance and creeping co-optation of the nationalists, instead of their heavy-handed repression demanded by many liberals, may paradoxically signal the state’s strength rather than weakness. If the nationalist resistance boils down to radical rhetoric used in a more or less formalised political competition, it ceases to pose a significant challenge to the reproduction of state power. At the same time, the state retains its authority through succeeding to be represented and seen as a mediator that reflects and articulates rather than suppresses pervasive antagonisms.

Conclusion

The Pride Parade has become one of the main lines of confrontation between liberal civil society and the ‘Europeanising’ state, on the one hand, and nationalist organisations and movements, on the other. The latter found the Parade an efficient way of mobilising support for their own political project responding to a much broader set of issues related to Serbia’s integration into the transnational order. Identitarian fears, a sense of national subjugation, and socioeconomic frustrations coalesce into a nationalist-populist narrative whose construction is in many ways reminiscent of Milošević’s similarly inclusive strategy. So far, however, the nationalists have failed to build a strong social and political coalition to challenge the hegemonic transformations.

They did achieve some victories: the Ministry of Interior banned, citing security reasons, the Parades scheduled to be held in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (although the decisions were probably made mainly because of the interests of established political elites), and some of the organisations managed to legitimise themselves as participants in local institutional politics. Nevertheless, the government that took power in 2012 has successfully appropriated populist rhetoric in a manner that supports its own ascendancy (see the conclusion), thus squeezing out nationalist organisations and movements from that part of political space. Moreover, the government's significant advance toward a factual recognition of the independence of Kosovo has met with little popular resistance, suggesting that this important nationalist motif had become increasingly exhausted. It remains to be seen whether nationalist populism can again become a basis for broad anti-regime mobilisation if many continue to be excluded from the benefits of transformation.

Part II:
Reforming (through) the state-civil society interface

Chapter 3:
The rise of 'partnerships': the double kind of reform at the interface and the politics of 'transparency'

In May 2011, the Palace of Serbia, a vast modernist building in Novi Beograd colloquially known as SIV (for *Savezno izvršno veće*, the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council for which it was originally constructed in the 1950s), hosted a one-day Conference on Partnerships. It was the first formal event in Serbia on 'partnerships' between the three 'sectors' that the agenda identified as the public sector, civil society, and the private sector. It was organised by BCIF which arranged most of the practicalities, the EU Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations which provided funding, and the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society (hereafter 'the Office'), a government body which had only started to work five months earlier. By hosting the conference in the spacious, stately halls of SIV, the government was giving a signal of its investment in the partnership agenda.

In his keynote speech, Adriano Martins, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, said that one of the aims of EU funding for Serbian 'civil society organisations' (CSOs) was to involve them in democratic decision-making, and that 'strengthening the partnership of CSOs with the state and other stakeholders is crucial' for Serbia's European integration. This framing of partnerships by integration continued through the first panel discussion on 'defining partnerships and the possibilities of their development.' Ognjen Mirić, Deputy Director of the Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO) in charge of EU funds coordination, insisted that partnerships for the purposes of EU funding must be based on a 'formal mechanism of cooperation' rather than 'personal links.' He described how SEIO had developed precisely this kind of formal consultative mechanism for the 'programming of EU funding for Serbia.' In the same panel, Ivana Ćirković, Director of the Office, remarked that there is still a lack of knowledge about, and will to build, 'systematic, formal partnerships,' and stressed the importance of transparent public funding for CSOs with 'clear criteria' for approving grants.

This chapter analyses this recent arrival of the language of 'partnerships' to Serbia. It focuses on partnerships between the state and civil society that correspond to the involvement of civil society in the performance of traditional state functions, such as policy-making, law-making or provision of public services. It examines two kinds of reform, or more accurately its two levels: reforms *through* the state-civil society

interface (its expansion) and reforms *of* the interface (changing its regulation). Four key arguments are made about partnerships.

First, developing the theme of Chapter 1, it is argued that the agenda of partnerships was part of the hegemonic project of 'Europeanisation.' The organisational set-up and rhetoric used at the conference revealed the tendency of Serbian statespeople and NGO workers to frame partnerships, discursively and institutionally, by the process of EU integration. This was a two-way process. Partnerships were a central competency of the Office whose establishment and initial functioning was to a great extent driven and supported by the EU and other foreign actors. The agenda was thus part of the transnational reform of the Serbian state that creates qualitatively new statal forms and practices, exemplified by the Office. The products of this 'projectisation' of the state can be described as NGO/state hybrids: they were closely integrated into the central government but spent a lot of time on implementing 'projects' funded by foreign donors. Unsurprisingly, their workers often came to public administration from liberal civil society.

Second, apart from EU integration, two reasons were evoked for the desirability of partnerships: democratisation, since NGOs supposedly represent the interests of citizens vis-à-vis the state, and a more efficient delivery of state functions, since NGOs can often do better for less. Building on the latter justification, reforms *through* the state-civil society interface are analysed as a neoliberal critique and optimisation of government gaining traction at the time of the crisis.

Third, the concern with efficiency also guided the second kind of reforms analysed here. The conference showed that partnerships were thought not to work well unless they are 'formalised,' 'transparent' and regulated by 'clear criteria.' Reforms *of* the state-civil society therefore proposed to introduce governmental technologies such as competitive public tendering, programme budgeting and financial monitoring to subject cooperation to the norms of efficiency and 'transparency.' Following the method of tracing the influence of 'minor traditions of neoliberal thought' on current reforms (Collier 2011), I suggest that these reforms modelled funding for civil society after the practice of public procurement, and as such rested conceptually on one such minor neoliberal tradition – the economics of regulation.

Fourth, I argue that a group of influential NGOs was at least partly driven to advocate for these reforms by political agendas that had nothing to do with neoliberalism. More specifically, the reforms promised to improve the access of such NGOs to public funds for which they had so far had to compete with other kinds of

organisations, including their major ideological adversaries like the Serbian Orthodox Church. I further suggest that the emphasis on transparency focused attention to procedural details, thereby obscuring the underlying political agendas, and was selectively applied in a manner which favoured the reform advocates while delegitimising their competitors for public funding for civil society. To show this, I trace several interrelated legal reforms funded by foreign donors that were meant to introduce the described governmental technologies. At the same time, they were illustrations of partnerships in which the state partially delegated its core function of law-making to a group of NGOs that significantly overlapped with the group of reform advocates. Paradoxically, these NGOs, but also the donors and state bodies that participated in the reforms, failed to meet the criteria of formalised participation, competition and transparency. Over the past decade, NGO participation in these processes continued to be dominated by the same small group of 'interface masters'– organisations and individuals recruited in an informal, personalistic, and therefore (to take the partnership discourse seriously) 'non-transparent' and 'non-competitive' manner. The interface masters also enjoyed privileged access to the activities of the Office and other partnership-oriented state institutions. This analysis highlights the disjunctions between the stated aims and actual effects of these reforms as well as some universal problems of neoliberal restructuring that go beyond the Serbian context. It also points to the limited achievements of the analysed interventions in reforming the pre-existing forms of sociality and state-civil society relations.

'Reminders from the outside': the Office, the Focal Point, the Unit, and the *Strategy*

The recent history of the founding of the Office (see Fig. 4) is highly revealing of the reforms and social relationships discussed in this chapter. In an interview, Ivana Ćirković, Director of the Office, told me that although there had earlier been some talk about an 'institutional mechanism' of cooperation between the state and civil society, the breakthrough only came later. It occurred in the context of the activities of her previous workplace, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (hereafter 'the Unit'), or rather the Unit's former incarnation called the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point (hereafter 'the Focal Point'). The government established the Focal Point in 2004 to implement the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (hereafter 'the

YEAR	STEPS IN THE PROCESS	CONTEXT
2003		**Oct:** government adopts the *Poverty Reduction Strategy*
2004		**Sep:** government establishes the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point
2006	**Jan/Feb:** Ivana Ćirković joins the Focal Point as Social Policy and Vulnerable Social Groups Coordinator; she becomes Deputy Team Manager later **Oct:** Focal Point and external consultants complete a report which recommends to include CSOs in the implementation of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy*	
2007	**Mar:** Focal Point launches the Civil Society Focal Points (CSFP) programme; Ćirković is engaged on the programme **Apr:** CSFP organisations chosen	**May:** Božidar Đelić becomes Deputy PM for European Integration
2008	**Mar:** CSFP organisations hold a meeting with Deputy PM Đelić and present a document calling for an office of the government for cooperation with civil society **late 2008**: Focal Point engages consultants Golubović and Anđelković to draft a report 'on institutional mechanisms of cooperation of the government and civil society'	
2009	**Apr:** consultants finalise the report which recommends an office of the government as the most suitable model of cooperation with civil society for Serbia **Jul:** the National Assembly adopts the Law on Associations; the pressure on the government, especially from the Unit and Đelić, to establish the Office intensifies	**Mar:** the implementation of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* ends **Jul:** Focal Point is transformed into the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit within the Cabinet of Deputy PM for European Integration
2010	**Apr:** government adopts the founding regulation of the Office **Nov:** European Commission issues *Serbia 2010 Progress Report* criticising that the Office is 'still not operational' **Dec:** government adopts an action plan (Government... 2010a: 11) which lists appointing Director of the Office as a priority	
2011	**Jan:** Ćirković is appointed as Director	

FIGURE 4. The process of the founding of the Office. Based on interviews and internet resources.

Strategy'), which it adopted as a condition of access to the World Bank credits. When the implementation ended in 2009, the Focal Point was transformed into the Unit whose mandate encompassed 'poverty reduction' as well as the EU-driven 'social inclusion' agenda. The Unit was a team of eight within the Cabinet of Deputy PM for European Integration Božidar Đelić.

In 2007, the Focal Point launched the Civil Society Focal Points (CSFP) programme to involve civil society in the implementation of the *Strategy*. Seven NGOs were chosen in a public tender process to represent the *Strategy*-targeted 'vulnerable groups.' They networked with other NGOs to form 'CSO clusters' for each of the vulnerable groups and then mediated between the clusters and the government. One of Ćirković's responsibilities was communicating with the CSFP organisations. In two public presentations I saw her give, she described these NGOs as crucial for the

founding of the Office. Indeed, in 2008, they met with Deputy PM Đelić and suggested that an office of the government for cooperation with civil society be established (CSFP 2008). In Ćirković's words, the 'initiative fell on' the Focal Point and Đelić, but support also came from Milan Marković, Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government, and Milica Delević, Director of SEIO. Later that year, the Focal Point commissioned a report that recommended an office of the government as the most suitable model of state-civil society cooperation for Serbia (Golubović & Anđelković 2009).

In Ćirković's chronology, it was after the parliament had adopted the Law on Associations in July 2009 (see below) that the government found itself under 'big pressure,' especially from the Unit and Đelić, to establish the Office. Ivan Sekulović, EU Financial and Technical Assistance Coordinator at the Unit, told me that the Unit had prepared all the documentation that the government needed to adopt the founding regulation[48] of the Office in April 2010. However, the government took another nine months to appoint a director, which my NGO research participants interpreted as a sign that its commitment to the agenda was insincere. Ćirković thought the appointment was made 'rather under pressure' by the EU whose *Serbia 2010 Progress Report* criticised the fact that the Office was 'still not operational' (EC 2010: 14). The government acted fast: Ćirković was appointed in January 2011 and the Office became 'operational.' It was given rooms in the same hallway of SIV as the Unit.

In the 2011 government budget, the Office was allocated what Ćirković described as a 'minimal budget' of 4m dinars,[49] of which more than 2m was needed to cover her legally prescribed salary. Thus, little was left for hiring more workers or for activities that the Office might wish to fund. When I suggested a comparison with the new 'independent regulatory bodies,' which the government had established but then kept under-resourced (see pp. 101–2), Ćirković agreed and commented:

> [T]hese are new authorities in the system that the government still doesn't recognise. I wouldn't think it doesn't want to, but they come from the outside, the system cannot produce them because for that awareness is necessary (...) and that comes foremost [in the form of] reminders from the outside (*podsećanje od spolja*).

The 'reminders from the outside' refer to critiques that the EU and liberal civil society made of the government's treatment of the regulatory bodies and the Office. In the case of the Office, however, the role of the 'outside' was not limited to raising

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[48] Regulation on the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society.

[49] Ca. £36,000 at the time.

'awareness.' The UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) almost doubled the Office's meagre initial budget with £35,000 of ten-month project funding (Office... 2011b: 12–3). Ćirković expected more foreign funding in the future – she told me that the Office had prepared a project proposal for bilateral support in 2012–13 and was waiting for an interested donor. She also expected that the Office would start receiving the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funding from 2013. Finally, potential future funding from the FCO was to be negotiated with the British Embassy (Office... 2011c: 13).

The Focal Point and the Unit were established to implement the World Bank and EU-promoted 'poverty reduction' and 'social inclusion' policies and as such were also funded by foreign donors. The Focal Point was financed by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DfID) which also funded the CSFP programme. After it had transformed into the Unit, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs took over and DfID continued to provide smaller funds until it closed its Serbian mission in January 2011. Ivan Sekulović described the Unit to me as a 'project' and explained that he and his colleagues are not 'civil servants' but are engaged 'for the project' and paid by the donors. Irina Ljubić, who came to the Unit from BCIF and introduced me to Ivana Ćirković, told me that the 'system of work' on her new job was similar to that in the nongovernmental sector. All her colleagues came from NGOs, worked on themes associated with NGOs, and involved NGOs in everything they did. Some five days after she had started working in the Unit, Deputy PM Đelić came to their office and greeted them with 'hey, NGO crowd' (*gde ste NGO-ovci*).

All of this suggests that the lobbying for, founding and early development of the Office was part of the ongoing transnational reform of the Serbian state – its 'Europeanisation.' International actors and other states' foreign policy departments and aid agencies contributed political incentives, financial support and policy concepts to the process, and in that manner directly participated in the transformation of the Serbian state. Revealingly, the FCO money was also spent on the 'transfer of experiences and lessons learnt' from Croatia and the UK. Most importantly, key domestic actors included Đelić (the highest-ranking government official in charge of EU integration), the Unit within his Cabinet, and SEIO. Clearly, those Serbian decision-makers and civil servants who worked on the EU integration agenda did not need any further 'reminders from the outside' to see the institutionalisation of cooperation with civil society as its part.

The EU itself contributed to this association. The European Economic and Social Committee released an opinion in which it invited Serbian authorities to amend legislation relevant for civil society, develop a strategy of civil society development, maintain a 'systematic dialogue' with CSOs, and support their development and sustainability (EESC 2008: 2). The *Serbia 2009 Progress Report* stated that 'cooperation remains mainly ad hoc and selective' (EC 2009: 15). Thus, the EU wove the expectation that Serbia develop an institutional mechanism of cooperation into the integration process. Accordingly, the Office established its own EU integration section and put the EU programme Europe for Citizens on its agenda from the start. In public events, Ivana Ćirković expressed hopes that Serbia's policies would adopt the EU definition of civil society.

The kind of state reform that the Office epitomised might also provocatively be termed 'projectisation.' The Office and, much more strikingly, the Unit, have adopted a set of practices usually associated with NGOs – they implemented 'projects' funded by foreign agencies (to the extent that the entire Unit could be legitimately described as a 'project'), wrote financial and narrative reports for the donors, and developed project proposals to secure future funding. I will argue below that Serbian NGOs were increasingly invited to perform state functions. Similar trends have been recognised around the world. However, the present cases indicate an alternative option, largely overlooked by the literature – namely, that a state on the receiving end of the international aid system becomes itself partially 'projectised,' with parts of it relying on foreign funding, implementing agendas shaped by international or supranational organisations, and hence potentially becoming more ephemeral or unstable than traditional state institutions. This trend is likely to deepen if foreign funding remains available while the current pressures to curtail government spending, especially on the public sector, intensify.

However, this point requires qualification. As shown, Serbian decision-makers were indispensable in pushing the process of establishing the Office forward, and the decision on its specific institutional form followed recommendations made by Serbian experts in the report commissioned by the Focal Point. The Office was constituted as an 'office of the Government' (*služba Vlade*), and thus its integral part. Its Director was appointed by the government on a recommendation of the government's General Secretary to whom she reported. That the Office prepared a project proposal and waited for a donor to accept it implied that Ivana Ćirković felt confident that the Office would

be able to secure and use foreign funding while staying in control (or, rather, keeping the government in control) of its own development.

Ćirković's background and understanding of her mission matched this institutional set-up. My NGO informants emphasised that she was a good person for the job because she used to work in civil society, and sometimes they claimed that the reason why she had been appointed was because leading NGOs had lobbied for it. However, she told me that what had probably stood mostly strongly in her favour was that she had been working in public administration for almost seven years, mostly in leading positions. Only somewhat later in the interview did she mention that what also qualified her was her earlier work in various CSOs. Indeed, she was equally well-versed in statal and civil-society styles of talking, and as familiar with the policies and everyday politics of the government as with those of the NGO scene.

Ćirković was born in the early 1970s in Belgrade where she finished her first degree in molecular biology and physiology, a field in which she never worked. In the 1990s and 2000s, she mostly lived in the US but also worked for a Dutch war correspondent reporting from the former Yugoslavia and volunteered in the Middle East, South East Asia and Europe. She returned to Serbia in 2003, completed her second degree in women's studies and became the head of the Sector for the Youth in the Ministry of Education and Sport in 2004. When she joined the Focal Point in 2006, the advisors in the Cabinet of Deputy PM demanded that there would be 'someone from the system'[50] as a 'link' between the government and the Focal Point. Ćirković was the first civil servant to join the Focal Point; everyone else had a civil society background. After the Focal Point had transformed into the Unit, she stayed in the team until she accepted the appointment as the Director of the Office.

The hybrid nature of the Office was evident also in the mixed background of its staff. Out of the nine people employed in the Office at the end of my fieldwork, all of whom were women, seven were previously employed in the public sector – in various ministries, SEIO, and, in one case, as the Deputy Ombudsman of the City of Belgrade. Nevertheless, four of these seven (including Ćirković) had earlier worked in NGOs and two had been working on EU-related agendas. Out of the remaining two, one person came directly from an NGO and another from the private sector. Thus, while bodies like the Office were important destinations for individuals who came to the public sector from civil society after 2000 (see pp. 79–81), many of them had had other public sector jobs earlier and tended to change jobs rapidly. The relative youth of the workers also

[50] Ćirković often referred to the government or public administration as 'the system.'

suggested that this was a reform-oriented body. Only one person was in her 50s, two (including Ćirković) in their early 40s, and the rest in their 30s or even 20s.

Ćirković made it clear in various public and semi-public meetings that she considered it crucial that the government 'recognise' the Office and take it seriously. Rather soon there were signs that the Office was starting to enjoy this much-sought-after recognition. While not happy with the original 'minimal budget' when I interviewed her, Ćirković emphasised that the Office actually 'finds big support in the system.' The Ministry of Finance had just given the Office a positive opinion on its Internal Organisation and Job Positions Classification Bylaw which was a legal precondition for its hiring more people. The government's General Secretary then officially proposed the Bylaw to the government, which approved it in December 2011.

However, the Bylaw did not guarantee that the Office would be able to employ all the 15 people that it envisaged. It was well-known that the government often did not allocate enough money to new institutions to enable them to employ the full number of workers. It was thus all the more important that the budget revision adopted in October 2011 more than tripled the budget of the Office to almost 13.5m dinars, enough to employ all the staff proposed. More good news followed soon. In November, the Ministry of Finance gave the Office a 34m limit for planning the next year's budget and similar figures were anticipated for 2013 and 2014. The Office made full use of that limit and was indeed allocated more than 34m in the 2012 budget.

In sum, the Office (and, to a much greater extent, the Unit) might be described as a 'hybrid' body: primarily of the state, but with transnational and NGO-like characteristics. It was a government body, but set up partially on initiative and with the support of foreign governance actors; it performed state functions, but sometimes in a manner reminiscent of an NGO. This is perhaps not unexpected for an institution charged with reforming the relationship of the state and civil society – the task whose vision and practical reality is the subject of next two sections.

Efficiency, transparency, formalisation: the politics of neoliberalisation

The Conference on Partnerships showed that the emergent discourse on state-civil society partnerships stressed the need for their formalisation. This section will analyse why that was the case and how it was to be achieved. But what the speakers at the conference did not address, suggesting that it was a matter of common knowledge, was

something more basic – why the development of partnerships was desirable at all. I will therefore address this issue first.

The *Strategic Framework* of the Office for 2011–14 is a good document to start from as it defines government policy on cooperation with civil society. It lists three reasons for the government's interest in establishing an 'institutional mechanism of cooperation' and 'constant dialogue and partnership' with civil society. The first is the 'important role of CSOs in modern democracies.' In such polities, it is argued, CSOs enable citizens to 'articulate, defend and advocate their legitimate interests in public and political life,' and in so doing they contribute to the exercise of 'participative democracy.' References are made to the relevant provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon and other EU documents. This is followed by a claim that civil society is particularly important in the new 'Central European' EU member states where it 'preserved the memories of the "interrupted history" and its democratic values' under communism (Office... 2011c: 4). The idea of 'interrupted history' or the evocations of 'democratic values' of the region's predominantly authoritarian interwar regimes need not concern us here. What is important is that civil society is defined in a standard liberal manner (it allows citizens to have their interests represented and 'defended,' presumably against the ever-encroaching state), in harmony with EU discourse, and in reference to the suitable 'Central European' myth of origin.

The explanation of the second reason – tellingly entitled *Reducing the Burden on the State Apparatus and Strengthening Intersectoral Cooperation* – deserves to be quoted more extensively.

> Limited financial and human resources available to the state, as well as the increased and ever more complex social needs, necessitate the democratisation of the providers of social and other services which had traditionally fell under the constitutional competence of the Government. Across Europe, the volume of social services provided by CSOs is constantly growing.
> Today, there is hardly a field of social action in which CSOs do not play a prominent role in formulating and implementing public policies [14 examples follow] – hence the interest of the Government to establish a partner-like relationship with civil society (Office... 2011c: 4).

The language is veiled, but the message is clear. The state's resources are 'limited' and increasingly strained by the society's growing needs (rather than, say, corporate demands for subsidies and tax breaks). This 'burden' is to be reduced by a partial outsourcing of the state's functions to civil society. This is represented as something

inevitable, a kind of natural process occurring 'across Europe.' Anticipating that we might persist in imagining that it is the government that is responsible for public services, the text informs us that this was only 'traditionally' the case. The 2009 report that recommended that the Office be established articulates this economic calculus more explicitly when it describes a 'cheaper and better-quality social protection system' as one of the benefits of partnerships with civil society (Golubović & Anđelković 2009: 3). Large chunks of this report have been incorporated into the *Strategic Framework*, but with some interesting changes: in the place where the *Strategic Framework* talks about the 'democratisation' of public services, the report refers to their 'privatisation' (in quotation marks). A final thing to point out is that partnering with NGOs in the context of EU integration, as the third motif predictably discussed by the *Strategic Framework*, is also found to have an 'economic-institutional aspect' – the 'strengthening of capacities for optimal usage of available EU funds' (Office... 2011c: 5).

Importantly, these justifications for delegating state functions to NGOs were formulated at the time of the crisis and calls for the reduction of the 'cumbersome' and expensive state (see pp. 75–6). In this context, NGOs came to be seen as a 'cheaper and better-quality' alternative. The argument that NGOs are more flexible, innovative and cost-efficient than state bureaucracies has become nothing short of a truism in some quarters in development and public policy (Clarke 2004a: 121; Fisher 1997: 444; Mercer 2002: 18; Miorelli 2008: 95–6, 115–6). It is easy to see why. Like private businesses, NGOs are available to be contracted for 'projects.' The state rents their labour force only for the precise duration of a project, otherwise leaving them to their own devices and to secure their own funding. Allocations for remuneration in tight project budgets are often small and do not include social and health insurance contributions. Even better, many NGOs specialise in mobilising volunteers. (Revealingly, one of the few events that the Office co-organised in its first year of existence, together with two ministries, some CSOs and UNICEF, was a 'national conference' whose purpose was to 'raise awareness' about the importance of volunteering. This was a high-profile event which featured a keynote speech by President Tadić and which Ivana Ćirković saw as extremely important). These characteristics, then, make NGOs a cheap on-demand labour reserve, in contrast to permanently employed civil servants who must be paid their legally guaranteed salaries (and insurance contributions) at all times.

The idea of partnership was thus informed by neoliberal rationality understood as a critique of 'too much government' and a method of its optimisation according to the

'rule of maximum economy' (Foucault 2008: 317–9; 2009: 29–54, 333–62). The delegation and outsourcing of state functions to NGOs has been identified as part and parcel of neoliberal restructuring which blurs and redraws the boundaries of the public realm (Clarke 2004a: 91, 116–20, 2004b; Ferguson & Gupta 2002: 990; Wedel 2009: 32–3) and contributes to the simultaneous 'de-statisation of government' and 'de-governmentalisation of the state' (Rose 1996: 56). Over past 20 years, such processes, often couched in the language of 'partnerships,' were found to proliferate in a variety of contexts, including Russia (Hemment 2009, 2012), Africa (Carmody 2007; Ferguson & Gupta 2002), Britain (Glendinning, Powell, Rummery *et al.* 2002; Rose 1996), Canada (Mitchell 2011) or Bangladesh (Lewis 1998).

Neoliberal remaking of the public realm characteristically involves privatisation in the sense of a shift of activities and resources from the public sector to the private sector where exchanges are coordinated by the market. In this scheme of privatisation, the nongovernmental sector occupies a somewhat ambivalent position – it is not-public, not-for-profit, and 'expected to behave in a more "business-like" fashion' (Clarke 2004b: 32). However, in Serbia, this was not simply an 'expectation.' Rather, particular regulatory techniques were being proposed in order to *make* NGOs behave efficiently.

The general calls for 'formal' and 'systematic' partnerships of the kind heard at the Conference on Partnerships were phrased rather more palpably in a consultative meeting of the Office with a group of about 30 NGOs in September 2011. I only knew a few people personally, but the NGOs represented, which included several interface masters, were mostly well-known and influential. With a single exception, they were all 'NGOs proper' (see p. 68). Ivana Ćirković noted that instead of issuing an 'open kind of invitation' to the meeting, 'we chose organisations that we previously worked with, that is I did, and we tried to cover various sectors and get a degree of regional coverage.' (I will return to this shortly.) She then presented the mandate and planned activities of the Office, emphasising that it would draft annual reports on public funding for civil society. The subject came up repeatedly in the ensuing discussion. The first NGO representative to speak said that the Office was going to need 'credibility' in relation to ministries and local governments in order to pursue its aim of 'financial supervision' of government grants for NGOs. Somewhat later, a BCIF representative said that the Office should focus on establishing 'mechanisms' and 'rules,' especially for funding in the 'line item 481' (see below). He also suggested that a communication channel be established, perhaps in cooperation with other relevant institutions such as 'audit

bodies' (*revizijska tela*), so that NGOs could report any issues with that funding to the government.

Ćirković and the attending NGO workers clearly agreed that reforms of public funding for civil society should be one of the Office's top priorities, as was also recognised by its *Strategic Framework* (Office... 2011c: 5–9) and other policy documents (Government... 2011a: 50). This was preceded by several years of NGO criticism of existing funding practices.[51] To understand the issue, a few words must be said about the regulation of public funding for civil society at the time of my fieldwork. In their budgetary procedures, all 'budget users' (*korisnici budžetskih sredstava*), in this context mainly ministries and local governments, were obliged to apply a standardised classification system called the Budget System Chart of Accounts. In it, NGO grants corresponded to what was known informally as the 'line item 481' (*linija 481*) and formally as the 'Group 481000 – Grants for nongovernmental organisations.'

Fig. 5 shows that the budget users treated these grants as a type of 'current expenditures' that they were free to award to a very broad range of 'nongovernmental organisations.' Curiously, this category was not mentioned anywhere else in Serbian law.[52] The classification system defined churches, sports associations and political parties as 'nongovernmental organisations' – which they were not, in the everyday understanding of the term that corresponds to what I called 'NGOs proper.' Furthermore, the inclusion of 'grants for other nonprofit institutions' enabled the awarding of grants to nonprofit bodies that were not nongovernmental in either the colloquial or the legal sense, such as state schools or libraries regularly funded from other line items.

This system had two other crucial consequences. First, the line item 481 in public budgets drafted for the following year only showed 'appropriations' – amounts of money allocated to budget users – which the users could distribute to all 'nongovernmental organisations.' One had to wait until the end of the year in question, when 'budget execution reports' became available, to find out retrospectively how much money had actually been awarded to any particular organisation or kind of organisation.

Second, 481 appropriations could be spent on grants for various kinds of organisations whose public funding was differentially legally regulated. In the case of

[51] The current lack of 'transparency' has also been the subject of EU criticisms and recommendations (EC 2010: 14; EESC 2008: 1–2).

[52] The law knows 'associations of citizens,' 'foundations' and 'endowments.'

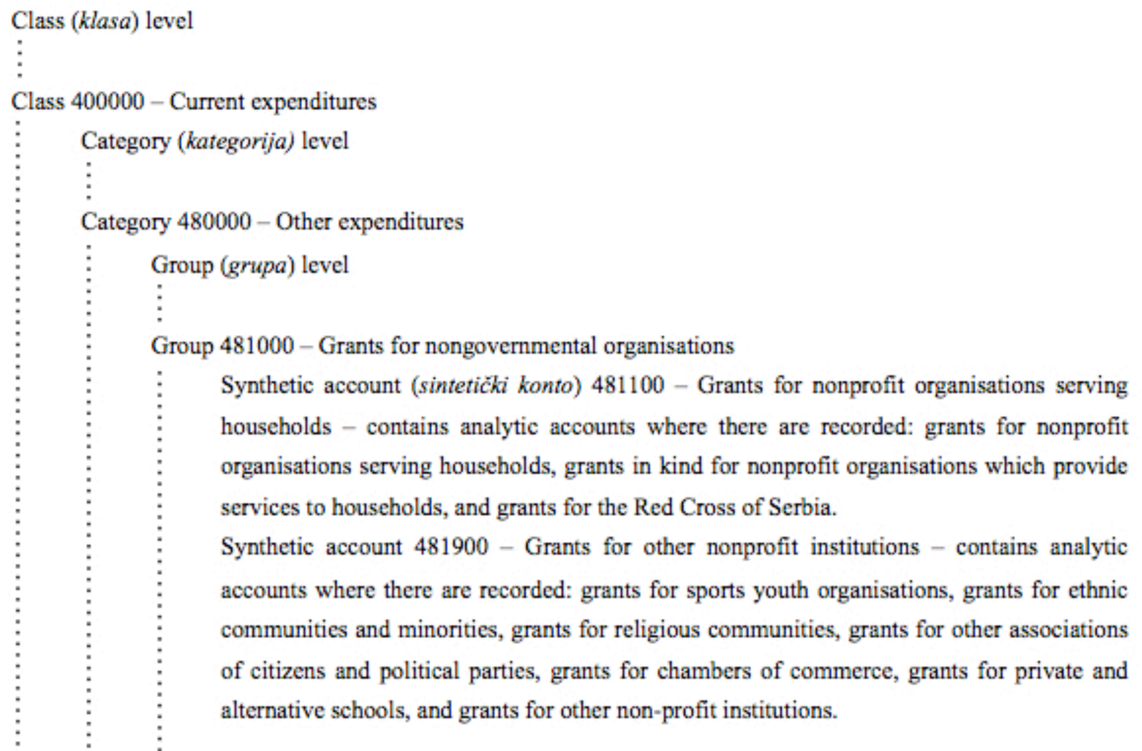

FIGURE 5. The line item 481. Taken from the Standard Classification Framework and Budget System Chart of Accounts Bylaw.

'associations of citizens,' which is the legal category encompassing most 'NGOs' in the everyday understanding of the term, the 2009 Law on Associations prescribed that grants were to be awarded on the basis of a 'public tender process' (*javni konkurs*), and that beneficiary associations were to publish an annual report on their work, revenues, and expenditures. However, the laws regulating funding for sports associations, political parties, and churches neither obliged them to tender nor, in many cases, to provide financial reports. One could thus argue, as the critics indeed did, that they enjoyed an unfair advantage over 'NGOs proper' in accessing the 481 funds.

Just before and during my fieldwork, this practice of funding had become the subject of sharp criticism led by several NGOs, as was evident from the discussion at the consultative meeting. The key NGO among the critics – and one of the interface masters – the Centre for the Development of the Nonprofit Sector (CRNPS), started in 2007 to monitor the line item 481 together with Transparency Serbia. The CRNPS and a 'watchdog coalition' of NGOs have also been advocating for a 'greater transparency of the awarding and spending' of the 481 funds, and 'equal conditions of access' for all CSOs, that is, based on mandatory public tendering (CRNPS 2011a: 7). In 2008 and 2011, they sent letters to the Minister of Finance demanding that the 481 be only used for organisations regulated by the Law on Associations and renamed accordingly

('grants for associations of citizens'). All other kinds of organisations currently funded from the 481 were to receive a new common line item or several separate line items (such as 'grants for religious communities,' 'grants for sports unions' etc.) (CRNPS 2011b: 49–54). The letters argued that the current classification system 'reduces the possibility for citizens to understand how taxpayers' money is spent and to influence [budgets] through their elected representatives' (CRNPS 2011b: 53). Knowing beforehand how much money was allotted to the various groups of organisations would allow NGOs to 'assess their options on time and prepare sustainable projects' (CRNPS 2011b: 10).

The CRNPS published the results of its analysis of 481 grants awarded by central and local state bodies in 2007–10 (CRNPS 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, n.d.). It found that it was often unknown how, and for what purpose, institutions awarded grants; there was no supervision of their spending; and even if tendering was organised, the criteria, names of successful organisations, and sums awarded were not published (CRNPS 2011b: 6–7). Further, 'NGOs proper' always received less than 30% of 481 grants in the years covered, whereas sports associations (which always took the biggest share of the pie), churches, and political parties combined received 62–81% (CRNPS 2011b: 14–33). That associations of citizens had to compete for the same funds with these other organisations was likened to an 'Orwellian situation where "we are all equal but some are a bit more equal"' (CRNPS 2011a: 24).

At the time of my fieldwork, these findings were well-known among NGO people and shaped their thinking about the reforms of NGO funding. Although the CRNPS was not always referred to as the source, I heard these points of criticism time and again in interviews, offices, and seminar rooms. My research participants repeated that the Serbian Orthodox Church and sports associations were receiving way too much money at their expense and that state institutions often awarded 481 funds without clear and public criteria and without supervising how the money was spent. People expressed moral outrage over having to tender for grants and account for 'every dinar' spent while the Church and sports associations were exempt from these requirements. They went further than the CRNPS in naming the reasons for the status quo; for instance, they mentioned local politicians doubling as officials of football clubs that received most of municipal money for NGOs. Along with the funding of 'party NGOs,' such practices were familiar elements of local state capture and 'partocracy' (see pp. 76–7, 80–1).

The CRNPS enjoyed close relationships with the state institutions promoting partnerships. The Focal Point chose it as the Programme Management Unit of the Civil

Society Focal Points programme. The Office invited representatives of the CRNPS to three out of four events that it organised or co-organised in 2011. At a high-profile event that the Office co-organised in the National Assembly, the CRNPS Director Jasna Filipović, as one of only two keynote speakers from an NGO, reiterated the points familiar from the CRPNS publications.

Ćirković broadly concurred with the CRNPS diagnosis of the problem and considered it a key priority for the Office. She told me that part of its mandate was to 'enable mechanisms for transparent funding':

> [S]ince we don't have a programme budget, meaning we don't have functions one can read but rather groups of appropriations within which anything goes, it is being noted that that the money allocated for the appropriation 481, that is, grants for nongovernmental organisations, is also used for grants for religious communities, sports associations (…). [V]arious CSOs and coalitions demand a diversification of the 481. We'll see whether that can be achieved before we get a programme budget.

Ćirković added that 'diversification' – the kind of changes that the CRNPS demanded – would 'make visible' who exactly gets money, and that there were indications that the programme budgeting could be introduced by 2015 but that was 'definitely a political decision.'

How, then, has 'diversification' come to be seen as conducive to greater efficiency? In 2010–11, most state bodies operated a so-called 'line-item budget': an approach that the literature on public budgeting, a field of public administration, considers inferior to the programme budget. The line-item budget only lists 'inputs' (in principle, expenditures) without linking them to either 'outputs' (measurable deliverables) or, even better, 'outcomes' (changes in the real world affected by outputs). That is why within line-item appropriations 'anything goes' – officials have plenty of room for discretion in spending the money. Programme budgeting, in contrast, ideally starts from planning outputs and chooses between different programmes according to their relative efficiency in delivering the outputs. Instruments such as cost-benefit analysis and performance monitoring are used in an effort to enhance government efficiency (Kluvers 2001; Rose 2003; Shah *et al.* 2007; van Nispen & Posseth 2009). Both Ćirković and the interface masters called for a programme budget but perceived that the decision was entirely up to the highest echelons of the government. In the meantime, they advocated for the less ambitious diversification as a step toward programme budgeting. Ćirković further referred to the principle of fair, meritocratic

competition – the priority should be to 'make the budget such that all have access to it, or at least as many as possible, so that they competitively compete (*kompetitivno se takmiče*) for the budget funds.' She illustrated this by the efforts to transform the funding of NGOs providing social services whose purpose was that 'it will be a market' (see the next chapter).

Thus, the Office and the interface masters had a common agenda regarding NGO funding. First, they argued for more 'transparency' – institutions should publish as much information as possible about available funding and tendering criteria and results, and beneficiary NGOs should issue programme and financial reports. Second, they demanded more efficiency – access to funding should be based on meritocratic 'competition,' 'equal', like in the 'market.' As a means to achieve these aims, the actors generally evoked 'formal and clear rules and procedures' and, more specifically, public tendering, financial reporting and the 481 diversification. In a longer run and at the national level, they hoped that programme budgeting would be introduced.

The references to competition, market and the like suggest that these reform proposals were guided by the same basic norm of cost-efficiency as the agenda of partnerships in general. 'Transparency,' too, has been recognised by anthropologists as a concept embedded in the neoliberal models of governance and democracy (Garsten, Lindh de Montoya *et al.* 2008; Hetherington 2011). More specifically, these proposals mirrored some of the key concepts of the economics of regulation which Collier (2011: 218–24) identified as one of the 'minor traditions of neoliberal thought' shaping reforms in post-Soviet Russia. This tradition, which originated in the work of George Stigler and other quintessentially neoliberal Chicago School economists, shaped thinking about government regulation of industries (with which Collier is concerned) but also government procurement – a domain of activity whose principles and techniques the Serbian reform agenda strove to approximate. According to contemporary procurement theories (Bajari & Tadelis 2001; Laffont & Tirole 1993), the efficiency of procurement is frequently constrained by 'information asymmetries' coupled with 'moral hazard.' In plain language, these are situations when the procurement agency knows less about the cost and quality of products of a firm than the firm itself, or when taxpayers know less about the procurement process than procurement officials who should act in their interest. As a result, a firm may be selected which does not provide the best quality and/or best cost. The procurement literature generally seeks solutions in tendering in which all competent firms are free to participate, thus maximising competition, and whose criteria, participants and outcomes

are all public, thus maximising 'transparency.' Apart from the economics of regulation, this literature draws heavily on game theory and principal-agent theory, two interrelated bodies of work that presume rational, utility-maximising actors. The procurement literature thus develops a characteristically neoclassical theory of efficient institutions that holds firmly to the assumptions of methodological individualism and instrumental rationality (Lo 2012: 37–57; Zimbauer 2001).

This conceptual framework underpinned a microeconomic critique of the existing funding practices which disaggregated the state and civil society into individuals construed as calculative actors who, under given conditions, choose to act rationally so as to maximise their own utility. For instance, an NGO manager exempt from reporting will spend grants in the manner that is most expedient for him and his organisation. An unsupervised official will approve grants in a manner that minimises her effort and social costs (such as those incurred by rejecting a 'friendly' applicant) and maximises her gain. Here, the neoliberal critique of 'too much government' assumed the form of 'too much discretion' which it proposed to restrain by 'formal,' 'clear' and 'transparent' technical mechanisms that would incentivise the actors to behave efficiently. These rules and procedures were instances of an 'institutionalisation of calculative choice' (Collier 2005: 12–3) which imposed efficiency-inducing limitations on that choice. They can be also understood as techniques of subjection geared toward optimising subjects for maximal productivity. If the manager must provide financial reports, the reasoning goes, he will spend the grant as agreed to keep access to future funding, and if the official must organise open and transparent public tendering, she will choose the best and most cost-efficient projects to avoid sanctions.

I do not argue that the individuals who called for or participated in these reforms spent their days reading classics in regulatory economics. Quite the contrary – with the continuing domination of neoclassical economic reasoning in economic analyses and policy recommendations churned out by think-tanks, as well as in 'grey sciences' such as public budgeting and public procurement, its basic assumptions about causes and cures for problematic human behaviour appear commonsensical. This may be one of the factors explaining the broad and uncritical support for the reform agenda.

However, it is also important to recognise that the support for these reforms was at least partly driven by political and ideological motives which had nothing to do with neoliberalism. I noted the frequent references to the Serbian Orthodox Church as taking too much of the NGO funding pie. In liberal civil society, there was little sympathy for this institution associated, as the previous chapter showed, with nationalism and

nationalist organisations and movements. In this context, any reform promising to curtail donations to the Church (especially as these cut into funding available for NGOs!) would be strongly supported by NGO circles. Apart from the Church, the reform advocates were also keen to minimise competition for the 481 funds from other kinds of organisations, such as sports associations, that they excluded from the category of actual NGOs and accused of securing funding through illegitimate 'partocratic' linkages. In contrast, NGO people sought to base their own access to state resources on technocratic and meritocratic criteria that they themselves defined (see pp. 81, 107–9). In the case of the reforms of the line item 481, such criteria corresponded especially to the capacity to write professional project proposals and financial reports. Probably not incidentally, this is a skill much more likely to be found in liberal NGOs than the other 481 beneficiaries.

Anthropologists have pointed to the inherent paradoxes of the current proliferation of discourses and practices aiming to increase 'transparency.' When the operation of power is described as transparent, the assumption is that power has a surface that can be seen through, and an interior that can, as a result, be seen. But can this surface ever be rendered completely transparent? (Sanders & West 2003: 16). An alternative critique of transparency projects is to ask not what they leave unseen, but what they make invisible. Pelkmans (2009: 426–7) argued that the preoccupation with transparency produces optical shifts that direct our attention to procedural and organisational details, thereby obscuring the ideological substance. This analysis is well applicable to the present case in which the actors laid emphasis on transparency and efficiency as the rational-instrumental benefits of apparently value-free procedures and criteria, thus concealing or at least downplaying their fundamentally *political* significance. This meaning of the introduction of neoliberal technologies only becomes clear when these are related to the struggles between, first, liberal and nationalist civil societies (Part I), and second, technocratic and 'partocratic' forces, over the resources of the post-Milošević state.

In his critique of transparency, Pelkmans (2009: 439) proceeds to point out that the 'transparency lens' is always selectively applied and as a result favours certain actors over others. An example of this is the noted emphasis on public tendering and financial monitoring as the means of assessing transparency. Further evidence for this point is presented in the next section that examines instances of cooperation between state and civil society actors whose purpose was precisely to develop a legal framework for transparent and efficient public funding of civil society. However, the actors

dominating these processes – the individuals and organisations I described as 'interface masters' – conspicuously failed to abide by these criteria themselves.

'Organisations that we previously worked with': interface masters in action

The Office organised or co-organised four events in 2011, most of which I have already mentioned in this chapter. As I went from one to another, I could not help but notice that inviting representatives of certain NGOs was a matter of course. Among others, the EMinS, the CRNPS, BCIF, and the Civic Initiatives were nearly always there.[53] In this subsection, I describe several interrelated reform processes in which the later three organisations and the Budapest-based European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL) played a prominent role. I argue that they were part of a larger group of interface masters – NGOs and individuals who exerted a special influence over reforms at the state-civil society interface before and during my fieldwork, of which the routine invitations were but one symptom.

Since associations of citizens used to be regulated by two laws from 1982 and 1990, lobbying for a more contemporary Law on Associations had already begun in 2000. The negotiations were usually punctuated by changes of government after which they started anew with a fresh draft of the law. There were three such cycles of activity, in 2000–04, 2004–07, and 2007–09 (see Fig. 6). It was difficult, even unproductive, to use interviews to find out exactly who was involved in such a long and complicated process, or when this occurred. What I could find out, supplemented with information from the internet and the civil-society bulletin *Mreža* ('Network'), revealed that ministries in charge, foreign donors who provided support, and working names of the law were constantly changing, but certain organisations and individuals who got involved in the process early on stuck with it to the end. Moreover, the same organisations and individuals dominated other related reforms.

In February 2003, the Federation of Nongovernmental Organisations (FENS) was formed at an annual conference of the Civic Initiatives that became its de facto secretariat. At the time of writing, the FENS remains the biggest, if largely inactive, NGO network in Serbia. Miljenko Dereta, one of the founders and long-time Executive Director of the Civic Initiatives, served as a Co-Chairman of the FENS from the beginning until October 2009. Since the FENS defined the law as its priority, the

[53] This does not exhaust the list; for instance, the Civil Society Focal Points organisations also kept being invited.

YEAR	*STEPS IN THE PROCESS*	*CONTEXT*
2000	**Dec:** 'expert team' formed by the Forum of Yugoslav NGOs (Dejan Janča, Dejan Šehović, Čedomir Radojković, Živka Vasilevska) prepares the first draft	**Oct:** regime change
2001	**Nov:** 'NGO working group' criticises the draft written by the Ministry of Justice and Local Self-Government at a meeting with the Ministry **13 Dec:** government adopts the draft anyway and forwards it to the Assembly of Serbia for adoption **15–18 Dec:** Civic Initiatives organises conference where NGOs and the Council of Europe (CoE) criticise the draft; the Ministry forced to restart consultations with the NGO working group and CoE experts **End Dec:** 'expanded working group' meets; Civic Initiatives starts mediating between the Ministry, the working group and the CoE	**Jan:** Đinđić government formed
2002	**Jan:** working group meets with CoE experts and 'consultant' Golubović; government accepts recommendations, sends a new draft to the Assembly	
2003	*(FENS is formed and gets involved; the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government gets in charge)* **June:** FENS urges the Assembly to adopt the law **Aug:** FENS discusses the law with the new PM Živković	**Feb:** FRY reconstituted as the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro **Feb:** FENS formed **Mar:** PM Đinđić assasinated **Dec:** early elections held
2004	*(second cycle of drafting begins; the OSCE Mission gets involved)* **Nov:** OSCE Mission and the Ministry organise a roundtable; NGO attendees (unknown) refuse the presented version; the Ministry promises to draft a new one	**Mar:** first Koštunica government formed
2005	**Spring:** Ministry finishes a new draft; 'NGO working group' (Vasilevska, Dereta, Golubović and Dejan Milenković) meets, welcomes the draft **Apr:** working group meets with the Ministry to discuss the draft **Nov:** roundtable about the law, organised by the OSCE, the Ministry, the CoE office in Belgrade and the working group, is held	
2006	**Mar:** Civic Initiatives organises a roundtable at which the draft previously agreed with the Ministry is presented **Summer:** State Secretary at the Ministry presents the draft to the Poverty Reduction Committee of the Assembly	**June:** State Union dissolved
2007	*(third cycle of drafting begins; the USAID/ISC stars supporting the Civic Initiatives and the ECNL to work with the Ministry)* **Jul:** OSCE, the Ministry and the working group hold another roundtable chaired by Dereta and with highest government officials in attendance **Sep:** European Integration Committee of the Assembly discusses a draft prepared by the Ministry, the Civic Initiatives and the ECNL **Oct:** government adopts the draft and sends it to the Assembly for adoption	**Jan:** early elections held **May:** second Koštunica government formed
2008	**Jul:** new government adopts the same draft and sends it to the Assembly **Nov:** the draft is put on the Assembly's agenda **Dec:** government withdraws the draft from the Assembly's agenda	**Mar:** government falls **May:** early elections **Jul:** Cvetković government formed
2009	**Jun:** the draft returned on the Assembly's agenda **Jul:** Assembly adopts the Law on Associations	

FIGURE 6. Drafting and adopting the Law on Associations. Based on interviews, the *Mreža* bulletin and internet resources.

Civic Initiatives continued to be involved in the process both directly and through the FENS.

After a new government had been formed in March 2004, the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government took over this agenda, and the Serbian

mission of the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) funded a series of roundtables in 2004–07. At the first such roundtable in November 2004, the Ministry presented a draft that unspecified NGO attendees rejected as unacceptable (Građanske... 2004). The Ministry unveiled another draft in the spring of 2005 that the 'NGO working group' found much improved (Dereta 2005). Importantly, the members of the group at this point are known – Vasilevska, Golubović, Dereta and Dejan Milenković of the NGO YUCOM. It seems reasonable to assume that these people stayed involved to the end. Dereta and Vasilevska (Građanske... 2007) as well as Golubović (Fond... 2007) are all mentioned as members of the working group as of 2007.

More meetings followed in 2005–07 (see Fig. 6), but only after early elections in January 2007 did the new government adopt the draft in October and send it to the parliament for final adoption. This was also the period when USAID started to fund the process through its $27.5m Civil Society Advocacy Initiative. This programme has been implemented since 2007 by the Serbian branch of the US Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) and four 'implementing partners' which included three interface masters – BCIF, the Civic Initiatives and the ECNL. The programme supported these organisations to participate in legal reforms important for civil society (ISC n.d.). Tanja Bjelanović, BCIF Programme Director, told me that there were 'three things which went in a pack'. First, the Civic Initiatives focused on the Law on Associations 'because that somehow falls in the nature of their work.' Second, BCIF as a leading foundation focused on the Law on Endowments and Foundations. And finally, the two organisations drafted some tax-law amendments together (see pp. 230–1). According to Bjelanović, Golubović, then already engaged in the ECNL, was 'an expert who practically did all these things for us.' Some more funding was provided by the British Embassy (Građanske... 2009b) and, specifically for the work on the Law on Endowments, the Open Society Foundation (Građanske... 2008). Bjelanović believed that the foreign funding mattered because 'a group of experts and organisations came forward and offered to cover all expenses and do the job.' Legal expertise and public debates cost most, she claimed.

However, the process stalled again when the unstable Koštunica government collapsed in March 2008, necessitating early elections. Two weeks after the Cvetković government had been formed in July, it readopted the same draft and sent it to the parliament. After further delays, the parliament finally adopted the law in July 2009. Among other novelties, the law liberalised the founding of associations, allowed them,

under certain conditions, to engage in profit-making activities, and introduced the already mentioned requirements of public tendering and financial reporting to the system of public funding for associations of citizens (Građanske... 2009c).

The provisions of Serbian laws often cannot be implemented until regulations or bylaws (*podzakonski akti*) specify details of their implementation. This was the case with the Article 38 of the Law on Associations that regulates NGO funding. The Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government founded a working group in December 2010 (Velat 2012) to draft such a specifying 'regulation' (*uredba*) that the government adopted in January 2012. The document, which came to be informally known as the Budget Funding for Associations Regulation, was presented days after by Ivana Ćirković, Dragan Golubović, Dubravka Velat of the Civic Initiatives, and the Assistant Minister Jasmina Benmansur (see video at Medija Centar 2012). Velat, the wife of Miljenko Dereta, took over his leadership in the Civic Initiatives in March 2012 when he accepted the offer of the U-Turn Coalition, led by the Liberal Democratic Party, to run for a seat in the National Assembly.[54] She mentioned that USAID/ISC supported the Civic Initiatives to participate in this working group as the only NGO:

> I couldn't say I represent[ed] the whole civil society because it would be wrong, I haven't been chosen or delegated or appointed in that manner, but I thought that the results of debates gave me enough legitimacy to represent the interests which were for the benefit of the sector.

Velat further noted that there were no public debates about the regulation because that is not a legal requirement for bylaws. Jasmina Benmansur specified that the working group was composed of representatives of ministries which fund NGOs, the Office, and the Civic Initiatives who also 'involved other independent experts... I mean Professor Golubović.' Clearly, then, relationships that crystallised during the long work on the Law on Associations prefigured the drafting of the Regulation as well.

The need for a new Law on Endowments was likewise because the law already in force dated from 1989. However, Tanja Bjelanović told me that what specifically bothered BCIF was that the old law did not require foundations to 'publish [their] work.' Such lack of 'transparency' made embezzlement easier and harmed the 'public image' of all foundations, she said. The new law obliged foundations to publish an annual 'report on work' and submit an annual financial report to the Business Registers Agency.

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[54] Dereta became an MP in May 2012.

According to Bjelanović, the lobbying for a new law was first initiated by the NGO Centre for the Advancement of Legal Studies (CUPS) but then it stalled. When BCIF got involved in 2007, it included a CUPS representative in the working group and built on its work. The group was composed of Golubović, Vasilevska, representatives of BCIF, the CDF (also a 'foundation,' though largely nominally – see p. 24), the Ministry of Culture, the Municipality of Palilula, and the women's NGO Voice of Difference. There was also a broader committee, composed of the members of the working group and representatives of a few more state institutions, foundations and NGOs, including the Civic Initiatives. However, while the working group met 16 times, the committee only met twice. The final version of the draft was based on a document that the committee accepted in June 2008 and incorporated comments collected in about five public debates from September 2008 to February 2009. The parliament adopted the law in November 2010 (Čulić, Trifunović & Golubović 2011: 5).

However, an account of the work on this legislation does not exhaust the close relationships between these organisations and individuals. Dragan Golubović must have known Ivana Ćirković at least since 2008 when the Focal Point engaged him to prepare the report. In two public debates in December 2008, he presented the report while Ćirković spoke about the Civil Society Focal Points. The debates were part of a British Embassy-funded project implemented by the Civic Initiatives whose Miljenko Dereta was also in attendance. The same project provided the additional funding for the working groups drafting the Law on Associations and the Law on Endowments. Its title – *Creating a Stimulating Environment for the Development of Civil Society* – was identical with the name of the event that the Office co-organised in the National Assembly (Građanske... 2009b). In October 2011, Golubović was engaged by the government's Human Resource Management Unit to give a one-day training course in SIV on *The Mechanisms of CSO Participation in the Process of Public Policy Development and Implementation* to a group of civil servants, including some employees of the Office. The Human Resource Management Unit, 'in cooperation' with the Office, engaged Golubović to give two similar training courses in 2012 (Office... n.d.). When I was leaving Serbia in December 2011, the assumption was that the expenses would be covered by the FOC grant to the Office.

The relationships between BCIF and the Office were likewise manifold. To mention but some, they organised the Conference on Partnerships together, and Ćirković has been sitting in BCIF's Donation Board for the Social Transition Programme since 2008 (BCIF 2009: 34, 2010: 31, 2011: 33). In 2008–09, BCIF acted

as a ‘consultant’ in a project of the Focal Point whose purpose was to develop a database of NGOs that had cooperated with the private sector (Poverty... 2008, 2009).

The Civic Initiatives was selected by the Focal Point as the Civil Society Focal Point for Youth. In 2011, it was apparent that the organisation was much appreciated by the Office which invited it to all its events, chose it as a partner for organising the aforementioned National Conference on Volunteering, invited its Executive Director Dereta to give a keynote speech at the meeting in the parliament and the Conference on Partnerships, and supported its large quantitative survey of the Serbian civil sector with a smaller amount of the FOC money. Ćirković, who spoke at public presentations of the results in late 2011, told me in an interview that the NGO invited the Office to cooperate in this ‘baseline study’ which she considered very important for the government. The 2011 report of the Office mentions the cooperation and argues that the results ‘will serve as the basis for the future defining of the activities of the Office [and] the strategic framework for civil society development’ (Office... 2011a: 2). In turn, a worker of the Civic Initiatives told me that the NGO pushed for Ćirković to become the head of the Office.

A few times, I heard NGO workers criticise the cosy relationship of some of these organisations and the state. The Civic Initiatives and Miljenko Dereta were especially targeted.[55] A leader of a large NGO in south Serbia told me in an interview that the Civic Initiatives could do just the same thing as BCIF – support small NGOs and help them develop. But that is not in their interest, they can ‘earn more money’ by ‘building an expert profile.’ They are less and less a ‘resource centre,’ and increasingly an ‘interest group’ oriented to influencing public policy. That is also the case of the CRNPS, he continued: ‘development of civil society’ is in their name, but probably not in their interest. On another occasion, as I was speaking on the phone with Virđinija Marina-Guzina, an NGO leader from Vojvodina (Chapter 5), I mentioned a new NGO initiative which involved a minister thought to be especially corrupt and provided him with a chance to present himself to the media in a positive light. Virđinija said that everyone in civil society is ‘doing it like that’ now, and Dereta has been rightly accused by the internet magazine *E-novine* of that kind of collusion with political elites. She knows him and that ‘he’s all about politics’ now. Some eight months later, Dereta did indeed enter parliament, although in recent years he has been officially active only in the NGO sector.

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[55] That I did not get to hear similar critiques of BCIF could be of course due to my close involvement with the organisation.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the restructuring of the state-civil society interface was born of a neoliberal conceptual genealogy activated in a particular historical context. My criticism of these reforms was double-pronged. Rather than reject their neoliberalism out of hand, I took it seriously in order to assess the actual practices and their effects. But I also went beyond it in order to identify underlying agendas that had no intrinsic relationship to neoliberal normativity but rather to the liberal/nationalist and technocratic/'partocratic' antagonisms and struggles.

The reforms were characterised by disjunctions between the stated aims and the actual effects shaped by the not-so-visible agendas. The reforms *through* the interface, which entail the delegation of some of the state's functions to nongovernmental 'partners,' had a whole array of stated objectives – competition and cost-efficiency, but also improved service provision and more democratic, participative and accountable decision-making. In the cases of the delegation of the core state function of law-making that I have analysed, the objective of participation was called into question as a relatively small group of NGO workers continued to dominate the processes over a number of years, which reinforced their relationships and put them in a better position than other organisations to access the activities of the Office in its first year of existence. These partnerships largely rested on foreign funding, leading to the projectisation of the state. While this might have been 'efficient' in terms of saving public expenditure, international donors tend to change their priority countries and pursue their own political agendas. This is not necessarily conducive to efficiency in the sense of a long-term commitment to a policy. Moreover, civil servants and their NGO 'partners' may become accountable not only to the citizens, as democratic decision-making presumes, but also to the donors. The latter is even more problematic if the donor is directly affiliated to another state, as is the case with USAID, the FOC or the British Embassy, or to a supranational state-like entity such as the EU. The discourse of 'partnerships' and the attendant involvement of state/NGO networks in agendas shaped by these donors thus emerge as yet another instrument through which the hegemony of EU integration is reinforced and reproduced.

Similarly, the reforms *of* the interface, aiming to replace the pre-existing informal and unregulated relationships of the state and civil society with formalised, transparent and market-like 'partnerships,' should in theory further deepen the efficiency of governance through partnerships and create a stronger, more sustainable NGO sector.

However, the processes introducing the new norms were themselves embedded in the old kind of social relationships which were partially informal (based on acquaintanceship instead of, or in addition to, necessary competence), obscure (especially to an outsider), and the result of non-competitive recruitment. The NGOs in question supposedly ‘represented’ the interests of the NGO sector, but to my knowledge there had been no sector-wide process of decision-making on which they could base the legitimacy of their claim to do so. In the case of the two laws, a degree of publicness was secured by the roundtables and public debates, but the participants’ involvement was limited to commentary on documents already drafted by the working groups, which kept control over whether their suggestions were included. In the case of the regulation, there were no public meetings at all. This lack of transparency and formalisation also seeped into the early activities of the Office influenced by the previously consolidated relationships, including such important decisions as who gets to attend a strategic planning session. Thus, while the interactions of various state bodies with particular kinds of organisations (such as religious communities or sports associations) are increasingly subjected to centralised audit discipline, the cliquish relationships of people and organisations controlling civil society policy-making at the central level slip under the radar.

The foreign donors who funded these projects in the name of transparency also proved far from transparent in their own operations. They did not organise public tender processes and published only the most general information about the projects. One may thus merely speculate about the compensations that the participants received for their work. It has been suggested that donors may promote ‘corruption’ (Hanlon 2004). This is not what I wanted to argue, especially because of the legalistic connotations of the term that I do not find relevant in the case of the reform processes that I analysed. I rather wished to highlight how the appeals to ostensibly ideologically neutral values helped obscure political agendas informing these reforms and the inconsistency of the latter with their own stated aims.

This analysis also points to some universal issues with neoliberal projects of societal restructuring. What such projects unfailingly promise to bring is an open and equal competition, and hence an efficient allocation of resources. However, neoliberal restructuring never occurs in a political, economic and social vacuum, but in a setting where resources and power positions are already unequally distributed. Therefore, it is by definition convenient for those who start from more advantageous positions (Büscher 2010: 49). Moreover, it is always put into practice by particular actors with a

power to define the terms of competition, for instance by axiomatically devaluing and delegitimising competing actors and the resources they possess (Pelkmans 2009).

In the present case, there is seemingly no reason to object to reforms whose stated intention is to channel government grans to those NGOs which can perform public functions well and at a good price. However, such reforms become arguably problematic when they systematically privilege, at the expense of others, NGOs that start from advantageous positions not only in terms of human resources, budgets and reputation, but also social and political relationships. The self-reproducing, non-representative influence of the interface masters undermined the objective of democratic participation. It also called into question the viability of the stated aim of civil society development and sustainability, since the pre-existing gap between the economic and political power of the interface masters and that of other NGOs was widening rather than narrowing. Finally, neoliberalisation of the state-civil society interface, as I will argue in the next chapter, may lead to the marginalisation and eventual demise of some NGOs that may struggle to tender and write financial reports but nevertheless have other capacities and values.

Chapter 4:
‘Traditional’ associations of disabled people: changes, continuities and struggles at the interface

On that bright snowless morning in December 2011, I drove to the busy highway tollgate near Sirig, a few kilometres north of Novi Sad (see Fig. 2). The day before, the media reported that the Protest Committee of Persons with Disability would hold two roadblocks symbolically at five to noon – one here in Vojvodina and the other in Central Serbia.[56] The reason was the failure of negotiations in which disabled people demanded an expansion of the legal right colloquially known as ‘another person’s care’ (*tuđa nega*).[57] This is a cash benefit for disabled people who ‘require another person’s assistance and care to satisfy their basic life needs.’[58] For those with complete disability (physical, sensory or intellectual), it then amounted to about 22,000 dinars (ca. €220) a month (*Vesti online* 2011). People with partial disabilities received about a third of this sum. For some, it was the only income. Their representatives had originally demanded its equalisation with the national average income (ca. 39,000 dinars). As a compromise, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy suggested 27,000 dinars. This demand was submitted to the Ministry of Finance, which, however, failed to respond. The roadblock was the third in a series of protests by disabled people, preceded by two demonstrations in September 2011 in front of the building of the government in Belgrade.

I arrived 15 minutes earlier to find the protesters (mostly wheelchair users), the police and the media already assembling in two lanes closed for traffic. More vehicles carrying disabled people kept arriving from both directions. There were some private cars, but the protesters were mostly travelling in specially adapted vans of associations of people with paraplegia, quadriplegia or muscular dystrophy. They were telling journalists of the Vojvodina state TV that they came to defend their ‘basic rights.’ A Novi Sad woman in a wheelchair complained bitterly:

> Last year they scrapped our [right to] wheelchairs in which we can go out to the city, they slashed our [right to] nappies by half... Tell me who can survive on 15,000. We’re being humiliated as never, our basic rights are being scrapped, the right to survive itself.

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[56] The organisers in Central Serbia backed out on the day of the protest.

[57] Formally ‘supplement for another person’s assistance and care’ (*dodatak za pomoć i negu drugog lica*). The right to this benefit was introduced in Yugoslavia already in 1958 (Kovač 2005; Pavlović 1965).

[58] Law on Social Protection, Article 92.

FIGURE 7. Disabled protesters trying to break through the cordon. Photo by author.

About 50 protesters eventually assembled, including some people with walking sticks and non-disabled people, presumably relatives, friends, or workers in the associations. After exchanging greetings and casual conversation, they moved over to the tollgate, carrying printouts with messages like ‘If you haven’t got anything new to offer us, don’t take away what we used to have,’ and attempted to block the lanes still open for traffic. However, the police formed a cordon to stop them (Fig. 7). There were more or less half-hearted attempts to break through, but it was clear that nobody desired physical confrontation. The disabled protesters and the policemen engaged in inconclusive moral arguments ranging from polite to heated. Stevan Lukovnjak, President of both the Union of Paraplegics and Quadriplegics of Vojvodina and the Protest Committee of Persons with Disability, then addressed the crowd. An able-bodied older man, he said there were rumours that the demand letter ‘got stuck in the drawer’ of the State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance. He noted that it was cold, some would probably fall sick and they could not keep meeting in the cold like this, but said it was important to keep going. Finally, he suggested that their next action ought to be attempting to break into the Ministry of Finance.

The protesters articulated an expectation that the state would continue, and ideally expand, the provision of long-established cash and in-kind welfare benefits to satisfy

their needs for maintenance, care, technical devices and medical supplies. This demand had been frustrated, leading to the palpable sense of injustice and the radicalisation of protests. At the time of my fieldwork, such demands were associated with the kind of organisations that held this and previous protests. These are usually described as 'associations of persons with disability' (*udruženja osoba sa invaliditetom*). While sharing the same legal subjectivity as other NGOs – that of an association of citizens – in everyday discourse they would rarely be described by others or themselves as 'NGOs' or a part of 'civil society.' Instead, they were put into a separate category of their own – that of 'traditional' associations. This was an externally ascribed label used by people in state institutions and 'NGOs proper.' (The members of such 'traditional' organisations themselves usually self-ascribed simply as 'associations' or 'organisations.') The fact is that these organisations shared some characteristics and, as the protests revealed, politics, both of which differed from those of both liberal and nationalist civil society. I therefore consider them as the third kind of civil society discussed in this thesis – a post-Yugoslav one – and one of the 'points of antagonism' about the hegemonic project of state transformation in Serbia, in addition to the more visible and emphasised liberal/nationalist divide.

The particularities of these organisations mainly derived from continuities with associational practices and the governance of disability in socialist Yugoslavia where many of them originated. They keep a formal registry of members, unlike 'NGOs proper' and nationalist groups. They are constituted as separate according to medical diagnoses, so that there are associations of the blind and visually impaired, mentally disabled, quadriplegics and paraplegics, and so on. Same-diagnosis associations form a hierarchical structure whose levels copy the political-administrative division of the country. At the local level, there are organisations for individual municipalities or several neighbouring municipalities. These are members of unions (*savezi*) at the national level. Moreover, in Vojvodina there is the intermediary level of provincial unions that are also members of the national unions. Lukovnjak led one such provincial union, and the decision to hold two parallel protests in Vojvodina and Central Serbia reflected this organisational structure.

Seen as socially useful and politically unproblematic, they had been integrated into the socialist sociopolitical and welfare system, in which they had been given a limited, but from their perspective all-important, redistributive role. Under Milošević, they were marginalised rather than reformed. Some fell victim to institutional decay and abuses on the part of their leaders. After the 2000 regime change, they became a subject

of the critiques and interventions embedded in the neoliberal reforms at the state-civil society interface. This chapter therefore develops several themes of the previous chapter in the particular context of relationships between the state and 'traditional' associations.

First, it shows how reforms *through* the interface sought to involve 'traditional' associations in the performance of state functions, especially the provision of social services. As I argued in the previous chapter, such redrawing of boundaries between public and private sectors has been an important component of neoliberal projects of (welfare) state transformation worldwide. It produces a dispersed state form whose characteristic problems of governance are addressed by audit and performance evaluation techniques (Clarke 2004a: 106–46).

This leads directly to the second argument about reforms *of* the interface that aimed at reinventing the central state as the regulator and supervisor of an increasingly decentralised social service delivery. According to the relevant line ministry (Labour and Social Policy), the existing system of public funding of 'traditional' associations through the line item 481 was lacking in efficiency and transparency. Efforts were therefore being made to bring this funding in line with the so-called 'project system' which became seen as a superior technique of planning, funding, delivering and evaluating services. This involved the introduction of the kind of governmental technologies analysed in Chapter 3: public tendering, programme budgeting and financial monitoring.

Third, the chapter documents one particular instantiation of the strategy outlined in the previous chapter – the one of invoking the apparently neutral norms of efficiency and transparency in order to advance political and ideological agendas that benefit some at the expense of others. A group of NGOs joined state bodies in the critique of 'traditional' associations – including, in addition to the reform advocates mentioned in Chapter 3, disability NGOs founded in the postsocialist period. These were, as their leaders emphasised, 'cross-disability' (rather than single-diagnosis) organisations. Instead of broad memberships, they brought together small groups of workers and activists. Experienced in raising funds from foreign donors and implementing 'projects,' they saw themselves and were seen by the state as more professional and capable. Implicitly positioning themselves as 'modern,' they stigmatised the 'traditionalists' as prone to misusing public funds and lagging behind not just the contemporary manner of work, but also the ideological shift to a 'rights-based' approach to disability. The latter informed the government's new 'Europeanised' disability policy with its emphasis on equal rights, anti-discrimination and integration. Disabled people were now expected to

become 'independent' and 'active' bearers of rights as opposed to 'passive' objects of medical interventions and 'paternalist' welfare. The 'modernists' criticised the protests of the 'traditionalists' and the expectations thereby articulated as a sign of their dependency on the state, itself linked to their socialist roots. They also claimed that the state still granted the 'traditionalists' a privileged access to public resources – unfairly and irrationally so, considering all their inadequacies. The appeals to efficiency and transparency thus served as an instrument of political struggles between the two groups of organisations.

I will question the stereotypes about 'traditional' associations by arguing that they glossed over a much more complex range of articulations between socialist legacies and current exigencies. I will show that many of these organisations adapted, with varying degrees of success, to the changing narratives and practices of the state. I will further demonstrate that the reforms of state funding have so far been less radical and comprehensive than they were presented as being, echoing the argument made in the previous chapter about the limited and uneven achievements of the reform interventions in re-programming actual social practices. And finally, I will take a critical look at the new disability policy itself. I will argue that its human rights rhetoric lent itself easily to the neoliberal ethos of individual self-reliance, but these ideals rang particularly hollow in a country replete with physical, economic and social barriers to the integration of disabled people. An overwhelming majority of disabled people was still unemployed, poor, marginalised, and dependent on state provision of welfare and health care. The advocates of the new policy were too quick to dismiss older approaches to disability in the absence of basic preconditions for an effective reform. The mobilisations of 'traditional' associations for the preservation of established welfare provision emerge as a rational response to the threats to their very livelihood rather than a sign of unwillingness to become emancipated.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the origins of these organisations in socialist Yugoslavia, stressing the kind of characteristics (especially close articulation with the state) that marked them as the 'relics of earlier times' in the postsocialist period. The second section shifts to the transformations in the post-2000 period. The third section illustrates these general characteristics and dynamics with the case study of associational practices of the blind in the town of Kikinda.

‘Something of the state’: associations of disabled people in Yugoslavia

Associations of disabled people were one type in a whole panoply of organisations that made up the specifically Yugoslav kind of ‘civil society’ (see pp. 59–61). They achieved an impressive coverage in terms of both geography and medical diagnoses. Organisations of people with sensory disabilities led the way immediately after the war, to be joined by people with other disabilities from the 1960s onwards – very much in pace with the disability movement in the West, and in a sharp contrast to the Soviet Union where even politically unthreatening sports clubs for disabled people only started to emerge in the early 1980s (Phillips 2011: 74–5). Their proliferation challenges the established wisdom according to which there was ‘no civil society’ in Yugoslavia.

Since these organisations and Yugoslav associational practice in general have not been objects of much interest either by domestic or by foreign scholars, my attempt to reconstruct their basic features is based especially on sources of Yugoslav provenance. Unfortunately, these tend to be rather general and written in the official lingo of the period. Those on associations of disabled people were often written by members themselves or professionals variously involved with them. The task is further compounded by differences between the republican and provincial legislations and frequent constitutional, legal and institutional reforms. Because of this and the space limitations, my focus will be especially on the situation in Serbia in the 1980s.

According to the Yugoslav constitution and the programme of the party, the Yugoslav system of socialist self-management was composed of three spheres: the state; social self-management; and ‘the free association of working people and citizens in social organisations and associations’ (Zečević 1987: 4). Within this associational sphere, Zečević differentiates organisations which

> I. play a decisive role in the political process of management – sociopolitical organisations;
> II. absorb and express the interests (particular or general) of working people and citizens – social organisations (...);
> III. express the personal (private) interests of citizens – associations of citizens (1987: 12).[59]

This scheme reveals how these various associations were understood and valorised. Sociopolitical organisations, such as the party, the League of Socialist Youth, labour

[59] This classification is in line with the one in the 1974 federal Constitution (Basic Principle IV).

unions and other mass organisations, were disproportionately larger and more powerful than the remaining two types. Given their predominantly political character and their foundational importance for the regime, they are clearly beyond the remit of the liberal understanding of civil society. In Yugoslavia, too, they were regulated by separate legislation, suggesting that their inclusion in the associational sphere was largely nominal and ideological.

Social organisations were understood as those that articulated and realised the interests of the entire society or particular social groups, thereby performing some of the functions of the state. As a result, they enjoyed a better legal status than associations of citizens (Zečević 1987: 27) that were something of a residual category, and clearly lowest in the hierarchy of value. Serbia's 1982 Law on Social Organisations and Associations of Citizens illustrates this. It defined social organisations as contributing to 'general or broader social interests' (Article 9) but left associations of citizens undefined. The obvious implication is that they were limited to the exercise of 'private' or 'personal' interests. Indeed, Zečević mentions religious and hobby-based associations of citizens as typical examples (1987: 12).

In socialist Serbia, organisations of disabled people were constituted as social organisations. Many still describe themselves in their printed materials and websites as 'social' or 'socio-humanitarian organisations' (*socijalno/društveno-humanitarne organizacije*) (see also Vukasović 2008: 182), although these terms are now devoid of legal meaning and the organisations have become 'associations of citizens' as most NGOs. This terminological continuity signals a commitment to a residual identity that is distinct from the self-consciously *nongovernmental* organisation of the postsocialist era. The roots of this identity must be sought in the Yugoslav concept of social organisation, but also in the particular history of associations of disabled people characterised by an imbrication with the socialist state. This can be traced to the first associations formed during World War II. For instance, the blind formed the People's Liberation Front of the Blind of Belgrade in November 1944 as a 'local chapter' of the Unitary People's Liberation Front (later the People's Front), the communist-led political wing of the Partisan resistance movement.[60] Tellingly, the first president of this 'first broader social, humanitarian, political and revolutionary organisation of the blind' had been a war-time secretary of the Communist Youth Alliance in her natal village before she came to liberated Belgrade in 1944 (Vukotić 1984: 89–91). The 1948 *Rules of the Association of*

[60] The deaf of Belgrade formed their own organisation within the People's Front (Savez gluvih... n.d.).

the Blind of Yugoslavia suggest that federal and republican government bodies directly controlled it in this period (Udruženje... 1948, Articles 2 and 37).

With the shift of the Yugoslav regime from early Stalinism to its own more liberal brand of socialism, the relationship of the state and associations moved from direct command to softer mechanisms of influence. The role of the People's Front, in 1953 reconstituted as the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia, was especially salient. This was the broadest, umbrella-type sociopolitical organisation whose collective members were other sociopolitical organisations and all social organisations and associations of citizens (Rožić 1980: 16). Its 'leading ideological and political force' was the party whose programme it followed (Rožić 1980: 19–20).

Zečević describes the relationship of the party and the People's Front to associations in the early postwar period as 'transmissive' (1987: 61–3). The relationship was supposed to become more democratic as self-management was being introduced, but a lack of interest and recognition prevailed in practice (see also Vukasović 2008: 192). Moreover, the Socialist Alliance continued to mediate the regime's implicit grip on associations. The local police, as the body responsible for registering social organisations and associations, could request its opinion on whether founding a particular organisation was 'in line with the goals and interests of the self-managing socialist society' (Zečević 1987: 22). If the opinion was negative, the request for registration was usually rejected.[61]

However, it seems that the regime did not need to resort to repressive measures. Rather, there was a relationship of willing conformism that went beyond declarations of commitment to socialist ideals. Zečević argues that associations in general tended to become state-like and state-oriented (in Yugo-speak, 'etatised'). Their leaderships were bureaucratised and distanced from the membership (1987: 106); they were only responsive to the initiatives of state bodies and sociopolitical organisations, especially the party (1987: 108); and many consciously copied the style of work, internal organisation, and stated aims of sociopolitical organisations (1987: 111–3).

Such tendencies are indeed apparent in organisations of disabled people. They developed elaborate governance structures and mechanisms that mimicked those of the state. For instance, after the 1974 Constitution introduced the delegate system of representation as the foundation of the entire sociopolitical system, the Union of the Blind of Serbia followed suit (Ristić *et al.* 1999: 97). According to its 1975 *Statute*, all

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[61] The 1982 Serbian law provided for this option only in the process of registering social organisations (Article 32).

its bodies – assemblies of local organisations, city, provincial and republican conferences, executive bodies, supervisory boards, and 'organisational-cadre committees' – were 'constituted in accordance with the delegate principle' (Savez slepih... 1975: Article 30). Also noteworthy is the territorial constitution of these organisations that copied the spatiality of the state, conceived as a series of concentric circles where the local community is encompassed by the region and the region by the state (Ferguson & Gupta 2002). The organisations were intensely preoccupied with frequent reforms of their territorial organisation, not always necessarily in line with changes of the administrative-territorial structure of the state (e.g. Vukotić 1984: 96–7). One can thus speak about political, organisational, discursive, even aesthetic proximity to the state. As we will see, the critics of 'traditional' associations alluded to this.

However, the members of such associations I interviewed never complained about having been dominated or controlled by the state. Branka Šobot Jeličić, president of an organisation of the blind in Kikinda and a member since 1987, rather suggested that there was a vague feeling of being 'something of the state':

> People thought like somebody else takes care of it and [the organisation] is part of the society, part of the state, you know. I think we all experienced it like that. As if it was something of the state (*državno*, lit. statal). (...) We didn't understand we were just an ordinary association of citizens obliged to work on its own. Then, too, we had a system of governance in which we chose our leadership ourselves. But somehow we didn't mentally experience it like that, that we're autonomous, rather we always considered ourselves something like, I don't know... that somebody is obliged to take care of us. And they did, the society did take care then.

Indeed, most of the disabled people I interviewed remembered socialism as a time when access to funding and material resources in general was easier and associations were able to offer much more to their members. Most money came from the profits made from the state lottery. Jeličić told me that when the lottery was being re-established after the war, Tito said 'this is money for the disabled.' Though I was not able to verify this claim, the Association of the Disabled War Veterans of Yugoslavia did have an exclusive right to sell lottery tickets in 1946–51 (*Poslovni dnevnik* 2010). Later, a share of income would be given to the unions who would keep a share for themselves and distribute the rest to local organisations based on their number of members.

Alongside activities that they still organise, associations used the lottery money for purposes that now appear unthinkable. For instance, there were special municipal funds to which the municipality and local companies contributed money for the

construction or purchase of 'flats of solidarity' – subsidised homes for local workers. By paying in their own contribution of the lottery money, organisations could obtain flats for their members. Slavoljub Epifanić, member of the Intermunicipal Organisation of the Blind and Visually Impaired in Zrenjanin, recalled that a whole block of flats was built especially for the blind (see Ristić *et al.* 1999: 37). The lottery money was also used to subsidise jobs for disabled people. In some towns, associations started their own companies employing disabled people, typically with a single kind of diagnosis. These tended to be organised as 'cooperatives' (*zadruge*) in the early postwar years and later as 'protected workshops' (*zaštitne radionice*) entitled to tax discounts and other forms of subsidy. Jobs were also available in mainstream enterprises.

Another source of funding was municipal governments that covered especially the material expenses of associations and the salaries of employees. Money could be also obtained from 'self-managing communities of interest' or SIZs (*samoupravne interesne zajednice*). From the early 1970s, these formally nongovernmental institutions were responsible for planning and funding public services. Again, local SIZs were associated to form provincial and republican SIZs. Decisions were supposed to be reached by a consensus of delegates of both 'producers' and 'consumers' of services who formed the assemblies and executive bodies of SIZs. There were SIZs for health care, education, social protection, housing and communal services, sports, culture and so on. Their sources of funding were payroll taxes and taxes on the revenues of enterprises (Pejovich 1979). SIZs for health care and social protection were especially important for associations of disabled people (Mašović & Bosak 1977: 103; Savić 2009: 82).

In sum, then, the organisations were in a position to direct a broad range of welfare resources to their members – jobs, homes, vacations, but also regular sport, cultural and social events. Knowing their current possibilities, it is difficult to imagine that they had been able to engage in some of these forms of redistribution. Unsurprisingly, many people I interviewed expressed nostalgia for the period. For instance, Goran Perlić, the President of the Association of the Paraplegics of Banat whom I met at the roadblock, said:

> I'm not a communist but communism was better for the people. Even in the 90s, we were getting all kinds of aid we don't get now. Today, there might be more understanding but everyone just lies, tells us the same story for the hundredth time, organises hundreds of lectures, for instance about writing projects...

Jeličić told me that cuts in funding for the organisations had already started in the austerity-stricken 1980s. However, it was especially in the 1990s that the organisations'

allocative power registered a sharp decline. The changes to their status paralleled those in the country at large – partial reform combined with a formal preservation of many elements of the old system that became increasingly dysfunctional in practice. SIZs were scrapped but the organisations continued, at least in theory, to be funded by the lottery. However, after the Socialist Alliance had ceased to exist in 1990, there were calls for disability organisations, as its constituent parts, to follow its fate. Funding became scarce and irregular (Ražnjatović 1991: 135). The situation worsened still in the most chaotic period of wars and hyperinflation in 1992–93 (Savić 2009: 22). At the same time, the organisations assumed a new responsibility for distributing humanitarian aid (usually foreign) to their members. The parcels typically included essential foodstuffs and toiletries, but there were also nappies, drugs or even wheelchairs. In the 2000s, the delivery of humanitarian aid became sporadic or stopped completely. Katica Ranđelović, who founded a cerebral and infant palsy organisation in Niš in the 1970s and now leads the Centre for Independent Living of Persons with Disability in the same city, told me that the members got used to this form of provision and were frustrated when it stopped. As the quote above suggests, Goran Perlić also remembered it with a degree of appreciation.

Another similarity with broader developments in the country was to be found in the processes of institutional decadence, if not outright criminalisation, in some organisations. In the setting of lawlessness, economic crisis and dwindling resources, the latter became an immensely competitive environment, full of gossip, suspicion and intrigue between members of the same organisation or between the various levels of association (local, city, provincial, republican, federal). This was not unprecedented – socialist-period sources contain veiled references to the 'privatisation' of decision-making in these organisations in particular (Vukotić 1984: 102) or associations in general (Zečević 1987: 112–3). This usually meant that a small circle of people in the leadership usurped all power and used it to enrich themselves or keep their positions while minimising their workload. My interviewees in Kikinda argued that the usual perpetrator in associations of the blind in the 1990s was the secretary (*sekretar*). As we will see, this perception was certainly based on their own experience, but they claimed that other organisations 'still functioned like that,' and I also heard of similar cases in associations of the blind or people with other kinds of disability (see also Savić *et al*. 2001). In 'traditional' associations, secretaries are not elected officials but servants (*službenici*) managing the everyday running of the organisation. By now, they are often the only paid employee in an organisation. Following a long-standing pattern (see e.g.

Savez slepih… 1959, Article 38), they are usually not disabled, which tends to lead to a distinctly paternalist relationship. In associations of the blind in particular, secretaries could abuse the members' impairment with particular ease – by withholding information from them or lying about the content of documents that they had them sign. There were also allegations that some secretaries or presidents used to privilege some members when distributing humanitarian aid in return for their support.

'From patient to citizen': 'traditional' associations and post-2000 reforms

In the previous chapter, I argued that selective delegation of state functions to NGOs, driven by a preoccupation with efficiency and participation, was part of the ongoing neoliberal transformation of the state. One of the domains in which this idea was most developed was the reform of the welfare system and social protection in particular. In Serbia, social protection (*socijalna zaštita*) is traditionally understood as the arm of social policy which targets those facing pronounced and specific issues, such as poor, elderly or, indeed, disabled people. It involves the provision of needs-tested cash benefits (including the 'another person's care' supplement) and social services. It was especially in service provision that NGOs were expected to play an increasingly important role.

Social protection reforms after 2000 were guided by the principles of decentralisation, deinstitutionalisation (shift from residential care to community-based services) and diversification (greater involvement of NGOs and private businesses in service delivery) (Bošnjak & Stubbs 2007). Commitment to diversification was articulated by the World Bank-sponsored *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Government... 2003: 104, 107–8; see also pp. 141–2) and the 2005 *Strategy of Social Protection Development.* The latter called for an equal access of 'public,' 'nongovernmental' and 'private' service providers to public funding – which was eventually legislated in 2011[62] – in order to develop a 'more flexible and more competitive mixed model of social protection' (Government... 2005: 37). Diversification and attendant competition between providers was expected to increase the geographical coverage, quality, variety and cost-efficiency of services, and to make them more attuned to the needs of recipients.

The new disability policy presented in the 2006 *Strategy of the Advancement of the Position of Persons with Disability* likewise invokes the involvement of NGOs as

[62] Law on Social Protection.

one of the ways of improving services for disabled people (Government... 2006: 11–13) and calls for their participation in creating and monitoring policies at both central and local level (2006: 10). Beyond this, the *Strategy* inaugurates an ideological shift whose tenor is condensed in this introductory remark:

> The foundation for the development of the Strategy were solutions proclaimed by the adopted domestic and international documents which define the issues of the treatment of persons with disability not as a segment of social policy but a question of respecting human rights. It is indisputable that a contemporary and successful society, to which the Republic of Serbia aspires as its strategic goal, means not only material welfare but a community of satisfied individuals who enjoy full participation in all segments of the society (2006: 1).

Accordingly, the *Strategy* emphasises the principles of anti-discrimination, equal rights, 'individual autonomy,' 'independence' and 'participation' of disabled people (2006: 5–6). It presents the new policy as anchored in the paradigm shift from the 'medical model' of disability to the 'social model' (2006: 6–7). The *Strategy* contrasts the two models in a table based on documents of the New Zealand Office of Disability Issues – not the most obvious source of inspiration for policies for Serbia (Fig. 8).

The (British) social model emerged in the British disability movement in the 1970s and became mainstream by the 1980s. From among various socio-contextual approaches to disability (Phillips 2011: 77–84), it appears to have been particularly

FROM		TO
Individual problem	►	The problem is in the society
Differences in capabilities make the person isolated and inadequate	►	Differences in capabilities represent a resource and potential for inclusion
Evaluation of inability	►	Orientation to abilities
Us and them: exclusion – (in)tolerance	►	All of us together: inclusion and appreciation
The society chooses for 'them'	►	Persons with disability decide for themselves
Professionals know best	►	People possess various kinds of knowledge
A model of disability which gravitates to isolation, with control or cure as the goal	►	A model of disability which demands participation in life, requires changes in the environment and behaviour, i.e. approach
Orientation to institutions	►	Orientation to communities
Based on charity	►	Based on human rights
Patient, i.e. recipient (*korisnik*)	►	Citizen

FIGURE 8. 'From the medical to the social model of disability.' Taken from the *Strategy of the Advancement of the Position of Persons with Disability* (Government... 2006: 8–9).

influential in Serbia, along with the related 'independent living' approach and unlike the American multiculturalist approach which construes disabled people as a minority culture (Gilson & Depoy 2000). The social model challenged the treatment of disability as an individual problem and object of medical and welfare intervention by arguing that it is actually the discriminatory organisation of society which turns impairment (the biological condition) into disability (Barnes 1991, 1998; Oliver 1990, 1996). Political strategies based on demands for equal rights, appreciation of differential abilities, and active participation in social life logically followed.

The *Strategy* and some recent legislation[63] show that such emphases have also characterised the belated importation of the social model to Serbia. They resulted in more sustained governmental and nongovernmental efforts to eliminate the omnipresent architectural and technical barriers to the access of disabled people to public buildings and services, as well as to develop personal assistance services for wheelchair users. 'Modern' disability NGOs and other NGOs implemented advocacy initiatives that referred to the anti-discrimination legislation and typically focused on accessibility. However, progress in ensuring equal access to jobs was very limited, if it existed at all. In 2011, only about 16,000 – or 5% – of the estimated 330,000 disabled people of working age were employed (CILS 2011: 12). That was even less than the 22,000 employed in 2006, before the adoption of the anti-discrimination law (Government... 2006: 24). Moreover, three quarters of those employed received below-average salaries (CILS 2011: 13). There was thus no reason to expect any improvement on the estimated 70% of disabled people at or below the poverty line (Government... 2006: 20). My interlocutors knew of very few disabled people who managed to find a job. In key respects, the new policy remained a narrative.

The post-2000 development of 'traditional' associations must be considered in this changing policy, legal and ideological landscape. They have been redefined as a resource for the planned reforms while also being marked as unprepared for the new tasks. Milena Banović, advisor in the Sector for the Protection of Persons with Disability in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (hereafter 'the Ministry'), told me that many organisations lack adequate expertise and cadres, and resist changes. Their activities have often remained unchanged for years. 'What's interesting' is that

[63] In particular, the 2006 Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disability (the first anti-discrimination law in Serbia) and the 2009 Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability.

their members still appreciate and demand such services! Banović mentioned sports competitions and literary evenings as examples. Since these were only for disabled people, they did not promote their social inclusion and demonstrate how they can do something 'equally' (*jednako*) to others. The Ministry had already reduced funding for such events and would do so further because they did not fit its own agenda – which, paradoxically, evoked the principle that disabled people 'decide for themselves.'

People in 'modern' disability NGOs and other NGOs dealing with disability issues, but also critical members of 'traditional' associations, highlighted similar problems. They maintained that these organisations often lacked 'capacities,' such as higher education and experience with 'projects,' and routinely described them as 'closed' to change and new forms of cooperation. Some of the most trenchant critiques of 'traditional' organisations I heard came from Lepojka Čarević Mitanovski, a wheelchair user in her late 40s and the leader of Out of the Circle, a network of 'modern' NGOs focusing on the issues of disabled women and victims of home violence. She told me:

> In the time of Milošević, humanitarian aid was the priority of all [disability] organisations, and so people with disabilities too got used to getting [things], they didn't get used to give anything, to invest themselves in something, to educate themselves, to get employed. (...) [W]e have to teach them to be independent in their life. But in a traditional organisation, they teach them to be dependent on the state. And they fight for benefits, not rights. For a reduced phone bill, smaller electricity bills...

Mitanovski continued by saying that the recent demand for bigger benefits for 'another person's care' was 'a completely rubbish category – the problem is that the state doesn't have money, and second, why should someone receive a disability benefit for doing nothing and sitting at home?' She claimed that such a policy 'doesn't exist anywhere' and contrasted it with her own organisation which 'fights for rights' and 'that I normally pay my bills and all my duties toward the state and have normal income as an employed person.' For Mitanovski, calls for *social* rights were contrary to rights; they merely perpetuated powerlessness and subordination in relation to the state. She had an intimate experience of the inequality and loss of dignity that being disabled in Serbia entails. But she and Banović seemed to overlook that, in a situation of persistent unemployment and structural discrimination, such rights remained central to the very survival of most disabled people. For many reasons, some of which they did not control, they were

unable to convert from 'recipients' to fully integrated and independent 'citizens' overnight.

It might seem that the social model, more recently criticised for its excessively rigid dichotomy of impairment/disability (Shakespeare 2006; Shakespeare & Watson 2001; Thomas & Corker 2002; Tremain 2002), was received in Serbia a little too dogmatically. But in its policy, legal and discursive manifestations I just described, it actually appears to have been mediated and heavily transformed by the human rights approach that is very much central to the agenda of many liberal NGOs. Moreover, legal and juridical enforcement of rights, especially to equal treatment and non-discrimination, is also the most developed component of the otherwise rudimentary so-called 'social dimension' of EU integration (Mabbett 2005). Tellingly, the Serbian disability strategy is careful to stress its compatibility with key EU anti-discrimination norms, including Article 13 of the *Treaty of Amsterdam*, the Racial Equality Directive[64] and the Employment Equality Framework Directive[65] (Government… 2006: 2). This marks the shift to a rights-based disability policy as a yet another facet of the hegemonic project of 'Europeanisation.'

As anthropologists have pointed out, human rights approach is individualistic, addresses suffering through a legal/technical (rather than ethical) framework, and privileges an individual's rights over needs (Cowan, Dembour & Wilson 2001: 13). In Serbia, these emphases made the imported social model rather compatible with the neoliberal ethos of individual flexibility, adaptability and self-reliance – a highly ironic twist, considering the former's Marxist roots. As Mitanovski's rhetoric suggests, this unlikely ideological confluence elevated cuts in badly needed welfare to something almost emancipatory, and hijacked the rights talk to prescribe responsibilities, especially to get employed and pay one's bills. But while anthropologists have started to explore how neoliberalism becomes embodied (Freeman 2011; Hilgers 2013), the particular intersection of disabled physicality and Serbian context could hardly be less conducive to such embodiment. Tellingly, Phillips (2011) has described the same glaring contradiction in her ethnography of the struggles of spinally injured people in Ukraine. It is the combined challenges of many postsocialist settings for neoliberal-inspired disability policies – from inherited non-inclusive public spaces to persistently

[64] Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

[65] Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

high structural unemployment – that lead to such conspicuous gaps between rhetoric and practice.

Apart from the retrograde attitudes of 'traditional' associations, the Ministry officials and the 'modernists' agreed that their public funding was also in need of an overhaul. Since state bodies funded them through the line item 481 ('grants for nongovernmental organisations'), these critiques and changes mirrored the broader reform of that line item which I have analysed in the previous chapter, but with some important specificities. Two institutional levels need to be differentiated.

First, local organisations received money from their local governments that, within legal limits, set up their own procedures so the central state could not control them entirely. The 'modernists' detested the fact that local governments perpetuated the established practice of financing not just activities, but also 'material expenses' (costs of running an office) and salaries of employees of 'traditional' organisations (which often consumed most of these grants). They considered this an unfair advantage since they had to cover such expenses from their project budgets. Mitanovski told me that 'traditional' organisations were 'protected like white bears' and their representatives received 'enormous' salaries. She claimed that 'there is more corruption here than in any other field.' People in other NGOs working on disability, employing liberal norms about 'civil society,' argued that this made 'traditional' organisations dependent on local governments and unable ever to challenge them for fear of losing the money. Because of this, they were often pejoratively dubbed 'budget organisations.' Such sweeping claims about the inefficiency and non-transparency of public funding of 'traditional' associations represented a political strategy of their delegitimisation.

Second, at the national level there was the practice of 'programme funding.' The way this worked was that local organisations drafted 'programmes' of activities for the entire following year and submitted these to their unions. The unions processed and submitted the programmes to the Ministry that decided, depending purely on its own priorities, which activities it would fund. The supported organisations had to document how they spent the money on a quarterly basis. This system was established in the early 2000s. The Ministry created a Fund for the Financing of Disability Associations in 2002 (Matković 2006: 56; Orlović 2011: 272)[66] and adopted a new regulation on the criteria for funding these organisations in 2003 (Savić 2009: 32–3). It was no longer organisations as such but rather 'programme activities' that were funded, and

[66] By 2004, it was replaced by two funds of the Ministry that support disability-focused projects of all NGOs, not just 'traditional' organisations. The money comes mainly from the state lottery.

organisations were therefore required to develop their programmes. The second option was funding through one-off projects of limited duration. People from 'traditional' associations told me that, before these changes, they used to get money according to the number of members and did not even have to 'justify' (*pravdati*) how they spent it.

By the end of the 2000s, this relatively recent mechanism was already seen as problematic. Mitanovski admitted that 'traditional' associations wrote their programmes of activities but expressed doubts that their members benefitted from them, implying that the activities were either not useful or perhaps not even implemented. Banović, the Ministry official, pointed out that the 2009 Law on Associations prescribed that state funding for associations must be distributed through public tendering processes (see p. 152). As a kind of compromise between this requirement and the established practice, the Ministry started to distribute programme funding through public calls which, however, were reserved for unions. It had one such call a year, plus one or more calls in which all NGOs with disability-related project proposals could compete. Even in this residual form, programme funding was seen as being in need of 'advancement' and transition to the 'project system of funding' that Banović defined as follows:

> [S]o that a project has a certain purpose, goal, activities which are mutually linked, that there is a certain way of applying and reporting or evaluating the results. In the earlier system of funding, there wasn't a cycle like that. Rather, there was a series of activities that were perhaps not mutually linked, they were intended for the members but were diverse.

At the time of my fieldwork, the Ministry (with two other ministries) was implementing the Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS), a three-year project funded by a $46.4m loan from the World Bank. Its components reflected the general direction of the social protection reform – decentralisation and diversification of service provision coupled with the development of a 'new regulatory, oversight and quality-assurance role' of the central state (World Bank 2008: n.n.). Activities of the Ministry largely focused on services for disabled people – first, by supporting all NGOs in developing these services in line with the reform objectives, and second, by assisting 'traditional' organisations in their transition to the 'project system.' Ivana Ćirković, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society (Chapter 3), told me that DILS

> works with these associations, teaching them to think in a project manner (*projektno*), to apply in a project manner. (...) [T]hey should be all enabled to be in the market and to be service providers so you practically know... It's not enough to

> include them but also to know what is the benefit of including them so that [public] administration is in a position – I imagine that would be its task – to follow how it is being implemented and evaluate the quality of the work, so that it will be a market, so when it turns out somebody isn't good, somebody else is engaged – on a specific contract, in a specific public tender process, in a clear manner.

Evidently, then, these particular reforms of the state-civil society interface reflected the general preoccupation of such reforms with increasing the efficiency of state funding of civil society, stimulating competition, and strengthening the ability of the central state to harness other actors for its own priorities (Chapter 3). Predictably, the transition to the 'project system' required that the 'traditionalists' attend many a seminar on project skills – a lot of which were held by 'modern' disability NGOs, including Mitanovski's organisation. The Ministry's calls for applications for DILS-funded projects were themselves considered part of the learning process, as the organisations were now required to write, carry out, and report on projects rather than programmes.

However, people in 'traditional' organisations seemed to perceive little difference between programmes and projects. They would explain programmes to me as 'of the project type' or 'like mini-projects,' or talk about their programmes when I asked whether they had been initiating any projects. From their perspective, the basic elements of the 'project system' were already there. The problems they had with programme funding were rather different to those identified by the Ministry and it was not clear how the 'project system' could solve them. Aneta Ilić, Secretary of the Association of the Paraplegics of the Nišava District in her late 20s, was frustrated by having to wait until the 20th of each month to learn how much money the Ministry had granted them for the next month. Moreover, she found the manner in which the Ministry approved or rejected activities quite arbitrary. Goran Perlić disliked the fact that the Ministry mostly refused to fund sports and social events, arguing that the 'healthy' people there did not understand that for disabled people these were 'not just sports.' Others among my research participants, aware that the Ministry had started to reduce funding for such events, similarly said that they were often the only chance for the members to socialise and perhaps meet a partner. Finally, monthly programme grants to local organisations were rather small, typically a few hundred euros, so making the already anorexic organisations even more 'efficient' did not seem a top priority. Nevertheless, we will see that some people did appreciate the positive aspects of the 'project system,' especially the fact that money went to those willing to work.

The claims that many 'traditional' organisations lacked capacities for project work were not unfounded. Many of my interlocutors admitted that there were few people in their organisation who knew how to write project proposals. Older activists complained that educated young people with disabilities were not interested in helping because the organisation was not in a position to remunerate them, while the young suggested that elderly secretaries and presidents refused to stand down and allow others to take position in their place. Both of these arguments were certainly true in individual cases. Some adopted an attitude along the lines of 'why would I bother to apply for funding when I know they'll never give me any?'

Nevertheless, quite a few organisations were more or less successfully adapting to the 'project system.' One such case is discussed in detail below. Another example is the Association for Help to Mentally Insufficiently Developed Persons (*sic*) in Niš, founded in 1966, which has been cooperating with other NGOs and public institutions on a DILS-funded project of a day care service for mentally disabled children. Its Secretary Jovan Bogdanović, father of a disabled son active in the organisation since 1971, spoke the language of reform fluently. He told me about their wish to develop 'innovative' services, support the process of 'deinstitutionalisation,' and apply for funding even from the demanding foreign donors. When I interviewed him in the summer of 2011, the project had already ended but they continued to provide the successful service on a voluntary basis. Their determination has paid off, as the local government took over the responsibility for funding from 2012. Thus, the assertions of a radical difference between 'traditional' and 'modern' organisations could be, at one level, interpreted as the latter's claims to authority and expertise in the scramble for scarce funding and political influence.

Furthermore, the reforms so far have been less comprehensive and radical than it might seem. Changes at the local level were typically slower and not so easily controlled by the central state. Local governments generally continued the established practice of funding the material expenses and salaries, though the grants were often very modest. They generally allowed the organisations to use the money as they wished, including on social and sports activities. Since the adoption of the Law on Associations, this provision too had to be organised through public tendering, but the requirements tended to be more relaxed than in other cases. Katica Ranđelović, the head of the Centre for Independent Living in Niš, provided an interesting example. A few years ago, the city government considered that it would stop paying the salaries of the employees of 'traditional' organisations. However, at a meeting of the city government's advisory

body for disability issues, local disability NGOs and the city found a compromise. Those who had been receiving salaries would continue to be paid, only their work would be now declared as 'work engagement' (*radno angažovanje*). This is legally supposed to be a temporary form of employment, and Ranđelović hinted that the remuneration was modest. In practice, however, the people kept their jobs and their contributions to the state pension fund continued to be paid. Though now running a 'modern' disability NGO and not receiving such a salary herself, Ranđelović supported this solution. These people had been doing the same job for decades and many were close to the retirement age, so they were unlikely to find other jobs.

Continuities could be found also at the central level. The Ministry still covered the material expenses and salaries of the republican unions (Tatić 2007: 15–6) and reserved one annual public call for unions, thus maintaining their residual privilege in accessing programme funding. Banović told me:

> **Banović:** With the new system of funding, we did not interrupt the funding of programmes; we just had to adapt it to the new manner. So, on the one hand, they implement their regular programmes that should exist, and on the other, it is necessary to change the manner in which all of that is planned, because it should be adapted to current conditions.
> **I:** So the programmes will be basically funded through projects.
> **Banović:** Yes yes yes.

This suggests that the 'project system,' in the form it had assumed in practice, might not have been such a radical break with the established practices of 'traditional' organisations. Further evidence for this emerges from the case study that follows.

Case study: associational life of the blind in Kikinda

Kikinda, a town of 38,000 in the North Banat region of Vojvodina (see Fig. 2), boasts a long and rich postwar history of the organising of the blind. My interlocutors proudly emphasised that the first co-operative of the blind in Serbia and possibly Yugoslavia was founded here, and was already in existence by 1945. The blind made brooms, brushes and baskets, and 15 members even lived together in a commune. The co-operative ceased to exist in 1947 (Ristić *et al.* 1999: 10). The organisation of the blind itself was founded in 1951. For most of its existence, it was constituted as the Intermunicipal Organisation of the Blind of Kikinda, Čoka and Novi Kneževac, the latter two being two adjacent smaller municipalities. Branka Šobot Jeličić, the current

President, told me that one Nikolina, a woman employed by the municipality as a social worker, was '*ex officio*' (*po službenoj dužnosti*) also the organisation's first secretary. Her daughter Savina was the association's accountant at the time of my fieldwork. Jeličić heard from Savina who, in turn, heard from her mother, that the organisation had been actually founded by the Socialist Alliance (then still the People's Front). According to Žarko Kecman, one of the oldest members, one of the secretaries in the 1950s came from the Socialist Alliance. This further illustrates the close relationship between associations of disabled people and the state in this period. Already in the 1950s, the organisation secured ten flats for its members 'in cooperation with the local government and social organisations' (Ristić *et al.* 1999: 22). In 1961–65, it was briefly a local branch of the association of the blind in Zrenjanin, a larger city 60 kilometres to the south, but otherwise existed as an independent association.

Seeing my interest in the association's history, its member and former President and Vice President Jova Jakovljević took me to visit Kecman who joined the organisation in 1955. Much later, in the 1980s and possibly already late 1970s (he could not remember exactly), he served as its President. As was the case with most disabled people I interviewed, he remembered socialism as a time when the system provided for disabled people: 'Wherever we turned to, we were recognised and they helped us most they could.' 'Everything was mutually linked, everything worked as it should have, people understood us.' At the request of the municipality, a representative of the blind always participated in the meetings of the Municipal Assembly. Through his contacts with directors of various companies, Kecman managed to find jobs for many blind people. Because of the specific nature of their disability, most worked as telephone operators. (Jeličić suggested that the Vojvodina Union of the Blind gave the municipality some of the lottery money to subsidise these jobs.) Kecman further recalled that blind women made handicrafts at home that he then collected and delivered to an enterprise of the blind in Belgrade. He also 'handed out,' as he put it, five flats to the blind bought by the municipality and the Union.

The key person in the local associational life of the blind in the 2000s was Branka Šobot Jeličić. Born and raised in western Bosnia, she joined the organisation in 1987, two years after she had moved to Kikinda. At that time, she was in her early 20s and already nearly blind. She had a grammar school diploma – not a very practical one for employment – and had started a degree in horticulture in Belgrade, but abandoned the studies after a year because of her worsening sight. People in the organisation suggested that she get requalified to work as a telephone operator. Jeličić accepted and the

association paid for the rather short course she took in the Veljko Ramadanović School for Visually Impaired Students in Zemun. However, there were no operator openings in Kikinda then or later so she never actually did the work. Instead, it was in the association that Jeličić came to realise her ambitions. By 1988 or 1989, she had become the president of the 'women's section,' and in the early 1990s the Vice President of the entire organisation.

However, she distanced herself somewhat in the second half of the 1990s. The successful sports club run by the organisation had to be discontinued because there was not enough funding for it, and the municipality moved the association into a new space that was far too small. But the real trouble began around 1995 when the association got a new, sighted, secretary – Jasmina Kovačev. In the account given by Jeličić, Jova Jakovljević and others around them, Kovačev started to 'rule.' When members needed to discuss anything with her or the President Petar Budai, they first had to make an appointment, often much postponed. Kovačev sometimes simply refused to help. It was remembered as particularly humiliating that she washed her hands after contact with the blind and disinfected things that they used. Because of her indifference and the lack of funds, well-established activities were discontinued and people stopped coming to the premises. Membership fell from some 200–230 people in the late 1980s to 130 in 2001. After Jeličić became President in 2000 or 2001, the association fired Kovačev. However, she proved a formidable opponent and sued the organisation. After a trial dragging out over several years, the court ruled that the dismissal was unjust and that the association must take Kovačev back. More legal battles followed. Kovačev supposedly threatened that things would either go her way or the organisation would come to an end, and hinted that she would make use of her political links – she was then in the local leadership of the Serbian Radical Party, the ruling party in Kikinda in 2004–08.

In a climax of the prolonged conflict, the Intermunicipal Organisation ceased to exist as a legal subject due to what Jeličić described as 'formal-legal reasons.' According to Jeličić and her followers, in 2003 a new leadership was elected and the number of delegates in the Assembly changed too. All of these changes had to be reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that then managed the registry of associations. The association apparently met this obligation but the Ministry somehow failed to record the change in the number of delegates. As a result, the organisation unknowingly continued to function in a legal limbo. In 2007, the former President and Kovačev's ally Petar Budai reported irregularities to the local police and the subsequent

enquiry uncovered the mismatch between the records and the actual functioning of the association (*Glas javnosti* 2007). The police ordered the organisation to dissolve its organs of leadership and, since no legal way could be found to reconstitute them, after three months it was deleted from the registry.

Immediately afterwards, Jeličić and her followers set up a new organisation, called North Banat Organisation of the Blind, with Jeličić at the helm. As they told me, some 90% of the old membership joined it. Equally swiftly, the remaining minority formed their own association with Budai as the President, Kovačev as the Secretary and a name identical to the old one save for the dropped adjective 'intermunicipal.' Budai and Kovačev have persistently claimed, on dubious grounds, that their organisation was a 'legal successor' of the old one. Interestingly, the municipality – though with new parties in the government since 2008 – has continued to pay Kovačev's modest salary but declined to pay any salaries in the other organisation.

The situation in which two (quasi) 'traditional' associations of the blind existed in the same municipality brought into focus the statist territorial organisation of unions. In a manner similar to the principle that state institutions of the same type have mutually exclusive territorial jurisdictions, the statutes of both the provincial (Vojvodina) and the national Union of the Blind stipulate that only one association per any given territory may become their member. As a result of this, and the concern of the two unions to remain impartial, neither of the two new organisations was able to join the unions. This had negative repercussions. Without representation, the associations could not influence decisions being made in the unions. They could not apply for programme funding of the Ministry, and as two NGOs with the same mission working in the same town, each represented the other's immediate competitor for all other sources of funding. As a way out of the impasse, the provincial Union attempted to mediate a merger. The larger organisation agreed under the condition that Kovačev resign her secretarial position, but this in turn was deemed unacceptable by the other association.

The case of Kikinda illustrates the decline, and intense internal and internecine struggles, that many associations of disabled people experienced over the past 20 years. But it also suggests that the stereotypes about 'traditional' associations, and their differences (if not inferiority) in relation to 'modern' NGOs, do not really capture the often complex articulations of socialist legacies and transformations necessitated by the new context. The Kikinda association has successfully adapted to the 'project system' and, to some extent, new sources of funding. For instance, the renovation of the premises that the municipality gave the association for use in 2003 – larger but ruined –

was possible thanks to a donation from the private foundation of a US ambassador's wife. Having finally gained adequate space, the Intermunicipal Organisation and later the new association headed by Jeličić have carried out a number of projects funded by various ministries, secretariats of the Vojvodina government, the municipality of Kikinda and other donors. At the time of my visits in the association in late 2011, it was hosting two series of workshops as part of a project funded by the Ministry of Labour – one in which a social worker and a psychologist advised the blind and their families, and another where a typhlologist (a blindness expert) taught them Braille. The outcome of two other funding applications was being awaited.

However, this did not mean a complete loss of 'traditional' activities: these continued to be demanded and appreciated by the members but not necessarily, as we saw, by outside agents. The sports club had been re-established and a goalball team[67] and very successful bowling team have been having regular training sessions. Cultural activities were similarly kept up. The municipality supported the association's publication of an anthology of poems by blind authors and Jeličić's book, which combines autobiography with a discussion of problems faced by the blind in general. Every fortnight, one of the members, Jelka Bota, broadcast a special show on the local radio. The members I talked to emphasised that they were welcome to come to the premises any time to get help in their dealings with bureaucracy or just have some coffee and a game of chess. This made them feel, as Bota said, that the 'organisation is there for us, not for the organisation's sake.'

Jeličić was clearly the main engine of this success. She told me that she was initially guided by the former Secretary of the provincial Union Koviljka Despotov, 'the first among the blind in Serbia who got into the system of projects.' According to Jeličić, Despotov had visited blind colleagues in Slovenia and BiH shortly after the Yugoslav wars. Having seen that they were being funded through projects, she followed their example – 'she took their forms and copied them (*prepisivati*).' In the early 2000s, Despotov gave some project samples to Jeličić who started to apply with the aid of her sighted husband. She usually dictated the applications to someone while ad hoc expert collaborators helped her with specialist terminology. Savina, the daughter of the first secretary, did the accounting. Jeličić and other members attended multiple seminars on project writing and other skills, such as the development of local action plans on disability.

[67] Goalball is a team sport designed specifically for the blind.

Jeličić was quite critical of the old system of funding, in which allocations depended on the number of members. She thought that programme funding – which she considered a kind of project funding – was better because it ‘reflects who wants to work.’ When it started to be introduced, the association in Kikinda sometimes managed to obtain as much as 300,000 dinars a month while other associations in Vojvodina with a similar number of members had no activities at all. In a manner reminiscent of the kind of narratives of personal flexibility, adaptability and efficiency presented in Chapter 1 (pp. 107–9), Jeličić connected this to her attitudes to work and life more broadly:

> In general, the nation understands the transition with great difficulties. I do understand – I have been raised in the spirit of some other era, my parents taught me that one has to live off one’s work. It’s not a problem for me. I accepted the system of projects very easily. Most of our members finished the high school [for the blind] in Zemun, they are boarding-school kids (...). When they get out of their homes, they don’t have a clue what the society is, they demand, they expect, they think that somebody should do everything for them…

According to Jeličić, this kind of expectation was part of the reason why associations of the blind turned into ‘some kind of dinosaur that can’t cope in the new age’ while other categories of disabled people had become better organised and more integrated into society in the past ten years. And yet, Jeličić was very far from embracing the norm of pure individual self-responsibility. In her book, she wrote that associations of the blind

> are all nongovernmental organisations, i.e. associations of citizens that work on a voluntary basis. That means that the state does not have an obligation to fund their work. Blind persons are simply left to their own devices. There is no official public institution that would gather and register (*evidentirati*) blind persons and take care of them (Šobot Jeličić 2011: 41).

She proceeds to argue that when one is diagnosed with an untreatable condition of sight, one is alone with one’s problem. There is nobody – except their associations – to advise blind people about their rights or what aids and options of schooling there are. Similarly, when we talked, Jeličić mentioned that ‘except the associations, nobody registers persons with disability as such.’ She also reiterated that ‘the laws are now such that nobody is obliged to fund an organisation like that.’ The implied criticism points to the persistence of expectations toward the state despite its equally persistent failure to meet them. It also reveals that the ‘traditional’ self-understanding of associations as performing state-like functions (‘registering’ the blind, advising them on welfare rights,

mediating bureaucratic encounters), rather than 'watch-dogging' the state or advocating for rights, is not necessarily displaced by an engagement with the 'project system.'

Conclusion

With their origins in socialist Yugoslavia, 'traditional' associations of disabled people are of immense interest for the study of legacies of Yugoslav civil society. I argued that they recently faced a complex and often contradictory set of pressures, opportunities and threats. Neoliberal reforms at the state-civil society interface assigned to them a new role of service providers in a decentralised, diversified and competitive system of social protection. At the same time, the new rights-based disability policy called on disabled people (and their organisations) to become active participants in decision-making, and promised to bring them complete equality and integration in all domains of life. However, all these ostensibly emancipatory shifts were coupled with an exercise of what Murray Li (2007) called 'will to improve': to change the practices and attitudes of disabled people stereotyped as inefficient and outdated through education and the introduction of governmental technologies that, paradoxically, strengthened the power of the central state.

I sought to destabilise the hegemonic discourse about 'traditional' associations and the necessary reforms of their relationship with the state at several different levels. First, I showed that despite their objectively limited capacities, at least some of the organisations succeeded in adapting to the new expectations of the state, and that the problems actually plaguing them, such as insufficient resources and bureaucratic detachment of the Ministry, were excluded from the reform discourse. The case of the Kikinda association further indicates that such adaptations did not necessarily lead to a complete abandonment of the 'traditional' activities and practices that remained meaningful and fulfilling for the members. Moreover, some associations, whose organisational form identified them as 'traditional,' were actually founded in the postsocialist period. All of this suggests a continuing appeal and resilience of this supposedly anachronistic manner of organising. It also points to the political motives behind the sweeping claims of 'modern' disability NGOs about the 'traditionalists.'

Second, I argued that a more attentive look at the implementation of reforms reveals a great deal of continuity with pre-existing practices as well as often formal and/or uneven changes. Established practices were often relabelled or reduced in scope rather than completely scrapped. Such continuities can be found at the level of the

central state, as we saw in the previous chapter, but perhaps even more at the local level, which I will explore more closely in Part II.

Finally, I questioned the interpretations of the political mobilisations of ‘traditional’ associations as a sign of their members’ mentality of ‘passivity’ and ‘dependence’ inherited from socialism. I argued that they rather represented an active and rational strategy of conserving and hopefully consolidating whatever *substantial* entitlements that disabled people still had. The new rights-based disability policy was appealing with its empowering promises of complete equality, integration and independence of disabled people, and helped bring about limited progress in making public spaces accessible. But in a setting in which disabled people continued to be structurally disadvantaged, what it actually offered was *procedural* rights that could not be comprehensively enforced in the short run and were thus of little consequence for the lives of many disabled people.

While the future of ‘traditional’ organisations is difficult to predict, there are indications that many will find ways of functioning in the new conditions. Some were becoming professionalised service providers as envisaged by the social protection reform. There were also signs of an increasing cooperation with ‘modern’ disability NGOs and other NGOs working on disability. These often involved ‘traditional’ organisations as junior partners in their projects, for instance advocacy initiatives focusing on accessibility. This was important for the legitimacy of the projects, since ‘traditional’ organisations with their large memberships could be credibly represented as representatives of the disabled population. Although not on completely equal terms, such cooperation could help ‘traditional’ organisations acquire much-needed project skills, knowledge of donor and policy idioms, and social capital.

Part III:
Local civil society interventions

Chapter 5:

'Provincial political story': public advocacy and actually existing local politics

I first met Virđinija Marina-Guzina in September 2010, some three weeks into my fieldwork. Two BCIF workers took me on one of their 'monitoring' trips – brief visits of NGOs to which the foundation provided project grants. The second stop in our itinerary was Vršac, a town of 35,000 in the South Banat region of Vojvodina (see Fig. 2). This is where Virđinija led an NGO called the 'Free' City of Vršac Civic Parliament.[68] With BCIF funding, it was implementing a 'public advocacy' project to prevent further deterioration of the City Park in Vršac. The project was like most advocacies in Serbia – an NGO gets a grant to influence the national or, much more often, local government to achieve a policy change. The long-term objective is to make local governments more accountable and responsive to citizens. This chapter therefore examines advocacy as emblematic of the established idea that the interventions of liberal civil society, typically supported and influenced by foreign donors, are uniquely suited to promote 'democratisation.'

Virđinija, a middle-aged former theatre director, and her collaborators on the project met us in a communal NGO room. Virđinija was wearing all black, dark red lipstick and black-dyed hair. Adding to her air of engaged intellectual was her literate, often sarcastic and radically critical manner of talking. In a short presentation, she characterised the problem addressed by the project as a 'provincial political story.' Its undercurrent was that Vršac had been ruled, for the past two decades, by informal 'power centres' (*centri moći*). One of them was the director of the utility company which was the park's custodian and which Virđinija described as 'our biggest enemy.' She went on to argue that for many years, the interests of these power centres and their influence over local politics blocked the adoption of a decision that would stop the park's deterioration.

This first encounter led to my deeper engagement with the advocacy project. It allowed me a glimpse of how those variously involved with it understood and participated in local politics. With hindsight, I realised that much of the particular nature of this politics was captured by a native trope that Virđinija used – that of 'province'

[68] Virđinija's characteristic sarcasm showed even in the organisation's name. The quotation marks signalled that Vršac was actually far from free.

(*provincija*). She reminded me of it months later when she called me to tell me some news about Miodrag Babić, until recently the most influential 'power centre' of Vršac and the long-term President of Hemofarm, a large pharmaceutical company with headquarters and a plant in the town. Virđinija told me that a jury had awarded Hemofarm one of BCIF's corporate philanthropy prizes (see pp. 226–7). The prize was for a 'contribution to the local community' and was already the second that Hemofarm received. Because of that earlier award, Virđinija even had a public fight with two doyens of liberal civil society. 'BCIF and all the foundations... I'm angry at them for not having a sensibility for *provincija*,' she said. She believed that BCIF failed to understand the setting in which she was waging her struggle while, inconsistently, supporting that same struggle.

What was the meaning that Virđinija intended to evoke? Nearly everything in Serbia is often colloquially described as *provincija* in relation to Belgrade, whereas all Serbia is *provincija* in relation to Western Europe. In this nesting centre-periphery relationship, centre is imagined as dynamic, active, the source of innovations that spread outward, whereas periphery is static, passive, and receiving innovations with some delay. But how accurate is this concept for the present case?

In the first part of the chapter, I use anthropological scholarship on patronage and clientelism to analyse local politics in Vršac. I argue that this case deviates from the assumption that *provincija* is static and passive vis-à-vis the centre, but accords with the concept in that local political relationships were marked by significant continuities with the Milošević period. This resilient clientelistic and personalistic logic of local politics would seem to justify the need for reformist interventions preoccupied with 'democratisation' – such as public advocacy that I analyse in the second section.

The discourse of advocacy posits involving 'community' in decision-making as its very purpose. Advocacy thus approximates what an extensive literature conceptualised as the technology of 'government through community,' but with some important differences. The advocacy knowledge actually led the advocating NGOs to focus their attention on something else than 'community': local political and state actors. Furthermore, it prepared them to act as brokers: build networks, mediate resource flows and interactions, and translate between the interests of 'communities,' 'decision-makers,' foreign donors and themselves.

The final part of the chapter examines the effects of the advocacy approach in an environment in which informal relationships remain much more important than formal institutions. It shows that the advocacy activists in Vršac achieved limited progress on

their objectives neither by involving the 'community' nor by targeting local formal institutions *per se*, but by activating their own network of informal relationships and brokering between partisan, state and NGO actors in and out of Vršac. This finding confirms the observation made in the previous chapter that top-down reforms, be they promoted by the central state or foreign-supported NGOs, often face particularly strong resistance at the local level. But the main argument upheld by the analysis concerns the very nature of such interventions as socially negotiated processes. While advocacy and other NGO-mediated reforms may succeed in transforming established relationships and practices, they seem to be themselves even more profoundly transformed when their concepts of sociopolitical problems and strategies for change confront realities on the ground.

The chapter finally highlights the important role of cultural and social identifications constituting the 'subject position' of liberal civil society in the advocacy project and the protracted local struggle of which it was a part. These identifications, ranging from conservationism to traditional partisan alignments, informed the alliances made in the course of the project. But they also had an intensely personal and affective dimension. The chapter thus shows liberal civil society in a less technocratic and more overtly political mode than in Part II, characteristic for its original *esprit de corps* of the anti-Milošević movement.

The sheriffs of Vršac: patronage and cliques in the province

While informal relationships were prominent in politics and economy in socialist Yugoslavia, they became even more pervasive in postsocialist Serbia (see pp. 66–7). Such phenomena have been analysed as responses to the characteristically postsocialist discrepancies between formal and informal norms (Ledeneva 2006, 2011; Wedel 2001, 2003, 2009: 47–72). Informal networks or 'cliques' – groups of people who contact one another for many purposes – profited from their capacity to traverse multiple domains (especially politics and business) and mediate between public and private spheres, state and market, legal and illegal, and central and peripheral levels of the system (Wedel 2003: 428–32). They blurred these conventional analytic distinctions and significantly shaped processes of postsocialist transformation. Anthropologists have attributed similar characteristics and effects to patronage and clientelism, and it is my contention that the field of postsocialist informal practices may benefit from the introduction of this classical analytical apparatus of political anthropology (Vincent 1978).

Patronage denotes a mode of structuring resource flows and social hierarchy whose basic form is a dyadic, interpersonal, semi-institutionalised, and unequal exchange relationship between patron and client (Eisenstadt & Roniger 1980: 42–51). It may become the foundational principle of larger formations, such as 'patronage networks' – multiplex structures encompassing vertical (patron-client) and horizontal (patron-patron) linkages (Scott 1972: 96–7). These relationships and formations were further theorised as functional modalities or substructures of formal bureaucracies and political institutions. The concept of 'political machines' or 'clientelistic parties' describes political organisations that obtain and maintain power through patronage rather than ideological mobilisation (Bailey 1963; Kaufman 1974; Scott 1969; Weingrod 1968). A recurring issue in this literature was why such relations often prevail in 'modernising' settings. This problematic was conceptualised as a relationship of the 'centre' (e.g. central government) or translocal 'larger forces' (e.g. the market) and geographically distant and/or socially, culturally, economically or politically distinct 'peripheries,' variously described as 'local,' 'regional,' 'provincial' or 'rural.' Patron-client relationships were found to prevail in situations where local political autonomy is high (Scott 1972: 109) and the centre is insufficiently autonomous from the modes of resource use prevailing in the periphery. Unable to integrate the periphery through regular administrative means, the centre has to co-opt it through patron-client linkages (Eisenstadt & Roniger 1980: 64–5). Local patrons thus become 'brokers' or 'mediators' between their clients and their own patrons in the centre. The effects of such mediation appeared contradictory: while some authors argued that patronage helps central institutions penetrate the periphery (Boissevain 1966; Powell 1970; Wolf 1966), others emphasised that it obstructs the development of rational bureaucracy and representational democracy (Lemarchand & Legg 1972; Zuckerman 1977). How can these analyses aid our understanding of politics in *provincija*?

At the time of my fieldwork, public life in many towns and municipalities was thought to be dominated by figures known as local 'potentates' (*moćnici*), 'sheriffs' (*šerifi*) or 'power centres.' These men (very rarely women) had often become wealthy and powerful under Milošević. Some served as government or party officials, but their personal power far surpassed their official mandate. Their reputation was often controversial: while critics insisted that they mismanaged public resources and distorted democracy and the rule of law, supporters maintained that they were true benefactors of the community. The anonymous author of an online compilation of biographies of 'All Serbian Local Sheriffs' argues:

> In some cities in the hinterland, [these] people, as either representatives of the elected local government or rich entrepreneurs or members of the underworld, by their decisions and interests, with the aid of a network of yes men, decide the fate of citizens and the place where they live. [A typical sheriff] is the founder of a local party organisation, he owns a firm or firms through which he sponsors a local sports club, or he is the donator of a local church. He is friends with judges at the municipal court... (Anonymous 2010).

Thus, sheriffs were imagined as exercising and reproducing their power through a parallel involvement in politics and patronage. What follows is a description and analysis of the trajectories of two such sheriffs of Vršac.

It is not an accident that Miodrag Babić opens the quoted list of sheriffs. My interlocutors argued that he was, or used to be until very recently, so omnipotent that he 'made the sky clear and clouded' (*vedriti i oblačiti*). The original foundation of his power was his long-term directorship in Hemofarm, the biggest local employer in the period of rampant unemployment. As Box 2 indicates, Babić used his control of vast economic resources to achieve the status of a local benefactor.

Babić became openly engaged in local politics in 2004 when a 'group of businesspeople and notables' (Grujić 2010) acting on his initiative founded a local party called the Vršac Region – European Region Movement (VRER). Babić was publicly presented as an '*éminence grise*' of what has immediately become and remained the strongest party in Vršac. Through VRER, Babić's clients like Jovica Zarkula and Čedomir Živković initiated or restarted their political careers. Zarkula was a regime person under Milošević – first the head of the Vršac police, then the mayor in 1997–2000. After the regime change, he found a safe haven in Babić's sphere of influence. He first worked as the Director of the Millennium Centre (see Box 2). Right after VRER had been founded, he headed its candidate list in the 2004 elections. The party's victory returned him to the mayor's office. Živković spent the 1990s in a Hemofarm's daughter company. He became the Executive Director of the Millennium Centre in 2000 and replaced Zarkula as the Director in 2004. VRER catapulted Živković to the top of local politics – he (again) replaced Zarkula as the mayor in 2008 and began his second term in 2012. These examples suggest that VRER represents an instance of the 'politicisation' of a previously established patronage network (Scott 1972: 109).

Miodrag Babić (born 1951) spent his earliest childhood in a village about 80 kilometres from Vršac. His family were Bosnian Serb 'colonists' – people who came to Vojvodina after World War II to occupy properties of expelled Germans. As a child, Babić moved to a hamlet near Vršac. He earned a degree in organic chemistry in 1974 and worked in a Vršac cleaning products factory before he became the director of Hemofarm, then a purely local company, in 1982.

In the disastrous 1990s, Hemofarm prospered under his management and opened new production sites in Serbia and abroad. Babić was allegedly granted access to scarce foreign currency from the National Bank, i.e. at official rates much lower than those in the black market. Since 1997, only companies importing fuel and pharmaceutical products enjoyed this privilege (Freedom House 2001: 735). Babić was a member of Milošević's Socialist Party but not openly involved in politics (Grujić 2010). However, high government officials often visited Hemofarm (Belić 2001). In February 2000, the Council of the EU listed Babić among people 'whose activities support President Milošević' and who were therefore banned from entering the EU; he was removed from the list three months later. The International Crisis Group also included him among businesspeople with close ties to the regime (ICG 2003: 17). Although there is no direct evidence, the implication is that Babić funded the regime in return for the privileges. The fact is that the regime known for appointing its clients as managers never threatened Babić's position.

The transformation of Hemofarm into a joint stock company began in 1990. However, the 1994 law renationalised a majority share. Privatisation restarted after 2000. In 2006, the German transnational Stada Arzneimittel bought 98% share for €475m. Babić received €9m for his 1.8% share, remained President and became Stada's Vice President. However, he had resigned in 2010, apparently following a conflict with Stada.

Locals worried that the 'Germans' would lay off many of the 2,000 workers who had lost their protector. But jobs were not the only thing for which many felt indebted to Babić. The company built Hemograd ('HemoCity'), a whole prestigious neighbourhood for employees. Also at Babić's initiative, the Hemofarm Foundation was established in 1993. It invested large sums of money, chiefly donations from Hemofarm, into charitable activities and both for-profit and public-purpose construction projects in Vršac and neighbouring villages. Most spectacular was the construction of the Millennium Centre, state-of-the-art sports and concert hall completed in 2001 and majority-owned by the Foundation. Babić first acted as the President of its Board of Directors and later 'honorary president.' Hemofarm also established an important presence in the local media.

Box 2. Miodrag Babić.

I will now turn to the relationship of VRER and the Socialist Party. This inevitably leads us to the second 'power centre' – Ljubisav Šljivić, the leader of local Socialists since time immemorial and a classic example of the continuity of political elites in Serbia. Šljivić led the local communist party in the late 1980s (Martinov 2000) and, since the early 1990s, its heir – the Socialist Party. By 1997, he headed a communal enterprise whose money he allegedly used to fund the party (Živanov 1997). He still headed the same enterprise at the time of my fieldwork – the 'October Second' Socially Owned Enterprise for Communal Undertakings, described by my interlocutors as the 'bastion' of the Socialist Party. Employing some 500 people, it distributed water, gas and heat, produced bottled water, cleaned and maintained public spaces, cemeteries and greenery, ran some three restaurants, and so forth. This was the enterprise that

Virđinija described as 'our biggest enemy' since it (and its predecessors) had been the legal custodian of the City Park since 1973. Local 'communal enterprises' (*komunalna preduzeća*) are utilities that provide local public services. In socialist Yugoslavia, they were typically 'social,' that is, nominally owned and controlled by the workers, which seems to have been the case with the October Second's predecessor. October Second was allegedly nationalised in 1991, in the same time as other utilities (Lazic & Sekelj 1997: 1065). Just before the regime change, however, the management decided to transform the company back into 'social' ownership. In that period, Zarkula was the mayor of Vršac as well as the President of the Board of Directors of October Second. The municipality and the Ministry of Economic and Property Transformation adopted supporting decisions that verified that the company's entire capital was 'social.' These were apparently erroneous, as post-2000 audits revealed that there had been a significant state-owned share all along, but they were enough for the court to confirm the transformation (Vlahović 2006). The company was still 'social' at the time of my fieldwork but it was unclear who the shareholders were. My interlocutors claimed that the actual owners were Šljivić and a handful of his associates in the management.

Šljivić remained a reasonably popular leader of the local Socialists after 2000. My interlocutors argued that many people voted for them because their livelihoods depended on October Second, and because Šljivić was a decent employer. Such an integration of local communal enterprises into the system of state capture is widespread (see p. 77); the case of October Second was exceptional in that was is not public but, at least formally, 'social.' While a substantial share of its income came from the municipal budget, this form of ownership left the local government with few means of controlling it. Unlike public communal enterprises, it could not be the subject of negotiations between the ruling parties over the 'feudal division' of the local state.

While a loyal Socialist, Šljivić openly stated that he was also at the VRER's cradle: 'I conceived the Movement together with Miodrag Babić in 2004 and our goal was to depose [the Democrats who governed since 2000] in which we succeeded' (*eVršac* 2012). My interlocutors argued that the alliance was due to a deep, long-standing mutual hostility between the Socialists and the Democrats. Accordingly, VRER and the Socialists formed coalitions in 2004–08 and 2008–12. Zarkula and some other Socialists even ran in the elections for VRER rather than the Socialists. Šljivić continued to run for the Socialists and represent them in the Municipal Assembly. Up to 2010, he also served as the President of the Assembly of Shareholders in the Millennium Centre in which October Second owned a small share.

Through the 2000s, then, local politics remained under the strong personalised influence of Babić, Šljivić and their clients. Through patron-client and cliquish relationships, they used their control of economic resources to maintain political power and vice versa, straddling or circulating between leadership positions in both spheres. However, by the time the advocacy project began, major transformations in both personal and party-based relationships have been unfolding.

After Babić had left Hemofarm in 2010, Živković, the VRER mayor and former Babić's *protégé*, replaced Šljivić as the President of the Assembly of Shareholders of the Millennium Centre. And when Jelena Babić (Babić's wife) had resigned in early 2011 as the President of the Board of Directors of the Hemofarm Foundation (the majority owner of the Millennium Centre), Živković took that office too. Speculations arose that Živković and people around him were working to marginalise Babić and effectively take over VRER and Babić's endowments to the town. This was by no means insignificant property – in 2011, the assets of the Hemofarm Foundation were worth more than €20m. Gossip had it that Babić wished to personally enter politics after his resignation from Hemofarm, but it 'didn't work out.'

The shifting relationships of local parties reflected these developments but also political changes at the higher levels of the government. While the local Democrats had been in opposition in 2004–08, they signed a coalition agreement with VRER after the 2008 local elections from which they emerged as the second strongest party. My interlocutors linked this new pact to the fact that the Democrats won in the national and provincial elections and led the governments at these levels in 2008–12. The local Democrats thus brokered between VRER and the central and provincial governments that approved various large investments in Vršac. This mediating role was also assumed to benefit from a personal link – Milorad Đurić, the local Democrat leader, was a member of the provincial government.

In 2008–12, the Socialists had their own agreement with VRER, but not with their archenemies: the Democrats. The latter often publicly attacked Šljivić, officially for his mismanagement of October Second. Relationships between all the parties were tense – VRER sometimes backed decisions proposed by the Democrats but opposed by the Socialists who, for their part, acted like a pseudo-opposition and supported the proposals of the other two parties only selectively. However, the VRER-Socialist agreement had been formally observed until just before the 2012 elections (i.e. after my fieldwork) when the conflict erupted publicly. Šljivić called VRER an 'interest group' and expelled Zarkula and four other Socialists, who once again ran for VRER in the

elections, from the Socialist Party (*eVršac* 2012). In interviews to the local media, he implied that VRER and their new Democrat allies had been busy stripping Babić's endowments off assets. With Babić sidelined, the VRER-Socialist relationship became openly hostile.

This material illustrates the patterns identified in the patronage literature. Political patronage played a key role in regime maintenance and elite formation in Milošević's Serbia (see pp. 66–7). Though the 'centre' (the regime top) pursued a strong centralisation policy in the legal and institutional domains, its power and autonomy vis-à-vis the 'peripheries' of the system was actually rather fragile. As the proto-capitalist transformation advanced, the control of economic resources became increasingly independent of the state and some of the new 'business' elites became politicians' patrons rather than clients. In the conditions of competitive authoritarianism, the regime top had to face hostile patronage networks of the oligarchs who allied with the opposition. It was therefore forced to grant its loyal clients a considerable discretion in their spheres of influence. Babić had established himself as a local technocratic leader even before Milošević's rise to power and thus achieved a significant degree of autonomy, which the patronage literature identifies as a situation when the centre resorts to patronage to co-opt the periphery. We have seen that the regime and Babić indeed appeared to have found some kind of cohabitation (see Box 2).

Following the regime change and the Democrat reign in 2000–04, Babić succeeded in expanding his hegemony into the political field by, first, creating a political machine which benefited from his existing patronage network, and second, allying with the Socialists. In 2008, when the Democrats became the dominant force at the national level, they also became a junior partner of the local hegemonic structure and mediated its access to the higher levels of the government. While the Democrats had to tolerate the continued power of *ancien régime* elites, the latter suffered increased internal tensions because of the pact with the Democrats. We will see below how the advocacy project was able to benefit from these inter-party tensions.

This analysis further shows that the native concept of *provincija* exaggerates the extent to which *provincija* is passive, static and dependent on the centre. This is far from uniquely Serbian phenomenon. In Romania, political and administrative rural elites obstructed land and forest restitution policies of the weak central government and used their control of these resources to create their own clients (Mungiu-Pippidi 2005; Sikor, Stahl & Dorondel 2009; Verdery 2002). In Italy, local hegemonic actors were found to establish patron-client linkages to the centre on their own terms (Tarrow 1977).

In such situations, hierarchy and resource flows between the centre and the periphery are not predetermined but emerge from idiosyncratic, though structurally constrained, negotiations and contestations of two active parties.

Nevertheless, Vršac was and remained a *provincija* in one fundamental respect: the underlying personalistic and clientelistic logic of local politics. This seems to confirm the pessimistic assessments of the impact of patronage on building representative democracy. The co-optation of the Democratic Party, the core of the anti-Milošević opposition, was especially disappointing for Virđinija and others who used to support it. Already the Democrat-led local government in 2000–04 was criticised for changing very little and appointing party members and their relatives to public offices despite their inadequate qualifications (*Republika* 2003). Virđinija told me of how the Democrat PM Đinđić visited Vršac in 2002 and 'didn't go to the Democrats who were then in government but he went to Babić.' When Đinđić met with citizens, Virđinija asked for word and expressed her disappointment that 'our first democratic Prime Minister' is paying homage to the 'sheriff of the town.' A month later, with hardly any explanation, she lost her job as the director of the drama programme in the state radio in Novi Sad. When I first met her, Virđinija clearly referred to the betrayed expectations when she described the local Democrats as 'currently our biggest problem,' 'devoid of ideas' (*bezidejni*) and 'conservative.' Despite this harsh critique, we will see that Virđinija turned to this party in order to take the advocacy project off the ground. But before then, I will discuss how she was expected to proceed according to the theory of public advocacy.

Public advocacy: 'community' mobilisation or NGO brokerage?

This section examines the discourse and practice of 'public advocacy' (*javno zastupanje*). The discourse of advocacy aims to democratise the local that it construes as 'community' – far cry from the reality of politics in places like Vršac. But the idea of community democracy had an equally tenuous relationship to the actual practice of advocacy.

The Vršac project was one of tens that BCIF funded since it had started its Public Advocacy in Local Communities programme in 2005. It was part of the 2010–11 programme cycle for which BCIF received funding from DfID, and which overlapped with the 2011–12 round funded by USAID. In each two-year cycle, BCIF would open a call for project proposals, invite about ten NGOs to attend several training sessions,

have them develop and resubmit their proposals, and fund the implementation of all or some of the projects. Advocacy aimed at concrete and formal policy changes, almost always at the local or, in the advocacy parlance, 'community' level. However, a more abstract and long-term goal was 'democratisation.' In the discourse of the donors and the implementing NGOs, advocacy was a means to achieve 'good governance' and representative and participative democracy (USAID 2005: 8, n.d.: 2–3; Vetta 2009, 2013: 95–131). 'Citizens become aware of their rights and power and use them to successfully participate in decision-making processes' (Đorđević, Stojanović & Vesić Antić 2009: 42), while local authorities become more accountable and responsive to the citizens.

The skills deemed necessary to do advocacy and the knowledge about its legitimate goals and methods were transmitted in training sessions. In early 2011, I attended three such sessions that took place from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening in a Belgrade hotel where non-Belgrade participants were accommodated. These were part of the 2011–12 cycle which specifically focused on 'budget advocacy' – advocating for changes in local government budgets. Some projects aimed to improve the 'transparency' of state funding of NGOs and employed rationality and techniques similar to the interventions analysed in the previous two chapters. Except this focus on budget, the trainings sessions must have been quite similar to those that Virđinija and her collaborator Dejan Maksimović had attended in March and April 2010. One of the trainers was the same: Snežana Stojanović, social worker and counsellor to BCIF who had been teaching advocacy from the programme's start and co-authored two BCIF-published advocacy manuals. For the sessions I attended, she was joined by Vukosava Crnjanski Šabović, another long-time advocacy trainer, director of an NGO specialising in accountability, and former politician.

The discourse of advocacy differentiated three types of relevant actors: 'community,' 'civil society' (or 'nongovernmental sector'), and 'decision-makers.' 'Community' (*zajednica*) was posited as the end beneficiary and very *raison d'être* of advocacy. It could be a whole 'local community' or its specific subsets (often described as 'vulnerable groups') defined by characteristics such as gender, age or disability. In the beginning of the first training session, Stojanović, the trainer, asked the students: 'What is important for you to set in motion (*da pokrenete*)?' The students responded: 'community,' 'the public.' Stojanović said yes, it is important to achieve a policy change, but to include and mobilise community is a goal in itself. On the following day, the students were presented with a list of questions to consider when defining their goal.

One of them was: ‘Is solving the problem a priority for the community, and why?’ This question, and the involvement of community, were important criteria for assessing the projects. Vladimir Radojičić, BCIF Programme Manager engaged on the programme, told me that the organisations should always include ‘beneficiaries’ (*korisnici*) in their work because that gives them legitimacy to say ‘we represent them.’ This came across in the third session as the participants read out their homework – the descriptions of their goals. Two men represented an NGO that aimed to advocate for better health care for rural women in one municipality. Specifically, they intended to demand money for a local Gender Equality Committee that would consult with the women to identify their priorities and spend the money accordingly. Vladimir commented:

> Have you heard of the Chinese MP who said that everyone who provides help to someone who hasn’t asked for it should be punished? Well, imagine that the Committee finds out that the women supposedly want better pews in the church and then it uses the money for that, will you be happy? You probably wanted something else.[69]

A student pointed out that both representatives of the NGO were male – why didn’t they bring a female colleague? Stojanović summed up: ‘The citizens should be here with you... You shouldn’t let the Committee decide what the women’s priorities are, you should ask them yourself.’

This emphasis on ‘community’ is reminiscent of the technology of ‘government through community’ analysed in the British governmentality literature as one of the mechanisms of ‘advanced liberal’ rule. According to Rose (1996; 2004: 167–96; 2008), the ‘social,’ as the formula of government in the welfare state, is being replaced by ‘community’ as a dominant concept of moral relations among individuals and a new territory for administering the same. Given that the ‘social’ was conceived as a single space of the nation-state, this involves a ‘de-totalisation’ of the territory of government (Rose 2008: 90). More than that, community is a new ‘*means* of government: its ties, bonds, forces and affiliations are to be celebrated, encouraged, nurtured, shaped and instrumentalised.’ If they have been lost, they must be ‘reactivated’ by means of ‘empowering’ or ‘revitalising’ (Rose 2008: 93–4). Unsurprisingly, such an approach to community has found its way into development policies promoting ‘good governance,’ for instance in Indonesia (Murray Li 2007: 230–69).

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[69] The reference to ‘pews in the church’ is interesting in itself as it hints at top-down control over the eligible aims of supposedly bottom-up advocacy.

However, this analogy only goes so far. While advocacy conceived community as its end beneficiary, those it immediately targeted were local 'decision-makers.' Other terms used in the training sessions included: politicians, political parties, (public/municipal/state) administration, civil servants, officials, local authorities, local self-government, municipality (authorities), representatives, or simply state. Thus, decision-makers were clearly understood as formal political or bureaucratic bodies or their individual members. No reference was made to 'sheriffs' or 'power centres,' leaving the prospective implementers in many places to figure out for themselves whether and how to address their power.

From among these formal institutions and individuals in them, the NGO workers were instructed to identify those relevant for their goals, classify them as 'allies,' 'opponents' or 'neutral,' and visually represent these relationships in a diagram called 'power map.' During implementation, allies were to be enrolled in the project's 'support network.' The relationship with them could be 'informal' and this was even presented as often advantageous. But this informality was defined in a rather circumscribed sense as establishing and nurturing a personal relationship with insiders in local institutions willing to lobby for the desired decision.

The trainers attempted to impose further limits on informal relationships but with rather ambivalent results. In the final training session, Stojanović defined the support network as a network of institutions and individuals who work on a common goal and exchange information and services. Having discussed the benefits and risks of networking, she asked the participants to answer a set of questions about whom they planned to include in their network and why. At one point during the presentations, Šabović, the second trainer, advised the participants to 'always consider their interests.' For instance, a political party may be interested to participate in order to demonstrate that its Municipal Assembly members are busy working, although the issue is not really their priority. The next NGO to present said they would like to include a party that used to help them in the past. But Šabović was not satisfied:

> A network includes those who can exert pressure on politicians, not politicians themselves. I hope I didn't confuse you when I talked about working with political parties and finding someone in parties who can be of help, but you shouldn't work with parties as such.

These awkward attempts to draw a line between pressurising/influencing parties and 'working with' them illustrate the uneasy relationship between Serbian civil society and parties: while the hegemonic liberal discourse of civil society defines it as

'apolitical' or at least non-partisan, the reality has been often quite different. The analysis of the Vršac project will show that achieving such fine balancing acts proved impossible in practice. What I want to stress at this point is that Šabović's ambivalence about cooperation with parties points to a more fundamental contradiction between the stated long-term aims and the actual short-term effects of advocacy. Apart from the Vršac project, I studied more or less closely the implementation of other BCIF-funded advocacies (see pp. 20–2). It would be difficult to sustain the claim that they mobilised and involved 'community' in the naive sense of a whole local population or its subset. Rather, the NGOs typically informed the public through the media and organised one or several events theoretically open to everyone but attended mainly by representatives of local authorities and NGOs. Instead of directly involving the targeted 'community' (e.g. disabled people), they tended to network with other NGOs whose members came from that community. This helped legitimate the project, especially when the leading NGO had none or few members from the given beneficiary group. It also positioned the leading NGO as the nodal point of a hierarchically organised network.

Employing insights of the anthropology of development, I suggest that the practice of advocacy may be fruitfully analysed as a kind of brokerage. While francophone interactionist anthropologists studied 'local development brokers' (Bierschenk, Chauveau & Olivier de Sardan 2002; Olivier de Sardan 2005: 173–7), anglophone authors criticised them for assuming the existence of discrete social and institutional realms between which brokers mediate (Mosse & Lewis 2006: 13–6; Rossi 2006). Inspired by Latour and actor-network theory, they argued that development projects become real through the work of 'translation': the ongoing process of translating various and often contradictory interests and generating interpretations of reality to which others can be recruited. Actors should not be presupposed to operate within a pre-existing social reality because the interpretations they generate aim to transform this reality, and their success depends on whether they are seen as doing so. While brokers are especially skilled in performing the task of translation (Mosse 2005a: 9), this should not lead us to privilege them or any other particular actor since translation 'occurs through diffused agency in networks' (Mosse & Lewis 2006: 15).

Advocacy provides a fascinating ethnographic commentary on this work in that it explicitly instructs prospective brokers to do just that – translate between the interests of 'communities' and 'decision-makers,' as well as between their own interests and those of foreign donors promoting 'democratisation.' In the resultant 'support networks,' the advocating NGOs mediate resource flows and interactions between 'communities' (or,

more precisely, other NGOs meant to represent them), donors, and local governments and politicians. Advocacy is thus global as much as it is local, and based on the 'rapid, deterritorialized point-to-point forms of connection (and disconnection)' (Ferguson & Gupta 2002: 994) characteristic of NGO-mediated transnational governmentality. The relationships forged through advocacy often remained ephemeral but could also become more durable. For instance, an NGO with a track record of advocacies targeting a particular 'community' had better chances of getting future funding for projects for the same group. Second, as a result of advocacy, local governments sometimes established consultative bodies with names like Council for the Advancement of the Position of Persons with Disability and invited the advocating NGOs to become members. Although these bodies typically had few resources or power, they did institutionalise participation of NGOs in policy-making. Similarly to the instances of such involvement at the level of the central government analysed in Chapter 3, the issue of representivity arises since in many cases one could argue that other (especially membership-based) NGOs are more representative of the 'community.'

I will now examine how this practice of advocacy articulated with 'provincial' politics.

Doing advocacy in Vršac: translocal politics of the local

As mentioned, the advocacy project intended to improve the protection of the City Park in Vršac. The park, which mainly acquired its characteristics in the late 19th and early 20th century (Građanski... 2010: 14–8), features architectural elements from that period and a variety of plant species, mostly mature deciduous trees. As one of the prettiest and oldest public parks in Serbia, it is an important natural and cultural heritage site. By far the largest public park or garden in Vršac, it is also functionally and emotionally very important to its residents. This was also the case with Virđinija and people around her, for whom the park had a particular significance analysed below.

The park was first put under protection by the 1973 Vršac Municipal Assembly Act on the Protection of the 'Vršac Park' Natural Monument. The act banned any interventions that might alter the park's appearance and put it 'under the authority and use' of a company which was the legal predecessor of the present-day October Second. The company thus became, vis-à-vis the park, what the law calls 'custodial institution' (*staralac*) or 'managing institution' (*upravljač*). The act required the company to only carry out works previously approved by the Institute for Nature Conservation of

Vojvodina Province and, in some cases, the municipal government (Građanski... 2010: 19; PZZP 2011: annex 2).

The first attempt to amend this regulatory framework was made in 2000 when the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia wrote a protection study that harmonised the protection status with environmental legislation then in force. 'Protection study' (*studija zaštite*) is a document produced by either of the two state conservation institutes[70] which describes the area/object to be protected and proposes protection measures. The study serves as a basis for a 'draft act on the establishment of a protected area' ('protection act' hereafter). Following public consultations, the protection act must be adopted by the relevant government body according to the indicated level of protection. The 2000 revision envisaged the third (lowest) level of protection, so the act was to be adopted by the Municipal Assembly. However, although the study had been sent to the municipality, the act has never been adopted (PZZP 2011: preface).

Despite the park's protected status, its condition has been continually worsening. Many tree specimens were lost due to biological ageing, but also inadequate care; the lost trunks might have numbered as many as 200 in 2005–10 (Građanski... 2010: 37). Some of the historical architectural elements were damaged or destroyed altogether. The advocacy participants I talked with all singled out October Second (or, in more personal terms, Ljubisav Šljivić) as the main culprit. The new protection study, prepared by the Province Institute for Nature Conservation as a result of the advocacy project, confirmed this view (PZZP 2011: 48). My interlocutors argued that it was not in Šljivić's interest to take proper care of the park because it was simply not profitable. Since October Second was a 'social' enterprise, the municipality, which paid for its services in the park, had no way of sanctioning it directly. Municipal payments to October Second were routed through Varoš, a public utility owned by the municipality. Varoš was formally charged with supervising October Second's services for the municipality. However, according to my interlocutor in the company, the informal balance of power was such that October Second chose what it would do in the park (i.e. most basic maintenance) and Varoš merely paid for this. Moreover, as we will see, Šljivić was accused of using his position in local politics (including his alliance with Babić's VRER) to actively block the adoption of a new protection act. Various possible reasons for this were being mentioned. October Second ran a restaurant in the park for

[70] One of the institutes is responsible for Serbia proper and the other for Vojvodina. The Serbia institute wrote the 2000 study because the Vojvodina institute did not exist at that point; it had been dissolved by the Milošević regime and was only re-established in 2010.

which it should by rights have paid a rent to the municipality as the owner of the park, but supposedly it did not. The fear was that the protection act might change that. Another explanation was that the company was planning to construct some new objects in the park.

For Virđinija and some of her allies, the project was a most recent episode of a longer struggle over urban space that they waged with the local hegemonic structure. When I first met Virđinija, she put the degradation of the park into the context of the interventions of the local government that had covered the town with concrete and destroyed the 'identity' of Vršac. She gave us a brochure published as part of the project which clearly suggested that this identity referred not only to the greenery being diminished, but also to the multicultural, multi-ethnic and urban tradition of Vršac – a town characteristic for Vojvodina, one of the most diverse European regions. The cover featured historical photographs and documents and gave the name of the project, *This is My Place*, in Romanian, Hungarian and German apart from English and Serbian. Germans were the most populous ethnic group in the town before World War I and, as the publication explained, most responsible for the development of the park. The booklet also described how Germans and Serbs lived in tolerance and cooperated to make Vršac 'one of the most developed cities of this part of the world' (Građanski... 2010: 12). This happened in the 18th and especially 19th century when previously small cities in the Austro-Hungarian part of what would later become Yugoslavia started to grow rapidly (Spangler 1983: 78). As for Romanians and Hungarians, they lived and still live in Vršac in significant numbers; Virđinija herself was Romanian. When I commented on these references in the booklet, Virđinija said that since we are both 'Central Europeans,' we obviously 'understand the same stories.' The material reminders of the Austro-Hungarian past symbolically connected Vršac to 'Europe' with its associated notions of modernity and civilisational progress (Chapter 1).

On my next visit to Vršac a few weeks later, Virđinija took me for a walk in the park. We crossed a broad long street called Žarko Zrenjanin Boulevard on our way there. Until a few years ago, Virđinija told me, it used to be called Žarko Zrenjanin Street and was lined with beautiful old limes. However, these were felled to make room for new concrete paving. Small saplings were planted in their stead and the street renamed. Laughing, Virđinija turned my attention to how the 'boulevard' ended in a small side street (unlike, presumably, actual boulevards) and commented that 'Jelena Babić probably saw something similar on her travels' (see below). The struggle for the park is symbolic, she continued; if they manage to preserve it, it will be a way of

countering this 'erasure' of the Vojvodinian identity of Vršac. Having walked through the park, we emerged from it on its eastern side. Towering before us was the blue glass and white tile structure of the Millennium Centre (see Box 2), huge by Vršac standards and dominating its surroundings. As we walked around it, Virđinija ridiculed its six-storey tower as 'Babić's phallus.' She also digressed into Serbian anthropogeographic discourse (e.g. Živković 2011: 76–93) in a manner I did not really expect from her. All that she was fighting against was the work of colonists who came to Vojvodina from the mountains of Bosnia, she said. These were the people who took the houses of expelled Germans, 'half-rural,' 'primitive', 'full of inferiority complex,' always loyal to the regime and therefore privileged, heavily present in the military and the police. Those who came to Vojvodina after World War I have assimilated by now, but not those who came after World War II. Babić and his people, she pointed out, are children of these second-wave colonists, and although they were already born or raised in Vojvodina, they still have their 'complexes.'

Since the late 1990s, a series of squares and streets in the historical centre of Vršac have been gradually paved with the same grey blocks of concrete as those in the 'boulevard,' only occasionally interspersed with a line of red paving stones. Several of these projects were funded by the Hemofarm Foundation (see Box 2), and even those which were not aimed at the same style – hence Virđinija's mention of Jelena Babić who used to direct the Foundation and was thought to have a significant influence on her husband. While the local government and media praised the renewed spaces as 'modern' and 'ordered' (*uređen*) up to 'European standards,' Virđinija derided their aesthetics as 'socialist realist,' 'vulgar' and 'newly composed' (*novokomponovana*), borrowing the latter adjective from the expression 'newly composed folk music' referring to low-brow pop-folk.

In 2009, work on one of the squares led to an old park being felled and replaced with young saplings – apparently without any public discussion. Virđinija told me about a protest meeting against this during my last visit in Vršac in September 2011 as we sat on a terrace overlooking the town. I then found her changed beyond recognition by the cancer chemotherapy she was taking, but also full of life and plans for the future. At the protest, Virđinija told me, she 'named' (*prozvati*) Jelena Babić as responsible for the felling and asked rhetorically why she 'shapes our lives to such an extent.' 'I think that is when I got sick,' Virđinija added without a hint of irony. With her death after a sudden deterioration of her condition three months later, these words assumed a tragic significance.

For Virđinija, the struggle was, on one level, deeply personal. She waged it with people she had considered her enemies for years and whom she suspected had her fired in 2002 and made sure that she would not find a public-sector job in her field (theatre) in Vršac. At the same time, she waged it for *her* place, a place for those like her, as the title of the campaign hinted. At the 2009 protest whose footage I saw, she was visibly upset when she declaimed:

> I don't want to be very melodramatic (*patetična*), but I probably will be very melodramatic, because this is about my past, my sentiment, my emotions, my childhood! They took everything from us and now they are taking our memories too, and our nostalgias, and everything that ties us with this city.

Virđinija's confrontational attitude made her an *enfant terrible* of Vršac, as others confirmed to me. This, and the personal enmity in relation to the local hegemonic structure, was something she shared with her husband Branislav Guzina, theatre and documentary film director and journalist who worked with her on the campaign and published scathing articles about Vršac politics online. Shortly after the 2000 regime change, he lost his job as the editor-in-chief of the Belgrade programme of the national state TV when, possibly overestimating the political changes, he had authored news stories criticising Babić and other potentates.

Closely related to this most personal dimension was a complex of ideas with which Virđinija defined her political and social identity, and which were not unlike the identity of liberal civil society (see pp. 68–70). Virđinija thought of herself as someone 'civil,' leftist/social democratic, tolerant to diversity, Vojvodinian, '(Central) European.' This was in a sharp contrast to the categories through which she interpreted the actions of her opponents. As I argued, these concerned their social and cultural background, but also political trajectories and authoritarian style: she described them as 'commies' (*komunjare*) and people with an 'old socialist way of thinking.'

Virđinija extended some of the positive identitarian categories to the past of Vršac whose material legacies she wanted to preserve. Accordingly, she framed the park as a reminder of the multicultural, and hence Vojvodinian and 'European,' heritage of 'old Vršac.' However, she also emphasised its environmental aspect that she grounded in law: the 1973 act and the 2000 study. As we will see, this framing enabled a translation between the project's aims and the interests and resources of local environmental activists who in turn brokered between the project and other institutions in and out of Vršac.

This was not the only respect in which Virđinija demonstrated a capacity for tactical alliances. Despite her strong criticism of the local Democrats in the meeting from the beginning of this chapter, she told us that she counted on the help of Stevica Nazarčić, then the Democrat President of the Municipal Assembly. She characterised him as 'our man' and a 'partisan apparatchik, but with a civil quality to him.' Her expectations were not unfounded. Virđinija told me that since she had established her NGO in 1999, they have been 'supporting democratic, pro-European forces,' including the Democrats. This was of course in line with the relationship between that party and liberal civil society in general. In this respect, the following story that Virđinija told me is revealing. After the regime change, a director of a public institution in Vršac, who used to be a member of the Yugoslav Left[71] in the 1990s, asked Virđinija to plead on her behalf with the new Democrat government. Virđinija indeed helped her and the woman kept her job. Virđinija's relationship with Nazarčić was also personal – he told me that he had known her and her husband since long ago and that they started a magazine together in the 1990s. He further said that the Democratic Party had recently organised a door-to-door survey in which many citizens mentioned the park's bad condition as a problem. This, and their long-standing enmity with Šljivić's Socialists, gave the Democrats a motive to support the advocacy initiative.

The project originally only demanded that the Municipal Assembly finally adopt a protection act based on the 2000 study. If October Second was deemed unable or unwilling to implement the prescribed protection measures, the act would appoint a new custodian (Građanski... 2010: 38). This plan was seemingly agreed upon at a roundtable organised by the Civic Parliament in October 2010 and attended by people from the local government, the Province Institute for Nature Conservation, October Second, Varoš, environmental NGOs, and the media. Chairing the event, Virđinija was clearly trying to be diplomatic and upbeat. Avoiding any discussion of the issue's political background, she appreciated that all relevant parties were present and described the meeting as a 'step forward' and the 'first time we're communicating.' This approach seemed to bear fruit: the representatives of the Province Institute pledged to revise the 2000 study and align it with the most recent environmental law, and the government representatives, who claimed rather comically they 'did not know' about the study, agreed to adopt the protection act once the revised study is ready.

[71] This was a regime party led by Milošević's wife (see pp. 66–7).

However, despite everyone else's best efforts, Dejan Maksimović made sure that the meeting would not pass without a diagnostic event when local public secrets came to the surface. Dejan was Virđinija's long-time acquaintance, committed environmentalist, and key collaborator on the project. At the time, he was based in the Vršac NGO sector, as the President of the Gea Natural Science Society, large environmental organisation, as well as the Programme Director of a smaller environmental NGO that he founded. However, Dejan was also active in local politics. In 2004–08, when a coalition of VRER, Socialists, the Serbian Radical Party and one more party held the local government, Dejan served as the Radical member of the Municipal Council (local executive government) for environment. Since then, Dejan has left the Radicals for the Serbian Progressive Party, which splintered off from the Radicals in 2008. When the project was being implemented, Dejan and his party were in opposition.

In his address, Dejan said that the Municipal Council attempted to initiate a discussion about adopting the protection act in 2005. They managed to get it on the agenda of the Municipal Assembly, but it was soon dropped because a 'certain party opposed it.' The same happened in 2006. Throughout the roundtable, Dejan continued to argue that a 'third interested party' needed to be brought into the process. When somebody directly asked him who he meant, Dejan responded that it was the Socialists. (Dejan told me that Šljivić blocked the legislative process 'in an informal manner.') This provoked an angry reaction from Milan Matijašević, Deputy Director of October Second, member of the leadership of the local Socialists, and a Municipal Council member. He said that the Socialists, as a modern and progressive party, 'will not be a brake on any positive trends.' With the fervour of a true democrat, he argued that the park should serve all citizens, not just the handful of people at the roundtable. Finally, he said that the meeting should not be spent on analysing who was responsible for what since, as he thought, we were beyond this 'era of conspiracy theories.' Instead, we should all be constructive! Dejan replied that he believed that there was still a problem that might reappear once the new protection act is ready for adoption.

Dejan's assessment was correct. Although a consensus had been seemingly achieved at the roundtable, the Province Institute received a letter only a month later in which October Second protested against 'an expansion of the protection area boundary' and 'a change of the protection regime' (PZZP 2011: 47). The company seemed ready to obstruct the protection act again. A new strategy was needed. I learned what it was in a smaller non-public meeting at the seat of the municipal government in February 2011.

Apart from Virđinija, her husband and Dejan, the meeting was attended by: Biljana Panjković, Director of the Province Institute; two experts from the Institute, one of whom wrote the new study; Orhideja Štrbac, a horticulturalist from Varoš; Stevica Nazarčić, the Democrat President of the Municipal Assembly; and the Deputy President of the Municipal Assembly, also a Democrat. October Second and other political parties were not represented. Panjković unveiled a new idea: the updated study would put the park under a higher, second level of protection. It was clear that the others had been briefed about the proposal beforehand, and they supported it unanimously.

Several justifications for this shift were presented. The official one was based on expert knowledge. Article 41 of the Law on Nature Protection defines the third level of protection as a 'protected area of local importance,' whereas the second level indicates a 'protected area of provincial/regional, i.e. substantial importance.' While the 2000 study put the park in the former category, the 2011 study argued that it belonged to the latter (PZZP 2011: 2). Panjković echoed this argument at the meeting. The main author of the study, an expert of the Province Institute, told me a few weeks later that when she had described the park's 'values' in the study, she realised that the level of protection should be raised.

However, there were clearly other considerations driving the proposal and the support for it. These had to do with the legal and institutional implications of upgrading the protection status. Acts establishing second-class protected areas must be adopted by the National Assembly or, if the area is in Vojvodina, the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. As a lower branch of government, the government of the municipality where the area is situated must comply. Thus, the proposal was a way of bypassing the deadlock at the local level. It would also save municipal money: if the area is established by an act of the Province Assembly, protection measures are funded from the provincial budget. For the Democrats, this was a win-win strategy – a completely legitimate way of pushing through a popular policy against the will of the Socialists, reaping the electoral benefits, and largely externalising the costs.

The obvious outstanding issue was the one of custodianship. According to law, the conservation institute that prepared the protection study may recommend a custodian, but the latter should be selected in a public tendering process wherever possible, and is ultimately appointed by the protection act. This did not prevent the attendees at the February meeting from agreeing that Varoš (represented at the meeting, unlike October Second) would make a good new custodian. The Deputy President of the

Municipal Assembly even quoted a sum that the municipality had supposedly already earmarked for Varoš for some works in the park.

This meeting revealed particularly well how the project countered the informality of local politics with a network of personalistic relationships of its own. Key people in the project network were or used to be active in the civil sector, politics and the public sector (in some cases simultaneously) and so they were able to mediate between these domains and the project. Dejan's case was already described. Thanks to his contacts in the field of environmental governance, he had known Panjković from before and was the first to contact her about the project. Orhideja Štrbac, horticulturalist from Varoš who attended both meetings I mentioned, was also active in Gea. At the February meeting, Panjković remarked that one of the advantages of Varoš as a potential custodian is that 'it has an assistance of the nongovernmental sector,' presumably mediated by Štrbac. October Second, to my knowledge, had no such links that could be useful, for instance, in obtaining project funding for protection measures.

As for Virđinija, she mobilised her personal links to the Democrats. Several interviewees told me that their involvement could be explained by the fact that it was a pre-election year when parties do their best to present themselves in a good light. Virđinija suggested the same when she, toward the end of the February meeting, said that 'this time we should finish it properly' and then addressed the two politicians, laughing: 'well, it's a pre-election year, so it could serve you well.' Panjković commented 'yes, everyone's a winner,' and also gave a little laugh. The Democrats could have been also motivated by their long-standing hostility toward the Socialists. They also had a partisan link to the provincial government that they could rely on to get the necessary funding for interventions in the park – the Province Secretary for Urbanism, Construction and Environment Protection was a Democrat. Moreover, as I mentioned, the leader of Vršac Democrats was a member of the provincial government.

Thus, when these efforts to reform the local finally started to bear some fruit, it was, paradoxically, by translocal means. Through a combination of the legal and institutional opportunities and the personal and partisan links to provincial institutions, it was possible to eschew (if not cut) the local Gordian knot of political and economic interests that had previously prevented any improvement in the park's management. The project itself was also translocal in the sense argued in the previous section: the foreign donor (DfID) and its Belgrade mediator (BCIF) have not only supplied the money and the advocacy know-how, but also a measure of authority. Ljiljana Marković, who assisted with the project's administration, told me that she believed that the fact that it

was a ‘foreign donation’ was important, and the project team deliberately emphasised this to impress.

The epilogue is, characteristically, unclear. In June 2011, Dejan told me that the Province Institute informed him that they had sent the protection study to the Province Secretariat. However, by the end of my fieldwork, there have been no public consultations and the act on the establishment of protected areas has not been adopted. As of November 2013, the website of the Province Institute still lists the City Park as a ‘protected area in the procedure of [establishing] protection.’ However, this has not prevented the municipal government from initiating works on a fountain, lighting and paths in the park in October 2011. Interestingly, the coverage of the works on the province state TV and a local TV featured a commentary of the director of Varoš, suggesting that the company had already become involved with the park. During my last visit in Vršac, Branislav, Virđinija’s husband, mentioned that he saw on TV that the municipality got some money for this from the province, but nobody knows how the result is going to look: ‘we didn’t see any project.’ In January 2012, Dejan wrote me that a Civic Parliament’s application for another advocacy for the park’s protection, this time targeting the province government, had been approved by the Open Society Fund and that he and Branislav would implement it.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that actually existing politics in Vršac were dominated by a dynamic but resilient structure of informal (patron-client and cliquish) relationships that extended also to the manner in which local actors related and interacted with political and state actors at the national and regional level. Public advocacy in general leads the advocating NGOs to broker between the interests, perspectives and resources of ‘communities,’ donors, and local political actors. In Vršac, this brokerage needed to reflect the particular constraints and opportunities of local politics if some limited progress was to be achieved. The advocacy activists further formed alliances with non-local actors whose leverage helped overcome the local deadlock. This analysis points to the limitations of top-down interventions that seek to bring political transformations in ‘peripheries’ like Vršac through formal democratic channels and/or the mobilisation of purely local resources and relationships.

The anthropological scholarship on patrons, clients and brokers has been often criticised as ‘methodologically individualist’ and ignorant of the political or economic

structural constraints on individual action. But we do not need to fall back on the old dichotomy. In a setting where the state combines neoliberal reforms with redistributive measures to ameliorate the resulting inequalities, the figure of the broker has been described as both the product and the producer of a new kind of society who 'creates and perpetuates such conditions, and indeed embodies the contradictions which ensue' (James 2011: 336). The advocacy activists seem to play a similarly contradictory role in relation to the aims of 'democratisation.' While Virđinija and her collaborators operated in a manner constrained by the reality of local politics, they also derived support and legitimacy from the law, their individual and collective values and identities, and the conviction that the change that they advocated for was in the citizens' interest. Such actually existing ways of getting things done deserve to be assessed with an open mind. They also invite us to temper our tendency to be excessively cynical about the role of NGO-ised civil society. The case of the Vršac suggests that at least some NGO activists did not abandon politics for abstract technocratic agendas, and that they wished to bring socially relevant changes to the places where they live. This is a theme developed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 6:
The ‘change of funding model’: embedding civil society and reinventing the ‘culture of giving’

On weekdays and especially weekends, the open-air Bajloni Market in downtown Belgrade, across the street from where I lived, was awash with buyers and sellers of everything from produce to flea-market medley. The crowds, in turn, attracted many poor who asked the passers-by for change just outside the market. Therefore, it first appeared as a routine situation when a shabby, possibly homeless middle-aged man approached my partner and me as we were waiting to cross the road, and asked us for ten dinars (about ten euro cents). When neither of us reacted, he added in a tone of tired irony: ‘So what are you guys doing, did you think up a project?’ Clearly, this was a commentary on our appearances which were middle-class enough to identify us as potential alms givers, but more specifically such (relatively young, ‘urban,’ smart casual) as to suggest that we might be living off a ‘project’ (*projekat*). The man was probably referring to the context with which the expression was most closely associated – the world of NGOs. I was struck by the fact that even this deprived and marginalised man was familiar with the idea of projects as a viable source of income for a certain kind of people. Less surprising was his implication that projects are something that such people simply ‘think up’ (*izmisliti*), presumably to line their own pockets.

Such suspicious attitudes toward ‘projects’ and ‘nongovernmental organisations’ were widespread at the time of my fieldwork. A 2009 survey (Građanske... 2009a), which used the term ‘nongovernmental organisation’ with its particular local connotations (see p. 68), found that only 13% of citizens ‘mostly’ or ‘completely’ believed that NGOs ‘work in the society’s best interest.’ About 40% of those who said they knew what an NGO was (only about a half of those surveyed) thought that NGOs are preoccupied with ‘personal gain,’ and the same percentage agreed that ‘NGOs are paid by international agencies to promote their interests in Serbia.’ The NGO workers I worked with often complained that people did not know what NGOs were or did, and did not trust them. In conversations with me or each other, they would refer to negative stereotypes also registered by the survey – that NGO workers are ‘foreign mercenaries’ (*strani plaćenici*) and ‘spies,’ that they ‘steal,’ ‘work against the interest of our nation and state’ or, alternatively, ‘only for their own interest.’

At the time of my fieldwork, BCIF and its foreign partners were stepping up their efforts to develop ‘individual philanthropy’ and ‘corporate philanthropy’ or, when conceived as an NGO activity, ‘fundraising from local sources’ (*prikupljanje sredstava iz lokalnih izvora*). These initiatives to ‘change the funding model,’ as they also came to be called, were precipitated by the expected imminent departure of foreign donors on which many NGOs used to rely for funding. The liberal commitment to the ‘autonomy’ of civil society from the state led the actors to prefer individual and corporate donors over state funding as an easier way of filling the resultant gap. However, one of the main obstacles to these attempts to embed civil society in the national society was precisely the endemic suspicion toward it. As we saw, NGOs were believed to be run by a specific kind of people who acted primarily in their own interest and embraced an a-national or even ‘anti-Serbian’ orientation. I will argue that these suspicions reflected the political dynamics of the emergence of liberal civil society, but also the social gap separating it from the popular masses.

Through its programmes teaching NGOs to fundraise, BCIF led them to develop what I call ‘rational philanthropy.’ I am here inspired by Bornstein’s (2009, 2012) differentiation of two types of philanthropy. ‘Traditional’ philanthropy corresponds to spontaneous, emotionally driven, often one-off giving where the donor remains detached from the receiver. ‘Modern’ philanthropy is a kind of contractual exchange and instrumentally rational action that pursues long-term returns. As such, it is channelled through durable institutional structures and the donor continues to monitor the use of her donation. Significantly, BCIF presented global models of rational philanthropy, ‘accountability,’ and ‘transparency’ as a solution to the problem of suspicion, while rejecting emotional appeals because of their supposed association with manipulation and embezzlement.

However, the established philanthropic practices in Serbia gravitated to the traditional type. While NGO workers frequently claimed that there was no ‘culture of giving,’ significant sums were being collected for sick individuals, often children or young people who required costly surgeries or organ transplantations abroad. The state TV regularly reported on these campaigns in its main news show and sentimentally emphasised the youth, talents or good character of the patients to mobilise the potential donors. Other successful large-scale initiatives were based on nationalist solidarity with Serbs in distress, for instance IDPs or those in Kosovo. The aim was typically to provide basics, such as food or adequate homes. People were also highly responsive to

traditional humanitarian campaigns, such as for the Central Serbian city of Kraljevo struck by a strong earthquake in November 2010.

When the NGOs that had taken the BCIF fundraising course actually started to fundraise, their pragmatic strategies went beyond the advice provided in the course. Instead of practicing a purely rational brand of philanthropy, they combined it with elements of the traditional approach. Even BCIF, contradicting its own rhetoric, mobilised emotions to appeal to the moral virtue of prospective donors. This might suggest the difficulty, if not impossibility, of basing philanthropy on purely rationalist principles. But it is also important to recognise that the traditional philanthropic practices were being deployed in a new politico-economic and ideological context. I will argue that the 'change of funding model' was part of the broader neoliberal reform through the state-civil society interface (Part II). Here, the mobilisation of affect contributes to the building of a new, neoliberal 'culture of giving,' buttressed by a public morality which extols compassion and selflessness as the values (supposedly) driving the growing voluntary provision of public goods and services in a setting of the welfare state retrenchment.

The second key argument of the chapter concerns what the NGO workers' strategies of overcoming suspicion reveal about the nature of the political and social gap between them and the national society. I will show that the NGOs devised ways of embedding civil society culturally, politically and socially – making it more indigenous, loyal and popular. The redeployment of traditional philanthropy was part of this effort. But the NGO workers also relied on personal contacts (often based on affective or ascriptive ties), face-to-face communication, and populist and 'Serbian' forms of self-presentation and sociality. This desire for recognition and the strategies responding to it support two arguments already made: that liberal civil society is increasingly willing to reconsider its somewhat missionary original identity (see pp. 68–70) and that it is best described as a distinctive middle-class fraction rather than a thoroughly transnationalised elite (see pp. 70–2).

BCIF and the 'change of funding model'

The following subsections review various activities that BCIF undertook during or shortly before my fieldwork period with the objective of 'changing the funding model' of Serbian NGOs. The multi-pronged nature of these efforts indicates that BCIF conceived this change as a comprehensive shift toward an entirely new political

economy to fit with a truly liberal civil society. This entailed a reconfiguration of its relationships not only with the national society, but also the market and the state.

In charge of all these activities since 2009 was Ksenija Graovac, the Philanthropy Programme Manager. At the time, BCIF had two main organisational divisions or 'programmes' – Philanthropy and Donations. The Philanthropy Programme was much smaller than the Donations Programme (see p. 28) and was only established in 2006. From the beginning, its focus was on the development of corporate and individual giving to NGOs (BCIF 2007: 20). For the first few years, it was the responsibility of a single person – Ksenija's predecessor. By the time I came to BCIF in September 2010, three people were working on the programme, two full-time and one part-time. Despite this gradual expansion, the status of the programme vis-à-vis the Donations Programme was still somewhat marginal, suggesting that the efforts to 'change the funding model' were still evolving and in the process of being defined.

BCIF's fundraising programmes and cooperation with the VIA Foundation

The first of the two BCIF programmes for the development of local fundraising I studied, titled Fundraising from Local Sources and implemented in 2010–11, was a cooperation between BCIF and its partner organisation since 2005, the Prague-based VIA Foundation. People in BCIF saw VIA as its 'role model' because it had managed to move from a dependence on foreign donors to a more 'diversified' structure of incomes with the dominant role of corporate donors (see below).[72] Milada, VIA Project Manager, told me that donor flight from the Czech Republic had already occurred by 2000. Accordingly, people from both BCIF and VIA conceived their mutual relationship (and the relationship of Serbian and Czech NGOs in general) in terms of the model of 'transition' – Serbs could learn from Czechs because the latter had already gone through what Serbs would inevitably have to undergo with a lag of some ten years. Thus, the development of local fundraising was imagined and presented to Serbian NGOs as yet another instance of 'catching up' with the rest of 'Europe' through transnational 'transfer of experiences' (Chapter 1). It is revealing that the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported this, as well as previous VIA's projects with BCIF, under the rubric of its peculiarly named Transition Promotion Programme.

[72] BCIF staffers would also mention the Pontis Foundation from Slovakia (Chapter 1) as a role model for the same reason.

The partnership was initially focused on transferring VIA's fundraising experiences directly to BCIF. By 2006, BCIF organised its first seminar on corporate philanthropy. Further activities to extend the transferred knowledge to other NGOs followed. In 2008–09, BCIF cooperated with VIA on the first fundraising programme whose title and basic structure were the same as in the 2010–11 programme. According to the Czechs I interviewed, the NGOs in this pioneering programme clearly had no previous experience with fundraising. The decision was therefore made to develop a more comprehensive educational component encompassing not just fundraising but strategic planning, project management and financial management – all aspects of organisational rationalisation.

The 2010–11 programme followed the same principle as BCIF grant programmes – BCIF selected a group of small and medium-sized NGOs whose projects it funded and supported with advice. Fifteen NGOs from different regions of Serbia and working in diverse fields entered the programme. During first six months, they attended three training sessions, each taking two or three days. The first session, on strategic planning, was taught by two Serbian trainers who followed a basic methodology supplied by VIA. The second class had two parts, about project management (taught by Milada of VIA) and financial management (by a BCIF worker with the relevant expertise). The final session, on fundraising from individuals and businesses, was led by two lecturers from VIA. Other people, such as Ksenija or some CSR managers, gave shorter talks and Q&A sessions.

During the training phase, the NGOs were asked to write two kinds of documents: strategic plans for the next few years, and fundraising plans describing what they wanted to raise funds for, how much, from whom, and how. The three external consultants engaged on the programme were supposed to visit all the organisations twice to help them with these tasks, but also to assess their capacities in terms of leadership, human resources, organisational culture, and so forth. These activities, as well as the structure of trainings, show that BCIF believed that successful fundraising required organisational rationalisation, as I will argue in detail below.

All but two organisations had submitted their strategic and fundraising plans. The consultants and BCIF programme managers working on the programme evaluated these documents and the consultants' reports and chose nine NGOs for the second phase. This consisted of fundraising itself, supported with small 'technical assistance' grants from BCIF, and lasted some eight months. In the end, BCIF paid out 'matching grants' to NGOs, that is the same sum as they had themselves fundraised, but only up to €3,000.

Five organisations succeeded in raising €3,000 or more. Clearly, then, the programme was not only meant to equip the NGOs with knowledge and skills necessary to fundraise, but also to motivate them financially to do so.

The second fundraising programme I studied was entitled Successful Fundraising and implemented in 2011–12. It was a continuation of the previous fundraising programmes, but this time supported by USAID/ISC (see p. 160). Its education phase overlapped with the fundraising phase of the 2010–11 programme. There were again three training sessions, but unlike in the previous programme, they took place over a shorter time span (about three months) and were taught fully by Serbs. The first session again covered strategic planning, but this time, the two remaining classes dealt with fundraising. The second session discussed individual and corporate philanthropy in general, while the third session covered concrete fundraising techniques and planning and financial management for fundraising. Moreover, the organisations were only expected to develop fundraising plans. The point of these changes, according to Ksenija, was to make the education component fully geared toward fundraising. While skills such as strategic planning were indeed necessary for fundraising, Ksenija argued, writing strategic plans was not the programme's real purpose. Both this streamlining and the fact that the course was fully taught by Serbs suggest that the development of fundraising was increasingly perceived as a pragmatic indigenous agenda.

Twelve NGOs attended the classes, of which ten submitted their fundraising plans. Seven organisations were chosen for the second phase. Small initial 'technical assistance' grants were again provided and, at the end of the programme, matching grants of up to $5,000. Three organisations managed to collect $5,000 or more, while some organisations only raised $1,000 or $2,000.

The* Virtus *awards

The Philanthropy Programme also strived to develop individual and corporate philanthropy at the national level. People in BCIF talked about such efforts in terms of improving the 'framework' in which giving to NGOs was taking place. These initiatives could be classified into two broad categories: 'awareness-raising' or 'promotion' of philanthropy and its importance,[73] and legal reforms necessary for, and likely to stimulate, the development of philanthropy. Awareness-raising was considered

[73] This included the Conference on Partnerships co-organised by BCIF (see p. 139), which promoted, *inter alia*, 'intersectoral partnerships' between businesses and NGOs.

indispensable since, as people in BCIF and other NGOs often claimed, there was 'no culture of giving' in Serbia.

The *Virtus* awards for corporate social responsibility (CSR) were one such awareness-raising activity. First of their kind in Serbia, they have been awarded by BCIF since 2007 with the principal support of USAID. Eligible were all companies and corporate foundations which had 'supported a social or nonprofit action or organisation' during the previous year (BCIF n.d.). Decisions on winners were taken by an independent jury. The criteria for making awards illustrated BCIF's preoccupation with promoting *rational* philanthropy. They involved an assessment of the company's: 'strategic approach to CSR' (its socially responsible policies toward employees, suppliers, contractors, customers, the 'community' where it worked, and the whole society); 'strategic approach to corporate philanthropy' (defined more narrowly as corporate donations for charitable purposes); and philanthropic activities over the previous year. Accordingly, Ksenija insisted in one of her statements for the media that the awards mirror 'measurable, clear results.' As much as she favoured this rationalist understanding, she rejected its opposite – sentimentality. Once, as I was preparing a summary of the applications for the jury, Ksenija commented:

> Sometimes I really must laugh at the applications… Not just because of all the grammatical and stylistic mistakes, but also because of the language they use. They often play on pathos (*patetika*)... the children [who were helped] and so on.

However, some of the 'pathos' that Ksenija professed to disparage did creep into the awards. Their Latin name means 'virtue,' 'goodness,' while the somewhat sentimental design of the logo and the prize featured the shape of a heart (Fig. 9). The award ceremonies 'symbolise[d] an abstracted form of reciprocal gratitude in return for the benefits provided through the company's moral endeavours' (Rajak 2011: 38). This moral aspect was expressed by the name and visual identity of the awards, but also the rhetoric used at the 2010 ceremony that I attended. Deputy PM for European Integration Božidar Đelić (see pp. 142–4) praised the award-winning companies for their 'solidarity with citizens.' He said *efcharistó* (Greek for 'thank you') to the winner of the main prize, the Serbian subsidiary of the Greek group Eurobank EFG, and argued that it was 'symbolic and significant' that a *Greek* bank was recognised for its 'philanthropic contribution' in Serbia at the time of the financial crisis. By implying that the bank was motivated by the tradition of 'Greek-Serbian friendship' and the shared Orthodox Christian identity, he attributed a deeply affective value to its philanthropic acts. Emotional elements were also evident in the campaign to which I turn next.

FIGURE 9. *Virtus* prizes. Photo by Mišo Gligorić. Source: Trag: Foundation for Community Initiatives.

The Small Change Is Not a Small Thing *campaign*

This was an awareness-raising campaign that BCIF implemented during my fieldwork (in late 2010 and the first half of 2011) with the support of USAID/ISC. Its purpose was double: to raise awareness about the importance of philanthropic giving by individuals, and to collect money for an NGO working with socially disadvantaged children. The basic message of the billboards, TV advertisements and posters in vehicles and stops of the Belgrade public transport system was that even small donations matter. This was communicated by the name of the campaign, the slogan 'Little Help – Full Heart,' and the central visual motif of Serbian dinar coins arranged into the shape of a heart (Fig. 10.). The female voice in the TV advertisement narrated: 'Even if we give a little, we help a lot and we get a lot. Because when we help, our heart is full.' Some of the posters further read: 'The small change in your pocket can help somebody a lot.' The campaign also invited people to take action and donate to the NGO – by putting money into special boxes placed in the branches of the campaign's partners (a supermarket chain, lottery and two banks), sending text messages, or paying money into a bank account.

The campaign raised about 321,000 dinars (then ca. €3,240). The sum was hardly astonishing, especially when compared to the expenses. However, people in BCIF

FIGURE 10. The *Small Change Is Not a Small Thing* visuals. Source: Trag: Foundation for Community Initiatives.

generally considered the campaign a success. They especially congratulated Ksenija on the clever name, slogan and visual identity, which they thought delivered the message very effectively. When presenting the campaign to the attendees in the final class of the 2010–11 fundraising programme, Ksenija said they wanted it to be 'modern' and 'without pathos' (*nepatetično*) – not exploiting the cliché images of sad children and the like. Thus, we again encounter here the 'modern' emphasis on the rational, even utilitarian possibilities of philanthropy, also suggested by the ad voice-over: 'Even if we give little (...) we get a lot.' But similarly to the *Virtus* awards, the campaign actually failed to abandon the traditional moral idea of philanthropy as 'doing good,' as revealed by the visual and verbal references to the heart symbolism. I will analyse this tension shortly.

Advocacy of tax reforms

BCIF also aimed to create a more 'stimulative' (*podsticajni*) or at least 'more favourable' (*povoljniji*) legal framework for philanthropy. These efforts targeted the state-civil society interface and were part of the foreign-sponsored initiatives of the group of interface masters (Chapter 3). In this subsection, I will focus on initiatives advocating for amendments of tax laws. As we will see, their overall thrust was to stimulate economic exchanges between the society and NGOs at the expense of those between the society and the state.

A constant refrain in the fundraising classes was that Serbian tax laws did not promote philanthropy. This was most often related to the issue of 'tax deductions' (*poreske olakšice*) for philanthropic donations. These are legally defined reductions of taxable income that depend on voluntary donations that the taxpayer had made to nonprofit entities or initiatives. They are practised by most EU member states (see e.g. Morris 2011 on the UK) and other developed economies, including the US (Smith 2011). Discussions in the classes might easily have led an uninformed observer to conclude that they were absolutely absent in Serbia. For instance, in her talk at the final session of the 2010–11 programme, Ksenija said that 'in Serbia, a stimulative framework doesn't exist.' In fact, deductions have been in place since the early 2000s. The law[74] allows companies to claim tax deductions of up to 3.5% of their gross revenue for donations for health, educational, scientific, humanitarian, religious, environmental, social protection, and sports purposes (Lončar 2010: 122). While the fiscal limit for deductions compares favourably to other countries, the enumeration of eligible purposes is arguably restrictive, as well as the fact that the law only applies to corporations, not individuals. However, Ksenija did not mention the fiscal limit at all. Rather, she continued that a reform of tax deductions was expected but it was 'small' and merely broadening the scope of eligible purposes. Moreover, its details depended on the overall tax reform that was taking a very long time to materialise. 'So there is a problem of the state framework in which we work,' Ksenija concluded.

In the same session, the participants were keen to learn from the Czech lecturers about tax deductions in the Czech Republic. The trainers confirmed that deductions were an important motive for many companies to give. The students further enquired about statistics comparing corporate donations before and after deductions were legislated. Hana, one of the lecturers, responded: 'That's difficult because we've always

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[74] Law on Corporate Income Tax, Article 15.

had them.' When she added that Czech corporate donations amounted to about €100m a year, the participants gasped and said that 'it's a lot.' On another occasion, they asked the trainers how much tax-exempt profit Czech NGOs were free to make. When Hana answered generally, they insisted on being told the exact sum. Upon hearing that it was up to about €12,000 a year, they started to laugh and exclaim 'like us!' This reaction was ironic, since the same limit in Serbia was actually about three or four times lower. The participants clearly assumed to be living in a setting where draconian and anachronistic laws were inhibiting the free market – and charitable giving that ought to accompany it.

I encountered similar expressions of discontent with the 'state framework' when I interviewed the same group of NGO workers. Not only did they repeat that there were 'no tax deductions' in Serbia and this was an obstacle to philanthropy, but also compared this situation to the much better one in the Czech Republic, implying that this was yet another domain in which Serbia was lagging behind other European countries. Being unaware of the relevant legislation at the time, I took these claims for granted and failed to challenge them. Had I done so, this might have thrown further light on whether the NGO workers truly believed there were no deductions whatsoever or deliberately exaggerated the situation to make their point.

BCIF has been cooperating with the Civic Initiatives and Dragan Golubović on proposals for tax-law amendments since 2007 (see p. 160). According to Tanja Bjelanović, BCIF Programme Director, the Civic Initiatives focused on tax legislation relevant for associations of citizens whereas BCIF worked on provisions on corporate and individual donations. They submitted their suggestions to the Ministry of Finance in a document drafted by Golubović (2009). It demanded that the state introduce tax deductions for all donations 'in public interest' (without imposing limits on what such interest might be), including donations made by individuals. It further suggested that gifts to NGOs and real estate property owned by NGOs be exempted from relevant taxes. In December 2010, the parliament adopted an amendment that scrapped the tax on gifts. The participants in the 2011–12 fundraising course were told about this change as well as the procedure for applying for the tax exemption. None of the remaining proposals have been adopted by the time of writing. However, this did not diminish their analytical relevance: they articulated a distinct vision of society that I analyse in the next section.

Building the moral neoliberal

When I asked Miodrag Shrestha, BCIF Executive Director, about the meaning of the proposals for tax-law amendments, he told me that it is preferable for the state to allow taxpayers to donate a share of their taxes through deductions, rather than to take all their taxes and redistribute some of these revenues to NGOs. The deductions system is better, he argued, because it is 'market-like' – the taxpayers can 'choose' who to fund and the costs of state administration of NGO funding are cut. We encounter here the characteristic concern with 'efficiency' that marks these reform proposals as part of the neoliberal restructuring at the state-civil society interface (Part II). These particular reforms would allocate more social resources for the production of public goods and services to civil society (i.e. private sector) at the expense of the state (i.e. public sector). They would curtail the state's control over the redistribution of social resources according to various public policy objectives, but also over the very definition of 'public interest.' These decisions would be increasingly up to private-sector actors: NGOs, businesses and individual citizens. With their mutual relationships imagined according to the ideological model of 'free market,' the decisions would supposedly reflect their rational 'choice.' The ultimate effect would be, it was believed, a more efficient production of public goods and services. In sum, these proposals entailed numerous tendencies characteristic for neoliberalisation, including privatisation, deregulation and tax cuts.

The greater reliance on donations rather than taxes means that individual and corporate participation in the funding of public goods and services becomes increasingly voluntary. This implies that individuals and businesses must be *persuaded* to contribute, and then, from the perspective of the providers of public services operating in a 'market-like' environment, contribute to them rather than somebody else. The very point of tax deductions is, of course, to motivate individual and corporate taxpayers to donate. If given a choice of donating a sum of money or paying it in taxes, corporations may be expected to prefer the former due to the economic benefits related to their improved brand image. But they will only reap these benefits if they can represent their donations as moral, rather than purely self-interested, acts. As for individuals, they do not stand to gain materially from donating rather than paying taxes. The potential beneficiaries are therefore left with little choice than to appeal to the moral sensibilities of individual donors, and to attribute an ethical value to their own

activities, and hence by interference donations supporting them, in order to allure corporate donors.

I argue that it is this logic of a neoliberal public sphere that leads to the contradictory situation when affective elements persistently infiltrate a self-consciously rational brand of philanthropy. Muehlebach (2011, 2012, 2013) identified this distinctly neoliberal kind of public morality in her anthropological work on the rise of unremunerated provision of social services concomitant with the retrenchment of the Italian welfare state (for a similar Russian case, see Hemment 2009, 2012).[75] This 'moral neoliberal,' actively built by the government, NGOs, Catholic Church and a host of other actors, glorifies and centres on a particular kind of ethical subject who cares for others out of compassion and selflessness. The voluntary labour of citizens thus becomes 'the pathos-laden vehicle through which collective transcendence and meaning and value get conjured,' and which 'allows for the emergence of utopic promise at the heart of neoliberal reform' (Muehlebach 2012: 12). From this perspective, BCIF's recourse to emotions to instil a new 'culture of giving' is not surprising. But why did BCIF persist to articulate, rather inconsistently, a preference for rational philanthropy? I will argue that this was a response to the specific challenges that the Serbian context posed to the 'change of funding model.'

The new donor hierarchy

As we have seen, the 'change of funding model' was coterminous with a wholesale reform of the political economy of NGOs – their extrication from the dependence on foreign donors and parallel embedding in the market and household economies. This change has been at least partly necessitated by the drying up of foreign funding. But BCIF was not simply concerned to find a replacement for foreign donors; it also wished to prevent another form of undesirable financial dependence – the one on the state. The reason for this was the ideological emphasis in the liberal understanding of civil society on its autonomy, its separation from the state, and its preference for building relationships with the market and individual citizenry.

For instance, Branka, BCIF mid-level manager, told me that the 2010–11 programme was 'pioneering' because it addressed in novel ways two crucial issues – the

[75] While the material discussed in this chapter concerns donations in money or in kind rather than voluntary labour, it is telling that the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society understood the promotion of voluntarism as an important part of its agenda (see p. 149).

funding of civil society and its 'independence.' She said: 'We don't have that kind of sector now, we have a sector which is totally dependent on foreign donors and now it begins to rely partly on the state, but neither the first nor the second is good.' Milada of VIA argued in an interview that 'it is the best [of all funding options] to get money from individuals. That is simply independent money.' She expressed doubts that state policies in 'Central and Eastern Europe' were 'so smart and excellent that NGOs should follow them,' and alluded to technical and bureaucratic problems that often arose with state funding. She further opined that NGOs should be 'independent' of the state because if they are not and the state develops 'usurping or totalitarian tendencies,' they can be easily co-opted or eliminated. Milada admitted that funding by companies is also not 'ideal' and that there are often 'ethical issues' to consider. However, she argued that NGOs can have more efficient relationships with companies since their style of operation is 'more flexible' and 'more direct and humane' than the one of convoluted and rigid state bureaucracies. I heard similar arguments from the Serbian NGO workers, none of whom opposed fundraising from businesses on principle. I asked a number of them a deliberately ambiguous question: is it 'more correct' (*ispravnije*) to raise from companies or from the state (or, in an alternative version, from individuals)? Interestingly, the interviewees typically associated 'correctness' with ethics only in relation to state funding. Regarding fundraising from companies and individuals, they understood the question of 'correctness' as one of viability – 'correct' meant 'doable, practical'. Some did recognise that companies follow their own 'interests' when they donate – they wish to 'advertise themselves' – but found this perfectly acceptable as long as they let the NGOs to do what they wanted. Corporate funding was clearly understood as fully compatible with the principle of NGO autonomy.

However, BCIF and VIA reserved the greatest praise for donations from individuals. They argued that once an organisation builds a large base of regular supporters, this becomes the most stable and crisis-immune source of income since all the donors were unlikely to cease their donations at the same time. Moreover, although this was not openly stated, the understanding that individual donations were 'independent money' seemed to be based on the presumption that an individual donor had less power to influence what the organisation does than state, corporate, or nongovernmental donors. I will return to this assumption below.

An ideological hierarchy of donors according to their compatibility with NGO autonomy was thus constructed, with individuals at the top, the state and foreign donors at the bottom, and companies in the middle. However, the Serbian reality was such that

donations from individuals and companies were still a small or nonexistent source of funding for most NGOs. The aspiration of the programme was thus merely to increase their share in the structure of incomes and to show NGOs that this was possible. In the final session of the 2010–11 programme, the Czech trainers discussed this principle of 'diversification' in a talk revealingly titled 'Healthy Fundraising.' According to Hana, one of the conditions of such fundraising was that donors were diverse: 'at any time, you work on several sources' to make a good 'fundraising mix.' Hana then displayed a pie graph of VIA's structure of incomes in 1998. This was an example of a bad fundraising mix, since VIA then raised 54% from foundations ('actually, this was one big American donation'), 42% from the US government, 4% from Czech companies, and nothing from individuals. The second graph of VIA's incomes in 2008 was dramatically different – some 70% were raised from companies, 20% from foundations and the government, and the rest from individuals, endowment, and service provision. 'But we're still not satisfied,' Hana said. 'You can have a great corporate donor but then the manager changes and you lose it, so we want to increase our share of individual donors.'

However, even the modest objective of diversification implied the necessity of addressing the suspicions toward NGOs. This applied to domestic corporate donors too, since Serbian businesspeople and managers, especially in small and medium enterprises, were presumed to share much of the outlook of the 'ordinary Serb.' In the next section, I turn to the causes of their suspicions.

The roots of suspicion

The NGO workers I talked with suggested four kinds of reasons why it was difficult for them to fundraise from individuals and domestic companies. First, they invariably mentioned the rampant poverty and bad financial condition of many small and medium enterprises, only worsened by the crisis. Second, nearly all of them mentioned that people did not know about all the good things that NGOs did, and variously blamed the uninterested media or the NGOs themselves with their unsuitable manner of communication. Third, they referred to cases when NGOs abused money collected for public good, which made people suspicious about such initiatives. And finally, they evoked the already mentioned stereotypes about NGOs as 'foreign mercenaries' and 'domestic betrayers.'

In the Milošević years, these labels were the staple of anti-NGO propaganda in the regime media (see p. 68). After 2000, nationalist and tabloid media perpetuated this imagery, sometimes in subtler ways, when reporting on statements or activities of certain NGOs, especially human rights groups and their well-known leaders like Nataša Kandić or Sonja Biserko. These people have been branded as 'anti-Serbs' and 'Serb-haters' for allegedly overemphasising the war crimes by Serbs against non-Serbs and downplaying those against Serbs. This characterisation has subsequently expanded, in the minds of many, to encompass the concept of 'NGO' as such. I am not in a position to examine the veracity of these claims about human rights activists, though I am inclined to believe that they were down to sensationalism and manipulation of facts. What I wish to suggest is that these labels turned out so powerful and pervasive partly because they did capture, though in a distorted manner, something about the political identity of liberal civil society that has been and continues to be strongly associated with cosmopolitanism and anti-nationalism. Many NGO workers I met readily recognised that this stereotype harmed the entire sector, including organisations whose agendas were supposedly apolitical. Quite a few even argued that people like Kandić and Biserko helped feed the stereotype, either because their media appearances were politically inept, or because they were, actually, 'Serb-haters.' These critiques were part of the opening chasm between NGOs which remained strongly committed to the political agendas of the 1990s (including the human rights groups) and those taking an increasingly 'pragmatic' approach (see pp. 79–80). We will see below how the NGO workers endeavoured to get rid of the 'anti-Serbian' stigma.

But there was an additional factor that seemed to underpin some of these explicitly identified issues. If 'ordinary' people failed to understand how NGOs were useful for them or if they considered them self-interested profit-seekers, this might also reflect a social gap between them. I have argued that liberal NGOs emerged in the 1990s as havens of a fraction of the socialist middle class of experts and professionals (see p. 71). These people shared the 'civil' political identity, but also high education and global cultural capital. Although the sector expanded in the post-2000 period and absorbed many members of younger generations, their basic socioeconomic and educational profile remained similar. Some people managed to find permanent NGO jobs for above-average or average salaries, not a negligible achievement in a country with rampant unemployment and an army of people labouring for very low salaries in the informal sector. Many others had permanent jobs as public-sector professionals and received NGO honoraria on top of their regular salaries.

Ksenija Graovac hinted at these issues when we discussed the obstacles to fundraising. She suggested that many organisations operate as a kind of 'foreign body in the local community' and continued: 'There are very few organisations which their local communities take seriously. Serbia is simply a poor country, it is a country of poor people, and class differences are quite big.' NGO workers are often 'condemned' by people around them for not being able to solve the huge problems of their communities. When they finish their work in the NGO, they again become neighbours and members of the community that they have failed to 'satisfy.' This lowered their self-confidence, as well as the years of wars and poverty when they struggled to 'survive in a projecty manner.' As a result, Ksenija argued, they

> face big problems with getting respect in their communities – 'recognition,' so that somebody recognises them and appreciates what they do. (...) When nobody likes you in the community, nobody recognises what you're doing, it is a very short-term help when you get money from a big donor, carry out a big project that has some good results, but what's next?

To overcome the suspicious attitudes, Ksenija concluded, the NGOs need to become 'well-grounded in their community' and improve their 'communication with the community.' But what I found particularly interesting in her comments was the close association between 'class differences' and being a 'foreign body in the local community.' This suggests that successful fundraising might require NGO workers not just to distance themselves from the political stereotypes about NGOs, but also to reduce the social divide between them and their surrounding society. What these two aspects have in common is the effort to make NGO activities more attuned to the expectations of their new donors – in effect, more populist and 'Serbian.' This will become particularly clear in the analysis of fundraising campaigns. But first, I will discuss strategies recommended in the fundraising courses.

Blueprints for trust

BCIF and VIA emphasized two kinds of strategies for gaining trust: developing rational philanthropy, and accommodating the expectations, possibilities and communicational preferences of the new donors. I have alluded to BCIF's preference for a rational kind of philanthropy, understood as a contractual exchange in which the donor expects to get the promised results, preferably visible and measurable, for her money. This was reflected in its deliberate promotion of the international term 'philanthropy'

(*filantropija*) instead of terms more familiar to the general population with traditional and religious connotations, such as 'charitable giving' (*dobrotvorno davanje*) or 'benefaction' (*dobročinstvo*). To understand why BCIF came to see rational philanthropy as a solution to the lack of trust in NGOs, it is useful to return to what was seen as its antithesis – 'pathos,' the use of emotionally powerful images and messages that was associated with the old-fashioned, irrational charity. Ksenija Graovac, as well as numerous participants in the fundraising programmes, were firmly opposed to it. Lepojka Čarević Mitanovski, leader of a 'modern' disability NGO (see p. 181) that quit the 2011–12 programme before reaching the fundraising phase, told me that one of the reasons why her organisation was unlikely to raise much from individuals was because it refused to use pathos:

> [W]hen I'm in the street and see that someone collects [money] for whatever, for instance using transparent boxes with 'Red Cross' on them, I get goosebumps. So people put money in, and they will always put money for the Red Cross [although] they will never learn where the money went, but should we bring boxes with our logo on them, nobody's gonna put money. (...) [T]hey're always betting on pathos – cerebral palsy evokes pathos, or children who need a heart or kidney transplantation (...) all pathos, all pathos.

Mitanovski implied that traditional charitable organisations such as the Red Cross were prone to exploit pathos and behave in an unaccountable and non-transparent manner. The important point is that the two were seen as closely related. Mitanovski's conclusion that a pathos-free approach was unlikely to succeed was actually quite unique and reflected her general discomfort with fundraising that she described as 'begging.' A typical argument was rather the opposite: people were distrustful because they had been 'cheated,' especially by campaigns with a strong emotional appeal. Nearly everyone mentioned the well-known and recent case of Katarina Rebrača, a former model who was arrested in 2010 for a suspicion that she had embezzled a large sum of money fundraised for her breast cancer foundation.[76] This 'was a strong story, much stronger than ours,' as one NGO worker put it. Since such affective appeals had been discredited, people's trust had to be won back by rational argumentation.

Following global NGO trends (Bornstein 2012: 54–60; Rutzen 2011: 268), the solution came to be seen in terms of 'accountability'[77] and 'transparency.' BCIF had

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[76] The proceedings are ongoing at the time of writing.

[77] This term does not have a precise Serbian equivalent. Often, *odgovornost* (responsibility) would be used instead.

been working on the adoption of the 2010 Law on Endowments and Foundations that imposed the requirement of 'transparency' on foundations to the extent that it obliged them to publish annual activity and financial reports (see p. 161). In the BCIF's fundraising programmes, transparency and accountability were linked to a set of practical rules. First, the NGO should make absolutely clear what exactly it was raising funds for. Especially when communicating with businesspeople, fundraisers should be ready to answer all manner of questions about money: how much the NGO needed to fundraise, how much it already had, what were the planned expenses, what are the salaries of its employees and so on. Second, the donations should be spent precisely as promised. And third, the NGO should publish regular reports to inform donors on how their money had been spent. Some of the fundraising NGOs also took up the idea of giving donors receipts for their donations. In the case of one NGO that wanted to collect money for a new wall around a local primary school (so as to protect children from stray dogs and drug addicts), this contractual approach found a rather literal expression in the idea of conducting street fundraising as a symbolic sale of bits of the wall, with invoices being issued to confirm the 'purchases.'

What is happening here is that the relationship of NGOs to their surrounding society is being modelled on the principal-agent relationship[78] in which the principals (here individual or corporate donors) develop ways of monitoring and constraining the agents (NGOs) to ensure that they do what they want them to do – spend the donations as promised. This has echoes of the reforms at the state-civil society interface. In this particular case, the agents take the initiative and impose the discipline of accountability upon themselves in order to woo the principals. But we will also see that this accountability translated into practice was not of the same kind as when the donors are governments or international agencies with their complex bureaucracies. While in the latter case it corresponds to an application of expert budgetary and accounting technologies to ensure efficient NGO performance (see Chapter 3), in local fundraising it rather involved delivering what was promised, and preferably something 'visible' and 'palpable.'

BCIF's idea of rational philanthropy did not stop here. Its courses invited the participating NGOs to undergo a set of transformations that aimed at organisational rationalisation and professionalisation as further guarantees of transparency and accountability. I have already mentioned that the NGOs were taught and required to

[78] Stein (2008: 126–7) makes the same point in her critical analysis of accountability in humanitarian organisations.

write strategic and fundraising plans on which they were given feedback. The people who created the programme considered this necessary because a vast majority of NGOs, as a result of their dependence on foreign donors, had got used to thinking and acting 'in a projecty manner' (*projektno*)[79] or 'tendering-processy manner' (*konkursno*). They lacked long-term strategic and financial plans and instead 'lived from project to project': when implementing a project, they were active, and when not, they went into a temporary hibernation. This financial instability went hand in hand with a programmatic inconsistency, as organisations responded to donors' current tendering processes with little concern for their own mission or hitherto thematic focus (if they had one at all). Instead of following their mission, NGOs focused on 'satisfying the donors' and on short-term survival strategies – they were 'whatevering' (*svaštariti*).

Therefore, BCIF strove to teach the NGOs to develop their fundraising campaigns according to their long-term strategies. According to Darko, one of the consultants engaged on the 2010–11 programme,

> that was one of the pluses of this programme, that BCIF forced them to think strategically, to think about their money, to think about how much they cost as an organisation, how they're going to cover those expenses and what sources [of funding] there are other than [standard] donors.

The NGO workers whom I interviewed affirmed that it was useful that they were made to write the plans because otherwise they would have never done it. At the same time, both they and the programme staff agreed that this was quite a struggle and that the consultants practically had to 'force' them to do it.

The second key strategy for gaining trust was to accommodate the expectations of the new donors. In the fundraising classes, the lecturers constantly emphasised that for individuals to give, the goal of the fundraising campaign had to reflect their own interests. The same basic principle applied to companies, but in addition there was the explicit recognition – formulated in the classes and echoed by the NGO workers I interviewed – that companies might very well be socially responsible, but their primary concern was for their own image. Hana, the Czech lecturer, said at the final session of the 2010–2011 programme that people give out of 'pure philanthropy' but companies

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[79] Curiously, government officials employed the term *projektno* in a decidedly positive manner, in order to denote the superior mode of funding to which 'traditional' associations of disabled people should adapt (see pp. 184–5). The government policy on state-civil society cooperation might be thus repeating errors that some NGOs had recognised in the meantime.

expect returns: ‘And it makes sense, companies were created to make profit, not to be good.’ At a different point, she said:

> There are topics that companies don’t like so much. If you’re working with children or disabled people, you’re fine, companies understand that. (...). However, if you’re doing some advocacy work, work on home violence, or with drug addicts or on other controversial topics, there’s a very small chance you’ll get money from companies.

She said this in a matter-of-fact tone, without passing any judgment on companies’ definition of what is ‘controversial.’ The audience also kept quiet and looked as if this was no news to them. Indeed, some of the NGO workers I interviewed expressed scepticism that they would be able to fundraise from businesses at all because they worked, for instance, with addicts or on minority rights. Since they presumed such ‘topics’ not to be very attractive for most individuals either, the new funding model implies a distinct movement away from such perfectly legitimate NGO agendas. We will see below that the need to accommodate the donors led to a remarkable consistency in the goals of fundraising.

To be considered were not just the wishes but also the possibilities of donors. For instance, Klára, another Czech lecturer, emphasised that businesses may find it easier to provide other things than money, such as services, goods, information, volunteers, or even interest-free loans. ‘You need to know what a donor has,’ she argued. Indeed, the NGO workers I interviewed expected the companies to offer, for example, construction materials or machinery rather than money, and in some cases planned to directly ask for such non-financial donations. In relation to individuals, they emphasised that people, most of whom operated very strained domestic budgets, would ‘give as much as they can’ and no minimal donation would be specified.

Finally, adjusting to donors was closely related to the adoption of a new communication style. A frequent self-criticism in NGO circles was that they used an excessively technocratic jargon replete with anglicisms that the ‘ordinary person’ found unintelligible. The trainers provided guidelines for a different, marketing-like and can-do style of communication. At various points in the final session of the 2010–11 programme, Hana argued that ‘fundraising is selling’ and stressed that one should use ‘normal, clear, human language’ and ‘communicate in a warm, informal manner.’ A good fundraiser has to be ‘convincing,’ ‘sincere,’ able to ‘understand the donor,’ ‘patient,’ and ‘persistent.’ She further commented that ‘one thing I learned from our friends in the West is that people like to give to winners, not losers.’ Therefore, one

should not complain about how poor their organisation was, but rather talk about its achievements and ambitions. Hana also recommended that the organisation's mission – the written statement of its purpose – be short, clear, and 'understandable to the donor,' that is based on 'concrete language, not philosophical concepts.' The Czech trainers also advised the NGOs to use a lot of pictures in their promotional materials, preferably with 'concrete people' who received their services. In the 2011–12 course, one of the Serbian trainers listed fundraising events, street fundraising, and letters as techniques that were 'most common and also most compatible with the mentality in these areas,' but mentioned a whole array of other methods and urged people to experiment with them.

The next section shows that some of the advice provided in the trainings did inform the actual fundraising campaigns, but specific aspects of it tended to be variously de-emphasised and re-emphasised in order to tackle the obstacles to fundraising as the NGO workers saw them. In addition, some strategies not suggested in the classes were used. This will be illustrated in the case study that follows – the fundraising campaign of the Cobra Group, as well as being evident in elements of some other campaigns. We will also see that these pragmatic strategies addressed the issue of the social divide much more directly than the relatively abstract knowledge transmitted in the classes.

Closing the gap

By the time the Cobra Group entered the 2010–11 fundraising programme, it was hailed in BCIF and Serbian NGO circles more broadly as a prime example of an authentic 'grassroots' or 'community-based' organisation. Cobra started the programme as an 'informal group,' that is unregistered one, but it got registered as an association of citizens before the programme ended. It was a youth organisation active since 2008 in the villages of Donja Trnava and Donja Toponica[80] near Niš, the third largest Serbia's city in the southeast of the country (see Fig. 2). Despite their rural residence, its members matched the middle-class profile of a typical NGO worker or activist: they were mostly university graduates or students in their 20s. That this group of young people worked successfully to improve life in villages in the least developed Serbian region was seen as especially valuable (and unusual), since over past two decades of 'transition' with an urban and Belgrade-centric bias, rural areas afflicted by poverty,

[80] Some members came from other neighbouring villages.

out-migration, and poor public services have not been the focus of much NGO work. Cobra and its enthusiastic leader Milan Stojiljković, graduate of economics, have been receiving various awards for their projects since they began working, including three from the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This recognition also had its drawbacks that 'Cobras' complained about – the recurring attempts of political parties, especially G17 Plus which controlled the Ministry of Youth in 2008–12, to show them off in the media and at partisan events as their own creation.

'Cobras' raised funds to equip and open a modest public 'internet centre' in Donja Toponica and provide a computer use and CV writing course to those requiring it. Their original goal was to fundraise for the construction of a stage for cultural events. However, following a period of despondency when they doubted the success of their campaign, they changed the idea to an internet centre because it was more of a 'priority' for the community. For various reasons, many villagers did not have internet connection in their homes and, as Milan argued, this was a problem especially because it prevented them from looking for jobs and publishing their CVs online.

Both the original and the amended goal were highly illustrative of BCIF-sponsored fundraising campaigns, which mostly aimed at creating or upgrading various kinds of public spaces, such as children's playgrounds,[81] sports, cultural and educational facilities, or open-air recreational spaces. The NGO workers I interviewed argued that people were most likely to donate for something 'concrete' and 'palpable,' facilities that they could 'see' and use themselves. For instance, an NGO worker from Aleksinac, a smaller city in southeast Serbia (see Fig. 2), told me: 'The good thing in this whole story is that when we finish raising funds, we will make something concrete [two playgrounds] and the people will see that we have really spent the money for something.' Clearly, then, Cobra and the other fundraising NGOs came to see local fundraising as a kind of transaction which was most likely to succeed if the donors got something for their money. This 'thing' was first, evident in its physicality, and second, seen as contributing to the solution of the most pressing problems of the donors. This was a way of ensuring 'accountability' – once the facilities were there, the NGO could be hardly accused of not fulfilling its promises. This emphasis on sensory immediacy is yet another illustration of the difficulty of converting a purely rationalist idea of philanthropy into practice.

The fact that the goals of fundraising tended to be quite uniform also undermines the construction of individual donations as inherently more conducive to 'autonomy'

[81] Note the focus on children as a classic example of what BCIF tended to dismiss as 'pathos.'

than funding from the state or foreign donors. The difference is rather that NGOs may conceive their agendas from the very start so as to satisfy potential individual donors, which is an arguably less conspicuous (but equally powerful) form of 'dependence' than the opportunistic accommodation of whatever priorities the other kinds of donors might have.

Cobra relied especially on personal acquaintances in order to raise funds. As Milan put it, 'the campaign will be door-to-door, since this is a small place and we all know each other.' Apart from visiting the villagers, the NGO organised football matches and concerts – all with the aim of interacting directly with potential donors. It was found that local businesspeople did not respond particularly well to emails and phone calls; talking to them personally was much more effective. Villagers employed in larger companies in Niš mediated between Cobra and their CSR managers. Members of Cobra also asked their relatives and friends for small donations. Milan told me that most villagers had been helping Cobra in the past, according to their possibilities – with little money, their own labour, or food and drinks. For instance, when Cobra cleaned an illegal waste dump and planted trees and built playground facilities in its stead, people spontaneously joined them or brought them refreshments. The same was the case when Cobra refurbished (with BCIF funding) the ruined and empty House of Culture and readapted it as its seat and multi-purpose cultural, educational and social centre (one of its rooms now serves as the internet centre).

The other NGOs also predominantly relied on personal relationships and face-to-face contact. Branka, the BCIF manager, told me that some of the more 'fancy' fundraising techniques suggested by the Czech trainers, such as wine auctions for managers, may be applicable in Belgrade, but

> the hinterland is a different story, [there] we cannot talk about professional fundraising but rather use of friendly and kin relationships to achieve company sponsorship for some activities... which is also alright when the economy is undeveloped and small and medium enterprises make business like that, of course they don't have a CSR department...

Apart from friendship and kinship, intimate mutual knowledge arising from living together could also drive this manner of fundraising, as Ksenija Graovac suggested when she called it the 'I-did-it-for-a-neighbour principle.' It would seem that in practice, all the sophisticated advice about organisational rationalisation, proper communication and fundraising techniques came down to the recognition that most likely to give were the people who 'knew' the NGO workers and/or were connected to

them by affective or ascriptive ties. Though letters were also used in a few cases, they were mostly addressed to local notables who would harm their reputation by refusing to give a donation. The NGO workers generally doubted that such impersonal methods were likely to succeed.

Cobra also benefited from its ability to revive the memories of socialist practices to mobilise the villages' ageing population. Milan recounted to me how they called all the villagers to the House of Culture to introduce the organisation that had just started to work. When they told them they were an 'informal group' and aspired to become an 'NGO' and 'write projects,' people looked at them suspiciously. Seeing that, Milan changed his vocabulary:

> I said, let me begin differently – we are a group of young people who have nothing to do with any political party, we want action, we want to work, clean the wild dump in the village...! And when they see that, [like] *ORA* which used to be then, youth work actions (*omladinske radne akcije*), and when they see young people collecting waste with rakes, they join them en masse and that probably returns them to that period and that changes the image [they have of NGOs].

It was also interesting that Cobra continued to use the old name of the House of Culture (*Dom kulture*), strongly associated with the socialist legacy (on these institutions elsewhere in socialist Europe, see Siegelbaum 1999; Taylor 2011; White 1990). I sometimes heard middle-aged people regret that many rural Houses of Culture, which used to be the venues for folk-music concerts and youth parties, had fallen into disuse and disrepair. Until Cobra reopened the House of Culture, there was no community space in the village. Especially in relation to the middle-aged and elderly, then, these subtle continuities helped Cobra overcome the initial suspicion – not necessarily because the villages were die-hard socialists, but because they remembered the period as one when the people, young and old, came together more easily and more frequently to work for the common good.

While the continuities with socialism were relatively specific to the case of Cobra, the other ways of reducing distance that Milan mentioned were not. A number of NGO workers had told me that they avoided presenting themselves as an 'NGO' and instead used the term 'association.' The reason for this was invariably the stigma of 'Serb-hating' discussed above. One man told me that when people hear 'NGO,' they imagine that 'we chase Mladić' (see p. 123, n. 41). Two middle-aged female workers from the NGO in Aleksinac told me that when people hear the word, all they think of is Nataša Kandić and Sonja Biserko. These women described how, in the course of one of their

earlier projects, they toured tens of godforsaken villages in the vicinity of Aleksinac, one of the poorest Serbian regions. Upon their arrival, the 'peasants' would first ask them whether they had anything to do with Kandić or whether they were a political party. Once they said no to both and explained what exactly they were doing, the locals welcomed them warmly. They appreciated that somebody had 'remembered' them and come to visit them in their villages forgotten by everybody. This element of togetherness, being with people on their own terms, can be also traced in Milan's quote above: the scene of young university students labouring and dirtying their hands moved their fellow villagers to join them.

Needless to say, Cobra's fundraising was a success. To open the internet centre, they only needed to collect about €2,000 and receive a matching donation of another €2,000. By the end of the campaign, they had collected 323,075 dinars, then about €2,850. With the matching donation from BCIF, this became Cobra's largest project up to that point. The centre was opened, in a room doubling as a small public library, and the training sessions provided as planned.

Conclusion

On one level, BCIF's fundraising programmes fulfilled their purpose. The NGOs came to understand that they needed to overcome the suspicion of their new donors if they were to survive. However, if we agree with Bornstein (2012: 86) that suspicion is 'an evaluative frame to mark those whom one knows (and hence can trust) and those whom one does not,' the question of '[w]hy is the audit – rational, bureaucratic, economic – associated with truth?' logically follows. For many Serbs, direct personal knowledge indeed seemed to be a more important principle of evaluating the trustworthiness of an NGO than the parameters of its financial management and internal decision-making. Bornstein (2012: 63) likewise notes that in New Delhi, '[p]eople funded NGOs that they knew. Perhaps someone they knew worked for it, or started it, or was on its governing board.' In the context where NGOs are marked by persistent social and political stigmas, personal relationships and more populist and 'Serbian' forms of self-presentation, solidarity and community appear as more realistic ways of embedding NGOs in their surrounding society than strategic planning and marketing-style communication.

The structural characteristics of a neoliberalising public sphere push in a broadly similar direction. As the provision of public services becomes increasingly dependent

on the voluntary participation (financial or otherwise) of individual and corporate citizens, appealing to sentiments and invoking moral values emerges as an indispensable strategy of persuasion. NGOs like BCIF, which actively promote these transformations of the public sphere, find themselves in a contradictory situation of resorting to the very elements of traditional philanthropic practices that they rhetorically oppose as irrational and associated with non-transparency and corruption.

These forms of philanthropy are certainly not devoid of problems. They systematically privilege, on the one hand, one's kin, friends, neighbours and acquaintances, and, on the other, children, fellow ethnic Serbs, or the 'innocent victims' of spectacular natural disasters or individual tragedies. These criteria discriminate against many who are morally equally deserving of help. Their affective nature makes them easy to be exploited by the occasional embezzlers. The focus on parochial issues privileges highly particularistic, even autarchic patterns of intervention and redistribution. They can lead to a narrowing of legitimate NGO agendas which undermines the liberal assumption that individual and corporate donors are inherently conducive to NGO 'autonomy.' Yet these are established, functional practices. The material discussed in this chapter suggests that liberal civil society is likely to increasingly tap into their potential in the future. The 'change of funding model' opens the door to a social and cultural embedding of civil society through negotiation and compromise, and contributes to the building of a neoliberal, simultaneously rational and affective, 'culture of giving.'

Conclusions

The Progressive ascendancy: old wine in new bottles?

In historically oriented studies like the present one, it is perhaps always tempting to turn the conclusion into an attempt to forecast likely future developments. Moreover, Serbia has been undergoing particularly intriguing political reconfigurations since the end of my fieldwork. In the 2012 general elections, the Serbian Progressive Party, which splintered off from the far-right Serbian Radical Party, dethroned the Democratic Party both at the national level and in many municipalities, and proceeded to aggressively consolidate its hegemony ever since. But despite the ominous warnings of liberal commentators and the Democrats who urged the voters to make a 'pro-European' choice, so far the country did not plunge into an orgy of reborn chauvinism and bellicose nationalism. Quite to the contrary, leading Progressives used their 'patriotic' credentials and trademark style of populist demagoguery to shore up the waning legitimacy of the very hegemonic project of transformation that the Democrats pursued during their incumbency in 2000–04 and 2008–12. In fact, the Progressives seemed to take up this agenda with a greater determination than the Democrats. To push ahead with the EU integration process, they were willing to take, under EU auspices, crucial and previously nearly inconceivable strides toward a factual recognition of the independence of Kosovo. More recently, they announced an ambitious plan of economic reforms, including a radical restructuring of the public sector and flexibilisation of the labour market, all with the aim of achieving budgetary discipline and effecting the transition to a new, export-led model of growth. If anything, then, the Progressive reign appears to accelerate and deepen the hegemonic project of transnationalisation and neoliberalisation.

Nevertheless, too many circumstances warn against jumping into far-reaching conclusions. As I am writing, the Serbian government, the nationalist opposition and movements, various Kosovo Albanian political forces, and conflicted fractions of Kosovo Serbs engage in bitter struggles to advance, obstruct, or simply skew the implementation and interpretation of the recent Serbia-Kosovo agreements in order to maximise their own benefits. At this extremely complex, tense and volatile junction, the final outcome is all but clear. But if things go wrong for Serbian interests, the desirability of EU integration might come into question. Many other factors could have a similar effect: the possible negative effects of further economic integration, especially for the already fragile remnants of Serbian industrial and agricultural production; the

protracted 'integration fatigue' in the EU; and the Union's own deepening problems of economic performance, geographical and social inequalities, and democratic legitimacy. As for the planned economic restructuring, it is likewise bound to face huge, if not insurmountable, resistances and constraints. So far, there is little evidence of any significant improvements on the grave economic and social situation under the Progressive-led government. Some signs, such as the sharp drop in consumption or the rising levels of extreme poverty, crime and violence, point rather in the opposite direction. The already adopted or expected reforms, including tax increases, cuts in public spending, mass layoffs in the public sector, or flexibilisation of labour relations, are likely to bring painful short- and mid-term consequences before (and if) their promised long-term benefits materialise. Such effects might undermine the currently indisputable legitimacy of the Progressive Party and its transformative project. At the very minimum, then, the recognition of the continued hegemony of this project must be coupled with an acknowledgment of its equally lasting fragility.

Even this brief discussion suggests how difficult it is to formulate, in the space of a short conclusion, an authoritative diagnosis of the present moment, and, even more, a prognosis of what it might hold for the near future. I will therefore content myself with offering just a sketch of current trends and possible future developments and instead turn to a less ambitious, but equally necessary task of reconsidering the guiding questions of this thesis in the light of the material and analyses presented above. What, then, and whose reform did the various civil societies support or resist? And what were the effects?

The paradoxes of importing modernity

My argument has been that *liberal* civil society helped build the cultural and ideological hegemony of transnational integration and neoliberalisation, and participated in or even initiated various lesser-order reform agendas that supported, extended or flanked these tendencies, or mitigated their internal contradictions. I sought to explain this in reference to the continuities with the emergent 'civil society' of the 1990s – its political economy, dominated by foreign donors with their agenda of liberal peace; its political identity, articulated in historically and culturally specific categories which bound it to the similarly refracted transformative projects; and its social base of cultural elites and middle-class professionals whose characteristic forms of cultural, social and economic capital also tied their interests to the hegemonic transformations. In terms of historical

dynamics, I emphasised the key importance of the participation of liberal civil society in the victorious anti-Milošević bloc for this outcome. The post-2000 restructuring was thus a reform with the support of, and in the interest of, the NGO sphere; but it was also a reform of the other forces that comprised the anti-Milošević alliance. I will return to the latter point below.

By its largely uncritical reception and reproduction of the government discourse of 'Europeanisation,' liberal civil society consolidated the hegemonic representation of EU integration as an inherently benevolent process of economic, political, social and even civilisational modernisation. Evading public debate about its ideological underpinnings and politico-economic and redistributive implications, civil society gravitated to its framing as an essentially identitarian and cultural issue of accepting the nebulous 'European values' and reclaiming Serbia's rightful place in the 'family of European nations.' At the same time, through projects like the Slovak-Serbian EU Enlargement Fund, it sought to make itself useful and provide expert advice and other inputs for the myriad legal, institutional and policy reforms that were driven by the exigencies of integration or attributed an 'European dimension' – thus tacitly accepting that there was nothing to discuss about the broader process which framed all these reforms.

I identified a similar relationship of liberal civil society to the project of neoliberalisation of the Serbian state and public sphere. Leading NGOs advocated for, helped conceive, and contributed donor and their own resources to legal and institutional interventions that reconfigured the interface of the state and civil society in line with the neoliberal norms of 'efficiency' and 'transparency.' These reforms were based on the concepts of neoclassical economics, mediated by bodies of expert knowledge like regulatory economics, public budgeting, and public procurement. As such, they conceived causes and fixes for problematic human behaviour in the categories of methodological individualism and instrumental rationality. Beyond the implications of this kind of governmentality for the particular policy domains that I examined – state-civil society 'partnership,' social protection, tax system – it had the overarching effect of reinforcing, at least in the narrow but influential policy circles, what could be described as a 'neoliberal common sense.' It was this ideological and conceptual structure that informed the reform of the state by expanding and re-regulating its interface with civil society as well as the efforts to instil a new, 'market-like' and NGO-mediated, public sphere.

One should also note the complementary, if not synergic, relationship between these two transformations. It was neoliberal ideology – the 'neoliberal European policy consensus' (McNamara 1998) – that has decisively shaped the EU project as one of a negative (market-making) integration rather than, and at the expense of, positive (market-correcting) integration (Scharpf 2002). Beyond the increasingly unconvincing gestures to a 'European social model,' actual EU social policy prioritises the freedom of movement of an individualist 'market citizen' and his or her 'individual rights of exit from, and entry into, democratically shaped and collectively financed systems of national solidarity' (Scharpf 2010: 223; see also Hansen & Hager 2010). But the EU has a close affinity to neoliberalism also at the less visible level of technologies of rule that it employs. The celebratory discourse of 'multi-level' or 'European governance' (produced by the EU itself and much of the academia) obscures its negative dimensions, especially the tendency to hollow out the state – build a 'weak, polycentric state and a centreless society increasingly regulated and manipulated by market forces and through the opaque processes of intergovernmental or intra-institutional bargaining' (Shore 2006: 720–1). The EU's political technologies are more adequately described as a form of governmentality which works by divorcing fundamentally political issues from the realm of politics and placing them in the realm of science and 'experts' (Shore 2006: 721–2).

I exposed the discursive strategies through which Serbian NGO leaders and workers, and the politicians and civil servants who shared their perspectives and objectives, depoliticised neoliberalisation and European integration. In fact, they even explicitly used 'depoliticisation' or 'departicisation' as native terms for a highly desirable transformation of the state that they purported to pursue. But the language of 'reform' is *generally* one of neutral, technical improvements and corrections: 'formalisation,' 'rationalisation,' achieving an 'order/system,' and even, especially in the case of EU integration, 'normality.' By insisting on these supposedly unassailable and universal benefits of reforms, their advocates represent them as being in the 'general interest' of the nation, obscure the underlying political interests which they serve, and stave off or preempt criticism.

A crucial aspect of this kind of framing that I wish to highlight is its teleological and determinist idea of modernisation, here found in a 'transitional' and neoliberal incarnation. The belief is that the cumulative effect of all the legal and institutional reforms and newly introduced governmental technologies will be to erase the retrograde legacies of socialism and nationalist authoritarianism as well as the layers of premodern

culture (pejoratively described as 'collectivist,' 'tribal' and so on) which the former are said to have conserved. This effect will thus finally unblock Serbia's 'blocked transition' and open the door to a modernity imagined as universal and singular. At the normative and ideological level, this is a characteristically *liberal* modernity, based on the assumption that the ideal state of nature corresponds to a mutually autonomous 'state,' 'civil society' and 'market,' the sanctity of individual liberties and rights, and the 'rule of law.' But in practice, the necessity of confronting the resilient and often highly elaborate legacies of illiberal regimes marks this modernity as *neo*liberal. In other words, the state and other actors are required to step in to reconfigure these legacies in an 'attempt to reanimate the principles of classical liberalism in light of new circumstances' (Collier 2011: 2). In a country like Serbia, liberal democracy and liberal capitalism is, to use a staple term of NGO-speak, a 'project' – a planned intervention to be executed rather than a natural condition to be discovered.

Anthropological critique of established modernisation theories attacks the assumption that 'modernity is first and foremost a material project – one that *produces* cultural effects but that is not, itself, culturally produced' (Sanders & West 2003: 9). Such a construction is evident in the thinking of Serbian reformers. Culture corresponds to local deficiencies, while reform is what comes to rectify them under the guidance of the universal (or at least 'European') reason. One of the ways of interrogating these assumptions is the notion of 'multiple modernities' which recognises that modernity is always already cultural and, as such, plural (Eisenstadt 2000; Thomassen 2010). This approach destabilises a number of previously assumed dichotomies, such as the one of tradition and modernity, the West and the rest, and the local and the global (Sanders & West 2003: 9). But the notion of multiple modernities still implicitly presumes a shared unity in relation to which the various modernities can be defined. As an analytical alternative, we might follow Mitchell (2000) in recognising that the project of modernity *is* characterised by singularity and universalism that enabled its endless replication across varied settings. But precisely this is also the source of its chronically incomplete realisation. If the emergence of the modern (the Western, the capitalist) hinges on marginalising and subordinating what remains different to it, this 'constitutive outside' has an uncanny way of creeping back in and mutating modernity. The universalism of modernity always remains an impossible one, subverted by the very forms of difference on which it depends.

In the present case, this subversion should not be interpreted as limited to the continued active resistance to the neoliberal and 'Europeanised' variant of modernity

that liberal civil society and its allies advocate and promote. It is certainly a telling sign that people remain invested in ideas and practices that had been marked as anachronistic (such as 'traditional' associations of disabled people or 'paternalist' welfare provision) or in nationalist and neotraditionalist agendas that were hoped to have been thoroughly defeated and discredited. But perhaps even more intriguing is the way in which the unwanted legacies of past regimes and social orders refuse to vacate the relationships and practices of the would-be modernisers themselves, such as in the case of the interface masters, the advocacy project in Vršac, or some of the local fundraising campaigns. What this might suggest is the fragility and contested nature of the very project of civil society building in a setting that is culturally and socially different than those from which the hegemonic liberal ideal of civil society is being imported. It also points to the limited explanatory and transformative power of the neoliberal common sense.

As numerous anthropologists pointed out, and as I also argued in the introduction, civil society is not only a modernist but also a Western and capitalist concept. The Comaroffs underline that for many commentators, the viability of civil society in Africa has nothing to do with anything indigenous; it rather hinges on the health of African middle classes (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 18). The future of civil society is seen as dependent on the 'triumph of bourgeois-liberal capitalism' not only in the sense of purely material and economic interests, but the recreation of characteristic social and cultural arrangements of the 18th and 19th century capitalist society. This is the reason that 'Western-oriented intellectuals, lawyers, entrepreneurs, academics, teachers, and sometimes Christian (never Muslim) leaders are typically seen from outside as the vanguards of civil society in formation' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 19). To be sure, the Western observers and instigators of Serbian civil society (including the all-important donors) employed equivalent criteria to identify its prospective social base. It was intellectuals and middle-class professionals with pro-Western outlook that had come to populate, through a combination of self-recruitment and external encouragement, the emergent NGO sector. But these cultural elites and middle classes, whose formation occurred in the context of Yugoslav late socialism, could not be the same as Western middle classes, just as capitalism and multi-party 'democracy' in Milošević's Serbia were dramatically different from their nominal Western counterparts. This undoubtedly contributes to an understanding why, as anthropologists have abundantly documented, civil society in postsocialist settings often did not work as the foreign donors expected. Beneath their members' artful mastery of the register of

liberal democracy and all the outward signs of a liberal associational sphere, there was a rather different reality of relationships, practices and norms inherited from the socialist era and readapted for the purposes of pursuing self-interested material and political agendas in the new context.

But the Comaroffs' argument warns us against contenting ourselves with this part of the story, pertinent as it is. To explain the phenomenon of donor-driven civil society in reference *only* to the economic and political interests of those inhabiting it leads to an excessively instrumentalist and impoverished account. I often had a strong impression that my NGO research participants and interlocutors, even though perfectly capable of taking an ironic distance from the more obvious mannerisms of the donor discourse and the ideological obsessions of the NGO leaders said to be 'stuck in the 90s,' *did* internalise basic liberal assumptions about civil society, democracy and economy, and let them shape their very subjectivity. How else to explain the numerous forms of often intense self-criticism, targeting variously the continued dependence of civil society on foreign donors, its rising dependence on the state, imbrication with the 'partocratic' system, preoccupation with elitist agendas, inability to gain the confidence of local 'communities,' or lack of programmatic consistency, long-term strategic planning and sustainable financial management? And it did not stop at words – the reforms of the line item 481, the efforts to 'change the funding model,' the promotion of an organisational rationalisation and professionalisation of NGOs, were all attempts to correct some of these failings, along with other objectives.

From this perspective, these more recent phases of civil society building could be interpreted as an attempted *self-reform* of the reformers themselves – their efforts to embody moral norms, cultural understandings, and social relationships presumed by the liberal theory of civil society. While these initiatives were supported and influenced by the foreign donors as part of their 'exit strategy,' they were clearly becoming indigenised: not only did they target the characteristic problems of the particularly Serbian context, they were also refracted by that context. This could be seen from the various delicate balancing acts, such as the way in which the NGO workers who had crossed over to the state defined themselves as non-partisan experts, thus justifying their 'boundary crossing' as an extension of their original social and political identity into a new institutional context which did not compromise that identity. Another example is the ambiguous attempts to legitimate and yet circumscribe cooperation with political parties in the context of public advocacy. We might be witnessing a failure of the donors to appreciate the true purposes of those that they attempt to harness for their own

designs – their preoccupation with re-forming themselves as a new kind of middle class to match Serbia's neoliberalising economy (as well as the changing political economy of civil society itself), rather than with the possibly unattainable objective of 'reforming' the entire system (for analyses of similar cases, see James 2002; McNeill 2011: 114–53; Pigg 1997). This latter point brings us to the second overarching concern that I wish to deal with here – the antipolitics and politics of civil society and the 'reform' it promotes.

The limits of depoliticisation

Throughout the thesis, I alluded repeatedly to the conflicted relationship of the Serbian discourse and practice of civil society to the realm of politics. The paradox is evident. Given the axiomatic assumption that there is an intrinsic link between a 'vibrant civil society' and the quality of democracy, or in a more processual sense between 'civil society-building' and 'democratisation,' it would be logical to assume that civil society is something deeply political. But its political nature is actually seriously compromised and this is even understood as a good thing. The hegemonic liberal theory of civil society insists on its separation from the sphere of politics *sensu stricto*, expressed by its definition as a 'civil *sector*' with alternative and more or less closely overlapping epithets like 'nongovernmental,' 'nonprofit' or 'third'. Most liberal NGOs self-ascribe as 'non-partisan' and appear much more happy to talk about their 'values' than their political commitments, in line with the end-of-history view that political, economic and social liberalism is now (or should be) a matter of universal ethics to be protected and enforced by the law. While some common NGO activities such as public advocacy have an obvious political purpose, the underlying liberal democratic philosophy limits this to 'articulating,' 'representing' and 'defending' the interests of the 'community,' conceived in a simplistically communitarian or at best pluralist manner, in relation to the state or political society. Civil society is thus defined as a vessel for political agendas of somebody else, rather than a group or groups of people with agendas of their own. That the advocacy campaigns target nearly always the state betrays the assumption that the extant relationships between the capitalist *economy* and society are natural and/or not amenable to political strategies. Mirroring undoubtedly the donor fixation on 'concrete' and 'measurable' results, the objectives of advocacy are typically narrow and formal – here a legal act or strategy to be adopted, there a consultative body to be established. After all, the overarching language of 'reform,' which civil society co-

produces, adopts a similarly technocratic perspective when it emphasises ‘efficiency,’ ‘transparency,’ ‘formalisation,’ ‘institutionalisation,’ ‘harmonisation’ (with EU law) and so forth. One of the NGO workers I interviewed offered an exquisite example of this frame of mind when she criticised the idea reigning in Serbia that ‘politics is an ideological thing, not a pragmatic thing.’ She argued that ‘the main thing in politics is spending the budget,’ and gave Slovenia as an example of this stage of political maturity because one of the main concerns of public debate there was supposedly the issue of dog fouling. (Ironically, only a year or so later, this alleged utopia of bourgeois post-politics was tarnished by an unprecedented wave of public protests that their participants dubbed an ‘uprising’ against the country’s elites.)

The issue of ‘depoliticisation’ or ‘antipolitics’ is, of course, a familiar one in the anthropological literatures on NGOs and civil society building (Fisher 1997), as well as in the related scholarship on development. Anthropologists have been rightfully critical of this tendency to substitute narrow technical problems and solutions for structural and politico-economic ones and limit public deliberation to the application of expert knowledge. But too strong an emphasis on the strategy of depoliticisation risks overestimating its actual achievements and possibly even reifying its ideological representation.

In the material that I analysed above, the limits of antipolitics are manifest at several different levels. In concrete civil society interventions, such as the advocacy project in Vršac, the attempts of the donors to constrain the ways in which civil society can legitimately relate to the sphere of politics, and in that manner preserve their mutual boundaries, often collapse when confronted with established political and social relationships. Such interventions become drawn into the political strategies of local actors through negotiation and compromise. Depoliticisation itself may turn out to be a fundamentally political strategy, such as in the case of the lobbying for the seemingly neutral criteria of ‘efficiency’ and ‘transparency’ in public funding of civil society, which I showed to serve and simultaneously obscure the underlying political interests. But the purported boundaries of civil society and political society were in question also at the level of the entire ‘sector,’ as the phenomena of ‘party NGOs’ or party-mediated ‘boundary crossing’ show, and had been so from its emergence in the 1990s when NGOs worked closely with the anti-Milošević opposition. I mentioned numerous examples indicating that the particular partisan alignments then established continued to be perpetuated through the 2000s. However, the discourses about insincere Europeanisation or ‘illusion of reform’ suggest that these relationships became

increasingly tense as civil society came to doubt that its hitherto political allies were truly committed to the ‘civil’ and reformist values. This reveals the fragmentation of the eclectic anti-Milošević alliance as a result of the loss of the one shared interest (ousting Milošević). In the changed context, the ‘democratic’ and ‘pro-European’ political and economic elites started to prioritise their mutual and particularistic interests, leading to what many in civil society experienced as a kind of hijacking of the (supposedly ‘unblocked’) post-Milošević transformation. The Progressives’ rise to power in the 2012 elections, preceded by the much-discussed pledges of some doyens of civil society not to extend their support to the corrupt and insufficiently reformist Democrats, represents a new phase in this process in which a new hegemonic bloc, with the Progressives as its political arm, seems to be crystallising. It will be interesting to see the effects of these large-scale realignments on the NGO sphere, its political identity, and relationships with state actors and forces in institutional politics.

However, the most telling sign of the political nature of civil society and the ‘reform’ it promotes might be the fact that both were broadly interpreted and treated as such. Liberal civil society has failed to actualise its universalist ideal and become an inclusive associational sphere of a democratic society which provides a space for the articulation and exercise of plural group interests within the shared framework of liberal norms. Quite to the contrary, many Serbian citizens continued to perceive it as highly exclusive both politically and socially, and quite possibly even hostile to the Serbian nation or furthering only its own interests. This might gradually change if liberal NGOs undergo, in large numbers and a more sustained manner, populist transformations such as those provoked by the efforts to develop local fundraising. But in the meantime, liberal civil society is likely to remain a socially marginal phenomenon, and civil society in an analytical sense to exist emphatically in the plural. As we saw, some Serbian citizens became or continued to be active in other kinds of organisations and movements that, despite often sharing legal subjectivity and some formal characteristics with NGOs, developed very different political agendas and cultural meanings. The Yugoslav socialist forms of associational practice and state-civil society relations did not wither away despite being marked as anachronistic, while nationalist civil society became better-organised and louder precisely at the time when nationalism was expected to leave the scene. These ‘other’ civil societies interpreted the hegemonic ‘reform’ of the state through counter-narratives that rejected its very interpretation as the logical, if not the only possible, pathway of ‘transition,’ and articulated radically different visions of collective future. They responded to the deepening of transnational

and, increasingly, EU-led integration with mobilisations which defended the inherited systems of national solidarity or performed a counter-hegemonic project of retraditionalisation and ethnonational self-determination. Many members of 'traditional' associations of disabled people doubted that the new, 'efficient' and 'transparent,' system of public funding of their organisations could bring any significant improvements on the existing practices, and considered other changes to be the priority. They refused to believe that the elevated discourse of equal individual rights (coupled with a more sinister emphasis on equal obligations), so valued by disability and other NGOs, would solve their many predicaments. They responded to these ongoing reforms with a political strategy aimed at a preservation of the existing welfare system and collective entitlements. Nationalist groups actively rejected the very idea of equal rights for particular categories and groups of people and fought for the restoration of an inegalitarian social order. Instead of modernisation in the guise of economic, political and cultural globalisation, they envisaged a radically different strategy of national development that was based on mythical ideas of national authenticity and self-sufficiency.

Clearly, then, liberalism, individualism and cosmopolitanism, as values and norms comprising the very foundations of liberal civil society, have failed to become universally accepted in Serbian society and escape the possibility of political contestation. But it is also important to recognise that the likely terms (and hence outcomes) of such a contestation are seriously constrained by the dominant political discourses which tend to privilege organising binaries such as civil/nationalist or pro-European/traditional, and their attendant focus on the issues of identity and culture rather than political economy and social justice. The options of political challenge are still narrower in the case of neoliberalism and the neoclassical economic orthodoxy, as a result of sustained elite-sponsored efforts over the past few decades to establish them as elements of expert consensus and, ultimately, common sense. In the context of the ongoing crisis of global capitalism, neoliberalism, as an ideological and intellectual project, might appear to be dead. But as a 'mode of crisis-driven governance' of the kind currently aggressively deployed in the EU's peripheries, it is more adequately described as *living* dead, 'animated by technocratic forms of muscle memory, deep instincts of self-preservation, and spasmodic bursts of social violence' (Peck, Theodore & Brenner 2009: 105). I attempted to indicate several progressive roles that critical social science can play at this historical conjuncture. It can expose the mythical foundations – identitarian narratives, cultural imaginaries, and inherited wisdom passing

for scholarship – of hegemonic and would-be hegemonic projects that present either (neo)liberal modernisation or retraditionalisation as transformative strategies in the general interest. It can help redirect the attention to the political and ideological agendas that these projects further and the group interests that they serve, therein contributing to an expansion and change of emphasis in public discourse and deliberation. But perhaps most importantly, it can progress from critique to a more active mode of political engagement that defines a 'left art of government' (Ferguson 2011) by documenting collective strategies and social institutions promoting welfare, equality and other socially positive outcomes. In the present case, we saw that these may predate liberal civil society with its characteristic modes of intervention, but also put its concepts and resources to local uses.

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Legal norms

The norms are listed by their English names used in the text, followed by an official Serbian (Latin) equivalent and, if applicable, the issue(s) of the official gazette in which they, and their subsequent amendments, were published.

Budget Funding for Associations Regulation. Uredba o sredstvima za podsticanje programa ili nedostajućeg dela sredstava za finansiranje programa od javnog interesa koja realizuju udruženja. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 8/2012.

Criminal Code. Krivični zakonik. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 85/2005, 88/2005, 107/2005, 72/2009, 111/2009 and 121/2012.

Internal Organisation and Job Positions Classification Bylaw of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society. Pravilnik o unutrašnjem uređenju i sistematizaciji radnih mesta u Kancelariji za saradnju sa civilnim društvom. Zaključak Vlade RS 05 broj 110-9124/2011.

Law on Associations. Zakon o udruženjima. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 51/2009, 99/2011.

Law on Corporate Income Tax. Zakon o porezu na dobit pravnih lica. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 25/2001, 80/2002, 80/2002, 43/2003, 84/2004, 18/2010, 101/2011, 119/2012 and 47/2013.

Law on Endowments and Foundations. Zakon o zadužbinama i fondacijama. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 88/2010 and 99/2011.

Law on Nature Protection. Zakon o zaštiti prirode. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 36/2009, 88/2010 and 91/2010.

Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability. Zakon o profesionalnoj rehabilitaciji i zapošljavanju osoba sa invaliditetom. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 36/2009 and 32/2013.

Law on Social Organisations and Associations of Citizens. Zakon o društvenim organizacijama i udruženjima građana. *Službeni glasnik SRS*, no. 24/1982, 39/1983, 17/1984, 50/1984, 45/1985 and 12/1989, and *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 53/1993, 67/1993, 48/1994 and 101/2005.

Law on Social Protection. Zakon o socijalnoj zaštiti. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 24/2011.

Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disability. Zakon o sprečavanju diskriminacije osoba sa invaliditetom. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 33/2006.

Regulation on the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society. Uredba o Kancelariji za saradnju sa civilnim društvom. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 26/2010.

Standard Classification Framework and Budget System Chart of Accounts Bylaw. Pravilnik o standardnom klasifikacionom okviru i Kontnom planu za budžetski sistem. *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 20/2007, 37/2007, 50/2007, 63/2007, 25/2008, 50/2008, 3/2009, 26/2009, 37/2009, 64/2009, 110/2009, 11/2010, 31/2010, 40/2010, 53/2010, 101/2010 and 10/2011.

Vršac Municipal Assembly Act on the Protection of the Vršac Park Natural Monument. Rešenje SO Vršac o zaštiti SP 'Vršački park' broj 633-11/73-01. *Službeni list opštine Vršac i Plandište*, no. 8/1974.

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