Monitoring Elections in post-Soviet States: Diverse Paths and Similar Strategies of pro-Democratic Movements

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Abstract

This study is devoted to the in-depth investigation and comparison of election monitoring organisations in post-Soviet states. Election observation has become one of the core activities of civil society throughout the world, while in the post-Soviet region it became an indispensable part of the political process since the early 1990s. Particularly relevance for this task appears to be found in hybrid regimes: on the one hand, there exist grievances related to the quality of elections; on the other hand, political context is more open than in autocracies, allowing for certain activities of civil society. Relying on the versatile social movement and civil society scholarship, this project investigates monitoring organisations in three states that are often labelled hybrid regimes, namely Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Careful investigation of election monitoring organisations suggests that they predominantly rely on transactional activism, emphasising cooperation with different actors rather than contention. In turn, very little is known about how this type of activism develops in the post-Soviet region, which resources and strategies it encompasses and how different contextual factors lead to the development of transactional activism. Hence, the project contributes to the development of the transactional activism concept by presenting evidence from new case studies. In so doing it focuses on the different paths that the most visible political NGOs take in adopting transactional activism. The study attempts to explain how similar modes of activism developed and which factors or combination of factors have led to the adoption of certain strategies. This careful investigation shows how transactional activism is shaped in three countries by the number of external and internal factors, particularly, by the political contexts and resources. Furthermore, the interactional approach adopted in this study considers outcomes of the election monitoring as conditions for the further development of the monitoring organisations. This project relies on the activists' own understanding of these contextual factors and limitations in resource; it voices activists' views on strategies and discusses their motivations behind certain strategic choices. Methodologically, the study predominantly relies on a qualitative research design in which three case studies are complemented by the comparative investigation. The project draws its conclusions from a variety of data sources and presents rich empirical evidence on the internal development of organisations that have not yet been investigated. The study concludes that, while internal features of election monitoring NGOs closely resemble each other, differences in external political context account for the diverse paths of transactional activism development. In general, this project contributes to a further expansion of our knowledge of post-Soviet civil society.

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1   Introduction

Elections take place almost in all countries of the world, although they are not equally free and fair (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2013; Simpser 2013). In parallel to the introduction of electoral mechanisms, international and domestic monitoring groups were formed worldwide. The central goal of these electoral watchdog organisations is to increase transparency and accountability of the electoral process. While international monitoring has received a large amount of scholarly attention (Carothers 1997; Daxecker 2012; Hyde 2011; Hyde and Marinov 2014; Kelley 2012; Norris 2017), domestic monitoring groups are studied less frequently (Grömping 2017). Some studies have shown that efforts of domestic monitors have strong democratising potential (Bjornlund 2004; Lean 2013) for example, exposing electoral malpractice through mass media (Birch 2011) or reducing irregularities on the micro level (Ichino and Schündeln 2012).

Following this global trend, election monitoring organisations became a widespread phenomenon in the post-Soviet states immediately after the USSR collapsed: free and fair elections were listed as one of the main criteria to label these new independent states as democratising (Ottaway and Carothers 2000). Not all countries were equally successful during transition from Soviet autocracy towards Western-style democracy and many of them remain in the grey zone of hybrid regimes (Bogaards 2009; Diamond 2002). A considerable number of

post-Soviet states continue to be 'perpetually party free' regimes that fluctuate between democratisation and autocratic backsliding (Knott 2018). Similarly, Way (2015) shows that in post-Soviet hybrid regimes, democratic institutions remain fragile decades after transition: indeed, competitive multi-party elections take place regularly in these states, but competition is often tamed due to an uneven 'playing field' (Levitsky and Way 2010). In turn, Grömping (2017) convincingly argued that domestic observers are more prevalent in hybrid regimes that are instrumental for the creation of stable election monitoring ecologies: on the one hand, there exist grievances related to the quality of elections; on the other hand, the structure of political opportunities are more open than in autocracies and allow for certain activities of civil society. Following this logic, the project investigates election monitoring NGOs in three post-Soviet states that are often characterised as hybrid regimes, namely Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Election monitoring belongs to one of the core activities of civil society in all three countries and is acknowledged to be an indispensable part of the political process since the early 1990s. The study explores the strategies of the election monitoring organisations that helped them survive, flourish and even influence domestic governments and quality of elections. Hence, the overarching goal of this project is to improve our understanding of the pro-democratic movement on the post-Soviet space focusing on one of the most visible types of political NGOs involved in election monitoring. The project looks at these monitoring organisations through the lenses of versatile social movement and civil society literature and attempts to disentangle factors that shape monitoring strategies in these three countries. Hence, the project contributes to the theoretical and empirical cross-fertilisation of social movements and civil society research fields,

The puzzle of this study was partly inspired by this discrepancy between the conventional wisdom about the weakness of the post-Soviet civil society and certain success in the democratic development and the improvement of electoral integrity in these countries (Foa and Ekiert 2017). Soon after the collapse of the Communist Bloc, civil society in most of the post-communist states was labelled as weak and irrelevant (Howard 2003; Rose 1994). Even countries with a relatively good pace of democratic transition and consolidation were often considered to be 'democracies without citizens', while their civil societies were criticised for failing to perform their role of an engaging and democratising force (Mendelson and Glenn 2002). In turn, recent studies have called for a new approach towards investigations of civil society and social movements in Eastern Europe (Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2013). They put into question this disproportionate focus on the non-participatory nature of civil society in this region and the expectations of Eastern European civil society to follow the same development pattern as in other parts of the world. Scholars stressed that in the post-communist region civil society emerged in a variety of forms and developed diverse strategies and action repertoires due to the specific social and political context.

Traditionally, social movement scholars paid considerable attention to strategies of challengers to attack powerful opponents. As rightly pointed out by scholars, the importance of such strategies 'derives from the unenviable position in which excluded or challenging groups find themselves' (McAdam 1983, 735). Various strategies cluster in different action repertoires defined as 'a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a deliberate process of choice' (Tilly 2005, 41–42). In turn, action repertoires are attributed to different types of activism that can be contentious or non-contentious (Cisar 2013, 151).

One such non-violent action repertoire, *transactional activism*, is getting more scholarly attention in recent years (see for example, Cisar 2013; Korolczuk

and Saxonberg 2015; Mazak and Diviak 2017). In their seminal study, Petrova and Tarrow defined it as *ties – enduring and temporary – among organised non-state actors and between them and political parties, power holders and other institutions*. This action repertoire exists 'in a variety of settings and relationships at the local, national, and transnational levels' (2007,79) and is related to a set of specific strategies such as building coalitions and network formation, advocacy and lobbying, as well as cooperation and negotiation with elites.

Careful investigation of activities of the monitoring organisations suggests that these groups predominantly rely on transactional activism when they attempt to improve the quality of elections. At the same time, very little is known about how this type of activism develops, which resources and strategies are employed by the groups involved and how different contextual factors lead to the development of similar transactional activities. Moreover, this notion is often used by scholars who work on civil society in post-communist states, such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, while evidence from the post-Soviet states is still limited to very few investigations (Dutchak 2009). The present study contributes to this literature introducing new evidence on monitoring NGOs involved in transactional activism in three post-Soviet states: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Investigating paths that lead to the development of transactional activism the study relies on an interactional approach: it considers development of activism through several electoral campaigns and traces how monitoring organisations interact with the environment. Building on classical social movement literature (Della Porta 2014b), the project considers two factors that are assumed to be crucial for the development and strategic choices of NGOs: namely, it investigates the available resources and political context in which election monitoring organisations operate. Acknowledging the dynamic nature of these organisations

and their political context, this study shows how monitoring organisations adapt to specific contextual factors, how they mitigate low resource availability and how they interpret these factors to develop their strategies. Furthermore, the project relies on the activists' own understanding of these contextual factors and resource limitations; it voices activists' views on strategies and illuminates their motivations behind certain choices. The project assumes that all monitoring organisations rely on transactional activism; at the same time, it shows that they adopt different sets of strategies following different paths due to the external or internal factors. Hence, investigation of these divergent paths have important implications for developing a better understanding of activism in the post-Soviet region.

Scholars stress that strategies and outcomes of civil society actors are tightly coupled together (Suh 2014), so one cannot investigate strategies without paying close attention to the consequences of their previous activities. The study considers two interrelated aspects of election monitoring outcomes. Firstly, development of certain strategies and changes in tactics is considered to be an internal outcomes of the NGOs' activities that should be carefully considered and explained. Investigation of internal features of these monitoring organisations can provide a better understanding of civil society in a non-Western context, its specific traits and future avenues of development and cooperation. Secondly, election monitoring organisations are targeting an issue of electoral integrity that is defined as a *high profile issue*, which is difficult to influence without the political will of domestic elites. The study pays particular attention to the dynamics of election quality in each state and considers how NGOs have altered their strategies when election quality increases or decreases.

The broader research question of the project is concerned with the strategies of election monitoring organisations that belong to a pro-democratic movement.

The study investigates the following questions: which strategies used by the monitoring organisations belong to transactional activism? How do context and resources shape NGOs' strategic choices? How and under which conditions do election monitoring organisations adopt similar strategies of transactional activism? And how do outcomes of election monitoring further shape the political context in which these NGOs operate?

Methodological Approach

Methodologically, this project relies on qualitative in-depth case studies of election monitoring NGOs, complemented by a comparative investigation of NGOs in three post-Soviet countries. Recognising that the three countries selected for this project represent the unique results of their own historical development and various circumstances, the project claims that the cross-national comparison is the most suitable technique for uncovering insights that might not emerge from the individual case studies.

In all three countries, the periods under investigation cover a time when the political context was often characterised as a backlash against democratisation: Georgia in 2007-2008 underwent a period of a gradual increase in autocratic tendencies under Mikhail Saakashvili's leadership, although the 2012 peaceful change in the ruling coalition confirmed the democratic path of the county. In Moldova, stabilisation of the political context after the 2009 political crisis was accompanied by the consolidation of power by the Democratic Party and oligarchs behind it, as well as a deepening of the state capture. In Ukraine, disillusionment with the Orange Revolution and political crises in 2006 and 2007 paved the return of an autocratic leader and increased pressure on civil society.

Selecting cases that shared a number of similarities allowed for the develop-

ing of fruitful comparison and the disentangling of various paths towards trans-actional activism of NGOs in the context of post-Soviet hybrid regimes. Election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have to develop their activities based on the political environment and limited resources, and strongly depend on financial support from foreign donors. Hence, the study shows considerable differences in the paths of transactional activism development in three countries. Although in these states the non-contentious repertoire of action can be broadly described in terms of transactional activism, it clearly encompasses different sets of strategies, whereby: (1) cooperation with the state actors rather than citizens is prioritised when the political context is less oppressive and more open for NGOs; (2) cooperation with domestic NGOs rather than the state when pressure is high and competition between NGOs is low; (3) cooperation with foreign actors rather than the state or domestic NGOs when autocratic tendencies increase, while cooperation for funding between NGOs remains strong. More-over, empirical evidence demonstrates that political context plays a crucial role in the development of these sets of strategies.

Simultaneously, the study pays attention to internal aspects of monitoring NGOs, investigating how structures and methods of organisational development are related to transactional activism. Similar to some previous studies (Cisar 2013), this project showed that support from foreign donors is interpreted by NGOs not only as a financial basis of their activity, but also a basis of their independence from domestic political interests. The study also concludes that reputation seems to be the main intangible resource available for monitoring NGOs: a spotless reputation is required for the development of cooperation with other actors, regardless of whether they are other NGOs, donors or state agencies. At the same time, reputable organisations are more likely to gain the trust of foreign donors or of media outlets to reach citizens with their information about

election quality. Reputation is based on professional approach, expertise and a hierarchy that help NGOs collect, analyse and present unbiased information.

In turn, the question of election observers' impact on the quality of elections is widely debated in the academic literature (see for example, Asunka et al. 2017; Buzin, Brondum, and Robertson 2016; Enikolopov et al. 2013), these studies rarely treat monitoring organisations as a focus of their attention, while monitoring strategies and types of activism are never debated in this stream of literature. This qualitative study looks beyond the presence/absence of observers dichotomy and considers their impact beyond a correlation between their presence and a lack of obvious electoral manipulation. The project attempts to take into account different types of outcomes related to the quality of elections: not only if elections become free and fair, but if observers associate these changes with their own activities and strategies that they develop based on fluctuating election quality in the past decades.

Outline of the Study

The study combines case study and cross-case comparative research. Results of the projects are presented in the following way: Chapter 2 outlines the conceptual framework applied in this study to explain strategies and outcomes of the election monitoring organisations; the theoretical overview is followed by the methodological chapter that explains research strategy, data collection and data analysis methods.

Next, three case studies are presented in three subsequent chapters devoted to each country. Structurally, each case-study chapter is organised in the same order to ensure transparency and comparability of the empirical findings. Firstly, each chapter gives a short and general historical introduction to the post-Soviet

social and political context in Georgia, Moldova or Ukraine. Secondly, it briefly portrays the overall civil society context and presents election monitoring organisations as an integral part of civil society in each country. Next sections provide a detailed description of the political context in which election monitoring is performed and discusses the financial resources available to the monitoring organisations. Finally, each chapter provides a detailed account of the internal development and internal methods of action as well as the external strategies of organisations. Every case study is finalised with a concluding section that summarises key contextual factors and available resources that have conditioned election monitoring NGO development. This concluding section also discusses the outcomes of election monitoring missions and their influence on the subsequent development of NGOs and the quality of elections.

Chapter 4 presents a case study of Georgian election monitoring organisations and their development between 2008 and 2016. This period begins with the second presidential term of the Rose Revolution leader, Mikhail Saakashvili; it also covers the first peaceful turnover of power in 2012 and the further stabilisation of the political situation in Georgia. The case of NGOs in Georgia presents an example of the successful development of civil society in a post-Soviet region with a well-functioning third sector and high levels of cooperation between state and non-state actors. The chapter aims to understand how an open political context has influenced the strategies and development of transactional activism by local NGOs. It also investigates the role that electoral watchdogs play when there is a strong political will to conduct elections in a free and fair manner. Chapter 5 discusses the development of election monitoring organisations in Moldova, showing the opposite example of a civil society insulated from political actors in a state influenced by powerful business actors. The context of a 'captured state' with elites obviously interested in self-enrichment, rather than successful reforms

and democratisation, conditions a specific set of strategies of the Moldovan electoral watchdogs. The central characteristic feature is a strong cooperation between NGOs that has been shaped by an oppressive political context in the early 2000s and reinforced in recent years. Chapter 6 introduces an example of election monitoring organisations in Ukraine. It describes a diverse focus and often contentious co-existence of these NGOs. The chapter discusses the set of strategies developed in a non-democratic environment and a non-cooperative civil society context. Ukrainian monitoring organisations have the strongest regional focus among three investigated cases, with the least hierarchical organisation and considerable regional autonomy.

Chapter 7 is devoted to the careful review and comparison of the resources, political context and strategies of the monitoring organisations in three countries. The focus of this chapter is twofold: firstly, it carefully compares different paths that lead to the development of transactional activism in three post-Soviet states; secondly, it reviews roles that observers play in these countries. This chapter illustrates the finding and shows the similarities and differences in strategies, as well as attempting to explain them. Finally, the chapter shows how their strategies change depending on the outcome of previous activities.

The concluding chapter 8 summarises the research findings and puts them in the general theoretical context of civil society studies. The chapter shows how findings drawn from case-studies can benefit scholarship on post-Soviet civil society, as well as investigation of domestic election monitoring groups in hybrid regimes. Although small-N case studies are not aimed at producing universal sociological laws, the cross-country comparative design helps to uncover certain principles of NGO work that might be applicable to NGOs in this region or election monitoring groups worldwide.

2 Theoretical Model: Transactional Activism in post-Soviet States

The present chapter outlines the conceptual framework of the research project. The first part illuminates paradoxes found in the scholarship devoted to civil society in post-Soviet states. It reproduces the theoretical discussion on civil society development and presents recent theoretical innovations focusing on the concept of transactional activism. The chapter outlines scholarly debates around this concept and integrates them into the investigation of election monitoring organisations in post-Soviet states. In what follows, the chapter presents two major explanatory factors that are assumed to define the development of transactional activism: firstly, the resources available to election monitoring organisations; and secondly, the political context that surrounds them. Building on previous social movement research, the chapter also discusses interaction between social movement outcomes and the political context. Previous scholarship shows how social movement outcomes define future development of challengers and partly shape political context. Following this approach, the chapter introduces a variety of possible election monitoring outcomes and suggests how they might condition

the development of monitoring organisations. Additionally, it introduces a narrow stream of literature devoted to the role of domestic election monitoring organisations for the prevention of fraud. This review helps to identify research gaps in previous studies devoted to domestic election observers. The chapter concludes with a brief synthesis of the conceptual framework and introduces the research questions that guide the present study.

2.1 Scholarship on Civil Society in Postcommunist States: Paradoxes and Recent Developments

Scholarly debate on civil society in post-Soviet states has been caught in a long-standing paradox. On the one hand, the whole notion of civil society has been resurrected and reinstated in a broad public and academic debate due to the momentous events of transition from communist authoritarian rule. On the other hand, soon after transition, civil society in post-Soviet has been labelled as weak and unimportant, plagued by lack of trust towards volunteering associations and NGOs (Howard 2003; Rose 1994; Rose-Ackerman 2001). Moreover, post-Soviet civil society has been largely funded by strong foreign actors (NGOs, IGOs, foreign governments) which brought another point for criticism. Encarnación (2000) looked at the relationship between civil society and democratisation through the lenses of the democracy promotion project and concluded that the link between civil society and democratisation was 'at best a neutral one' because democratisation is mostly determined by political and economic conditions which surround civil society. Similarly, Offe (1997) argued that 'the rise of the robust civil society cannot be initiated from the outside'. Narozhna (2004) concludes that

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foreign donors did not develop any consistent strategy for supporting civil society in recipient countries, leading to the development of a 'democratic facade' for oligarchic regimes in some post-Soviet states.

Recent studies have called for a more nuanced approach towards civil society in a non-Western context. Considerable differences could be observed even among post-communist states that took different paths of democratisation or rolled back towards authoritarianism. Hence, 'civil societies developed everywhere within the space available, adjusting themselves to these different environments' (Celichowski 2004, 64). Earlier studies concluded that collective action in this region is 'decidedly nonviolent' (Ekiert and Kubik 2001), researchers often stressing a specific non-contentious repertoire of action developed by local civil society actors. Some scholars conclude that civil society in the post-communist region has a number of specific traits and features: for example, they are often focused on local issues, while nation-wide campaigns are rare; at the same time, geographically they are limited to the big cities and involve a mostly young population (Piotrowski 2015).

New empirical data and in-depth studies of civil society in the post-communist region can bring a better understanding of these actors and the roles that they play in political and social processes. Recent scholarship suggests that post-communist civil societies cannot be judged by the same standard as civil society in Western European states and the US due to specific historical legacies, experience of multiple transitions from autocratic Soviet rule, as well as the modern economic, social and political context (see for example, Bitušíková 2015; Piotrowski 2015; Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2013). Foa and Ekiert (2017) claim that the strength and role of civil society actors should be estimated not based upon the number of NGOs and the share of participants, but by using such indicators as organisational capacity and the behaviour of civil society actors,

their normative orientation and public sphere examination. Investigation of these dimensions provides a better explanation of civil society development in post-communist states and addresses divergent dynamics of its development. In line with these arguments, the present research attempts to develop a further understanding of post-communist civil society states, focusing on strategies of the political segment of civil society in three post-Soviet countries.

Investigating election monitoring organisations, the project relies on the theoretical approaches developed by two cognate fields of inquiry, namely civil society and social movement studies. Although these fields of scientific inquiry developed in parallel to each other (Della Porta and Diani 2011), scholars have acknowledged that they can complement each other in a meaningful way (Anheier and Scherer 2015). Depending on definitions and empirical focus, social movements are sometimes viewed as integral part of civil society or, on opposite, associational life and participatory process can be viewed as a part of broader social movements dynamics (Della Porta and Diani 2011). Civil society is defined as terrain that comprises multiple actors 'in which membership and activities are 'voluntary' - formally registered NGOs of many different kinds, labour unions, political parties, churches and other religious groups, professional and business associations, community and self-help groups, social movements and the independent media' (Edwards 2004, 20). Shaw (1994, 648) argues that although social movements have certain unique characteristics, e.g. informal and spontaneous character, but in reality they have 'many features in common with other civil society institutions'. Literature on civil society underlines autonomy of these actors from state and market, while social movements literature usually emphasises the virtues of conflict and contentious action (Della Porta 2014a).

In a recent review, Della Porta (2020) stresses theoretical resonance and multiple empirical interactions of these two fields, while theoretical and con-

ceptual borders become more and more blurred. The project illustrates one of such theoretical overlaps expressed in a shared interest to 'how organizational forms combine the quest for efficacy with that for decentralized, participatory structures' as well as attention to political and societal transformations and 'opportunities for the achievements of public goods and a good society' (Della Porta 2020).

Hence, the present study contributes to cross-fertilisation of two cognate fields looking at election monitoring ecologies through the prism of social movement literature. The study focuses not on individual and isolated organisations that perform certain tasks, but looks at election monitoring ecologies as networks of organisations i.e. as elements of social movements struggling for the freedom and fairness of electoral process. In turn, election monitoring movements defined as 'networks of informal interactions, between plurality of individuals, groups or associations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity' (Diani 1992, 12; 2003, 301). At the same time, borrowing from the civil society studies and transactional activism concept, the project shows importance of connections and cooperation of these organisations. Approaching election monitoring ecologies as social movements, the study represents another example of empirical bridges between civil society and social movement studies.

Social movement scholars have paid considerable attention to methods of action used by challengers to attack powerful opponents. As rightly pointed by scholars, such importance of strategies 'derives from the unenviable position in which excluded or challenging groups find themselves' (McAdam 1983, 735). In general, strategies are 'ways of prosecuting a challenge against an opponent' (Schock, 2012, 222). In fact, assessment of the tactics and strategies employed by social movements became one of the main measures of variation in social

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mobilisation (Kriesi et al. 1995; S. Tarrow 1989; Tilly 1978). Various strategies cluster in different action repertoires defined as 'a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a deliberate process of choice' (Tilly 2005, 41–42). In turn, action repertoires are attributed to different types of activism that can be contentious or non-contentious, violent or non-violent (Císař 2013a, 151).

Scholars investigating civil society in Eastern Europe have introduced a special concept that characterises the non-contentious types of activism and strategies associated with it that have emerged in this region. The seminal work by Petrova and Tarrow (2007) proposed the concept of 'transactional activism' that implies non-contentious activities of NGOs and social movements based on co-operation with different state and non-state actors. This type of activism is related to a set of specific strategies, such as building coalition and network formation, advocacy and lobbying, as well as cooperation and negotiation with elites. Transactional activism exists 'in a variety of settings and relationships at the local, national, and transnational levels' (Petrova and Tarrow 2007, 79). Neither this phenomenon, nor the theory are entirely new: for example, Skocpol (2003, 14) observed that, in American civic life, 'professionally managed associations and institutions proliferated while cross-class membership associations lost ground'. Although the trend of institutionalisation and professionalisation of civil society seems to be universal, the notion of transactional activism includes a broader set of strategies and emphasises coalitions and cooperation developed by the NGOs with different actors. At the same time, application of transactional activism does not exclude other modes of activism used by civil society in post-communist region. Císař (2013a) concludes that transactional activism is just one type of political activism used by the civil society in postcommunist states. He distinguishes five modes of activism that have developed in post-communist

states: (1) participatory activism based on such organisations as trade unions, who possess a large membership base; (2) transactional activism based on small advocacy networks and driven by foreign assistance; (3) radical activism related to the activities of groups from across the ideological spectrum (e.g. radical left, radical nationalist organisations); (4) episodic civic self-mobilisation related to spontaneous events, without a clear organisational structure; and (5) citizen self-organisation by individuals or small informal groups who are concerned with local or national issues (also see in Bitušíková 2015). It has been observed that all action repertoires in Eastern Europe are dominated by non-violent strategies (Ekiert and Kubik 2001), but a proportion of strategies in each mode's repertoire is different: e.g. in the Czech Republic, transactional activism's repertoire is dominated by non-violent rallies and demonstrations as well as petition signing, and involves a specific component of repertoire, namely cultural activities (Císař 2013a, 153). Although scholars stress that social movements and other civil society actors employ different methods of action, transactional activism belongs to one of the central and the most successful types in this region. It is effectively employed by civil society actors who address various issues, from environmental protection and human rights to the problems of corruption among politicians (Soare and Tufis 2020). The present study attempts to understand transactional activism in post-Soviet states, namely development of the strategies that are associated with transactional activism in this region.

Despite the considerable attention that transactional activism has received in recent years, little is known about how this type of activism develops, which resources and strategies are employed by groups that act in this mode of activism and how different contextual factors lead to its development. Moreover, this notion is often employed by scholars who work on civil society in post-communist states, such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Romania, while evi-

dence from post-Soviet states is still limited to very few investigations (Dutchak 2009). At the same time, empirical research on transactional activism appears to be contradictory and inconclusive. For example, proponents of transactional activism suggest it brings success to social movements in less receptive political contexts (Petrova and Tarrow 2007), at the same time, Mazák and Diviák (2018) conclude that political context is more important in determining the success of a social movement, while different types of activism do not account for a movement's success. Hence, there exists a considerable gap in understanding how transactional activism develops in post-Soviet states and how different contexts and resources lead to the employment of similar strategies of this action mode. The present study focuses on transactional activism and investigates action repertoires associated with this mode in three post-Soviet countries. In doing so, it looks into the sets of strategies developed by political NGOs that cluster in certain repertoires and disentangles paths of their evolution and the development of transactional activism in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Strategies of Social Movements

Drawing from abundant social movement scholarship, the study defines strategies as a 'series of decisions regarding demands, arenas and tactics of collective actions', while tactics are 'specific means of implementing strategy' (Meyer and Staggenborg 2012, 6). As highlighted by Ganz, a 'strategy is a way of "framing" specific choices about targeting, timing, and tactics' (2000, 1010). In turn, tactics became so integral to the perception of movements that some of them are remembered for their methods of action, rather than their goals (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). In turn, methods of strategic actions are often mentioned, but are largely underspecified, although some scholars explain that they are 'related to the broad strategy adopted by the movement, prevailing contentious reper-

toires and tactical consideration' (Schock 2012, 224). Jasper (2006) identifies five dimensions of strategies including explicit *goals* of a civil society actor who employs *means* to attain these goals and can face some '*resistance* from other players with their own means and goals' [stress added by author]. He stresses that strategies are *social and interactive* and that strategic thinking is oriented toward the *future*, entailing 'imagination, creativity, will, and subjectivity'[stress added by author] (Jasper 2006, 5).

This interactional approaches allows to put election monitoring organisations at the centre of investigation, focusing on the interplay between 'projects and constraints facing them' (Jasper 2012, 25). Previous studies show the importance of interrelation between the movements and their environment, concluding that successful social movements often engage in strategic adaptation to match their activities to their external social and political environments. For example, illustrating the development of tactical innovations of the civil rights movement, McAdam (1983, 736) explains that tactical interaction between insurgents and opponents occurs, 'in chess-like fashion' in which one tries to offset the moves of the other'. Moreover, groups that are more successful in adaptation are more likely to gain desired policy changes quickly compared to those groups who fail to adapt (McCammon et al. 2008).

In turn, this study relies on an interactional approach through critical investigation of the various paths that lead to the development of a transactional action mode of action by NGOs in different contexts. The empirical evidence presented below shows how monitoring NGOs adapt to the contextual factors and low resource availability and how they interpret these factors to develop their strategies. Some scholars note that strategies and outcomes of civil society actions are tightly coupled together, so one cannot investigate strategies without paying close attention to the external context which is, in turn, influenced by

the NGOs' activities. For analytical purposes, social movement strategies and outcomes are usually investigated separately, although scholars acknowledge that movement consequences deeply affect future movements dynamics (Suh 2014). The present study acknowledges that NGO strategies and outcomes are closely tied together and investigates the outcomes of election observation as a part of the contextual factors for further development of the monitoring NGOs. The review below discusses how different aspects contribute to the development of social movement strategies and methods of action, and is followed by a brief discussion of the outcomes produced by civil society and their impact on NGOs dynamics.

2.1.1 Choosing Strategies: Divergent Paths to the Similar Mode of Activism

It has been long established that choice of strategies adopted by civil society actors depend on a number of internal and external factors. Challengers choose appropriate strategies to achieve their goals based on the repertoire of action that dominates in a certain period of time (Tilly 1978). Moreover, Tarrow (1993, 284) calls tactics invented by social movements 'modular' suggesting that similar methods of actions are used by different groups and soon become permanent tools of contention. Development of a general and flexible repertoire causes gradual 'diffusion of protest and the mobilization of new and diverse groups within the population' (Della Porta 2013, 2). According to McAdam and Rucht (1993), diffusion involves a person or a group that serves as emitter or transmitter of a tactic; a person or a group that adopts it; an item that is diffused; and channel of diffusion. When applied to the post-communist region, diffusion of repertoires is often used to explain the spread of the 'electoral model of democratisation'

(Beissinger 2007). Similarly, Nikolayenko (2013) finds that, for the Serbian youth movement Otpor, previous protest campaigns played a crucial role in the learning process and the development of successful movement strategies that eventually contributed to the electoral revolution and ousting of non-democratic presidents from power. In turn, the diffusion thesis is hardly applicable to the development of strategies by electoral watchdogs: these NGOs appeared simultaneously in all countries and developed strategies of election monitoring independently from one another.

Whilst scholars have paid considerable attention to investigation and comparison of the different strategies used by similar civil society actors (Adams and Shriver 2016; Carmin and Balser 2002; McCammon et al. 2008; Van Huijstee and Glasbergen 2010), the opposite research question is still rare in civil society and social movement studies. At the same time, it is possible to assume that civil society actors adopt similar strategies following different paths when faced with different constraints and contextual factors. Following this logic, Bosi and Zamponi (2020) discovered four distinct paths which lead to the adoption of 'direct social actions' strategies by the subset of heterogeneous civil society actors in Italy. In turn, the present study narrows down the question and attempts to reconstruct differences in paths which similar organisations follow in adopting a certain type of activism. Comparing actors with similar goals eliminates possible alternative explanations and focuses on a limited set of factors that influence development of NGO strategies. Although comparison of various actors produces more generalisable results, the present study aims to provide a focused comparison of specific NGOs. Drawing from social movement and civil society research, the project argues that there are three main sets of factors that explain strategies of NGOs: the resources available to them; contextual factors; and the consequences of their earlier activities. Hence, the project attempts to explain

how similar modes of activism developed in three different countries and which factors or combination of factors lead to the adoption of certain strategies.

Resources and Internal Characteristics of NGOs

Social movement scholarship explains that strategies of challengers depend on the availability of certain tangible and intangible resources and are often defined by the social and political context in which these actors operate. Scholars have established that resources available to the movements have a strong impact on their internal characteristics (organisation, leadership, strategies) and play an important role in the success of mobilisation (Shorter and Tilly 1974; Staggenborg 1998). McCarthy and Zald (1977) emphasise that aggregation of resources requires at least some form of organisation: the crucial process of resource mobilisation relies on the creation of social movement structures and organisations that attract individuals and stimulate investment of time and money (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 118; Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Resources available to the social movements are distributed unequally; hence, availability or ability to produce certain tangible and intangible resources influences strategies that NGOs adopt and determines methods of action.

Scholars divide resources available to civil society actors into different types, such as moral, cultural, social-organisational, human and material resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 125–28; Oliver and Marwell 1992). Therefore, strategies are shaped not only by the available external resources, but also by the internal cognitive work which shapes actions based on activists' previous experience, their values and beliefs, philosophy and political ideology (Carmin and Balser 2002). Internal characteristics relevant for the development of specific strategies include movement ideologies and identities widely discussed by the social

movement literature (Jasper 2012). Some studies point to the high importance of cultural resources of opposition movements in socialist societies, where all material resources were monopolised and controlled by the state (Pfaff and Yang 2001, 544). Creation of intangible resources is crucially important for NGOs that operate in non-democratic regimes, with high levels of resource monopolisation in the hands of state actors or powerful oligarchs.

In Central and Eastern European countries, organisations involved in transactional activism often rely on external funding as the main source of material resources. External funding underpins electoral monitoring missions in most of the post-Soviet states from the beginning of the transition period, giving their preference to well-established, hierarchical organisations. Given their resource dependence on external donors, NGOs are more likely to develop strategies that are compatible with the foreign actors' priorities and demands. For example, in order to apply for external funding, environmental organisations in the Czech Republic developed moderated strategies and a professionalised approach rather than contentious grass-root mobilisation (Fagan 2005). Organisations in post-Soviet states have been widely criticised for having weak ties with local populations (Fagan 2005; Kudlenko 2015; Lutsevych 2013) or for their focus on issues and organisational structures that were relevant for foreign actors, rather than local communities (Mendelson and Glenn 2002; Mendelson 2001; Petrescu 2000).

On the other hand, Císař (2010, 751–52) finds out that foreign donations do not necessarily lead to complete co-optation of the civil society actors but instead facilitate development of transaction activism and the use of 'more assertive' strategies than those that would be possible if they were dependent on 'mainstream public opinion' (Císař 2013a). Discussing the development of environmental organisations in Central and Eastern Europe, Carmin and Fagan (2010) also stress that 'fixation on the mobilisation capacity of NGOs and the

extent to which donor-dependent organisations seemed divorced from indigenous civil society served to obscure the extent to which these organisations, freed from the constraints of mass membership and public opinion, were being empowered to engage politically at both the domestic and international level'. Given weaker participatory culture in Central and Eastern Europe, such independence from domestic political actors might be crucial for some activist groups (Císař 2010). Similarly, this study maintains that for election watchdogs it is crucially important to appear independent and not allied with any political force in their countries. Consequently, foreign financial aid is the only realistic option for monitoring organisations to gain enough resources to operate independently from local political interests.

Another aspect often criticised in civil society literature is the dominance of hierarchical, professionalised organisations among NGOs in post-communist regions disengaged from local citizens. Foreign actors preferred to channel their aid to professionalised and hierarchical groups; in turn, this has provided a framework for the reproduction of former Soviet elites ('nomenklatura') instead of supporting local democratically oriented groups (Hemment 2004). In a comparative study devoted to civil society in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Lutsevych (2013, 7) concludes that 'NGO-cracy in these three countries undermines democracy promotion initiatives'. These organisations often became synonyms for civil society, creating the 'civil society orthodoxy' expressed in the equation 'NGOs = civil society = democracy' (Salmenniemi 2008, 5). Some scholars represent alternative views on the development of hierarchical NGOs as main civil society actors. Studies suggest that NGOs form coalitions with other NGOs to strengthen their advocacy efforts (Nathan 2002; Spicer et al. 2011).

Hierarchical and organised structures help to collect and use resources more efficiently. Foreign donors are more likely to donate to a professional organisa-

tion, rather than a loose network of organisations and activists. Bădescu, Sum, and Uslaner (2004) find considerably higher levels of trust, tolerance, and engagement among organisational activists compared to the general population in Romania and Moldova. The hierarchical organisational structure and professional staff of the NGOs in these states represents an emerging 'democratic elite' in post-communist states that can spread democratic values in their countries. Authors suggest that this new elite may help transfer democratic values to the larger population. Similarly, the empirical evidence presented in the next section shows that changing societal attitudes towards democracy, electoral procedures and political participation are framed as important goals proclaimed by these organisations involved in broader pro-democratic movement. Eventually, these change in attitudes can help to improve the quality of elections 'from the bottom'.

Political Process Model

Another important aspect of civil society development and strategic choices is political context because all social movements occur within state systems (Johnston 2011). The political process model shifts scholarly attention away from the internal features of movements, to the context in which these challenges operate (Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam 1999). Tilly and Tarrow (2015) suggest that regime type plays a crucial role in determining which repertoires are available for challengers. Studying post-communist electoral revolutions, Nikolayenko (2013) argues that regime type influences important choices such as 'the timing of mass mobilisation, the scope of a movement's claims, and the repertoire of contention'. The central place in this approach takes the concept of political opportunity structures (POS), i.e. 'a degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system' (Eisinger 1973, 25). Early advocates of this approach argued that POS was one of the resources

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available to movements (McAdam 1996, 26). Developing this approach McAdam (1996, 27) synthesised the consensual list of political opportunity dimensions:

- The relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political system
- The stability of a set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity
- Presence or absence of elite allies
- The state's capacity and propensity for repression

In turn, Tilly (2008) distinguishes between several levels of political contexts: 'as regimes; within regimes, as political opportunity structures; and within political opportunity structures, as sketches of the strategic situations faced by claim-making actors'. Due to the specific political context and non-participatory culture, civil society actors in post-communist regions often prefer non-contentious strategies (Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2013). Theoretical premises of transactional activism also emphasise that non-contentious strategic choices like the creation of coalitions and interactions between civil society actors and elites depend on the contextual factors that surround civil society. Korolczuk and Saxonberg (2015) provide another illustration how political opportunities determine the mode of activism in CEE states, comparing the use of different strategies by women's organisations in Poland and the Czech Republic. This study concludes that the choice of strategy between transactional and contentious activism depends on a number of institutional factors, such as a more open institutional context that allows more civic participation, economic independence of women's groups, and the institutionalisation of EU gender mainstream policies that allows Polish civil society to use both participatory and transactional strategies. In turn, women's groups in the Czech Republic rely predominantly on transactional activism, although local NGOs find it hard to cooperate with each other; at the same time, political opportunities are less open in the Czech Republic that limits the repertoire of action available to NGOs (Korolczuk and Saxonberg 2015, 419).

The structure of political opportunities gains an even higher relevance in the case of NGOs that operate in hybrid post-Soviet regimes where a more oppressive political context provides fewer opportunities for mass mobilisation, but at the same time power holders are not completely closed from civil society actors as one would expect in autocratic states. For example, Spicer and colleagues (2011) compared advocacy efforts of NGOs to change drug-related and HIV/AIDS health policies in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine and discovered the crucial importance of contextual factors that enable or limit advocacy efforts of the local organisations. Assuming importance of the political context, the present study attempts to provide an in-depth understanding of how comparable political regimes determine the strategic choices of political NGOs and if differences in context result in various repertoires associated with a transactional type of activism.

The model2.1 summarises the number of factors that influence adoption of specific strategies and the methods of action by social movements. This model borrowed from the study of Kurt Schock (2009, 223) with some adaptation to the post-Soviet context. It stresses that regime type and internal characteristics of the movement (resources, ideologies) influence the choice of social movement strategies, and in turn specific strategies result in adoption of certain methods of actions. Simultaneously, methods of action are influenced by repertoires of action that dominate in certain regime types and by tactical considerations of social movements. Decisions that challengers make over strategies of action reflect actor identities and their understanding of how the political world around them works. Actor-centric analysis links internal movement features and external macro structures (Doherty and Hayes 2019, 282). Following this approach, the present study relies on the organisations' own perceptions of the surrounding political context, their resources, values and priorities.

This research attempts to disentangle paths that lead to the adoption of transactional activism strategies by election monitoring groups in post-Soviet states. These NGOs belong to a broad network of human and civil rights activists who have been operating in almost all post-Soviet states since the collapse of the USSR. They developed simultaneously but faced different constraints, including their social and political context and resources. This study provides an in-depth description of the factors that lead to the development of specific strategies that can be labelled as a 'non-contentious repertoire' of transactional civic activism in post-Soviet states. In so doing, it relies on a dynamic and interactional approach, suggesting that strategies of civil society actors are conditioned not only by their available resources and political contexts, but are also defined by the aims and outcomes of earlier attempts to reach these goals.
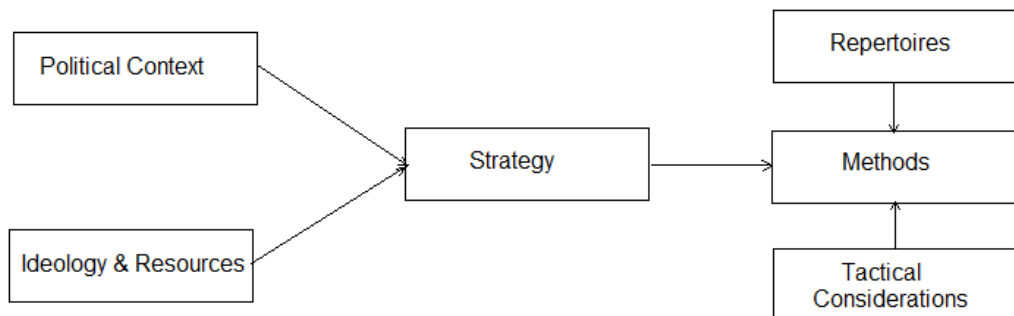
Figure 2.1: Strategies and Methods of Social Movements (adapted from Schock, 2012)

2.2 Relations between Strategies, Goals and Outcomes of NGO Activities

Scholars have concluded that the procedural and dynamic nature of civil society actors makes it hard to distinguish between different stages of social movement

development: Suh (2014) notes that the '...emergence, process, and outcome of social movements – the three main domains of research in the literature – are only analytically distinct, but in reality are intricately interlinked'. Similarly, Edwards and McCarthy (2004) claim that social capital or access to resources is not only a precondition that facilitates mobilisation and its outcomes, but also a type of an outcome itself. Similarly, this study considers how changing political context and resources available to election observers condition the development of their goals, strategies and certain outcomes.

This study holds that comprehensive investigation of monitoring NGOs cannot avoid looking into their goals and outcomes of their work. Scholars emphasise that social movements mobilise to reach a specific goal: Giugni (1999) defines them as 'actors and organisations seeking to alter power deficits and to effect social transformations through the state by mobilising regular citizens for sustained political action' (Giugni et al. 1999; Amenta et al. 2010). Researchers put a lot of efforts in investigating what can help social movements to reach these goals or, more broadly, investigating consequences of social movements, 'because people engage in collective action precisely - though not exclusively - with the aim of producing changes in the outside world, in particular political decision and public policies' (Giugni 2004, 2).

Goals of Election Monitoring Organisations

It is logical to assume that different types of issues targeted by civil society actors demand different strategies, while similar issues inspire similar methods of actions. It has been suggested that only groups dealing with specific issues opt for transactional activism. For example, Císař (2013a, 3) suggests that 'issues associated with ecology and the environment, animal rights, and human and civil rights and

freedoms are usually the basis of the transactional activists' political demands'. Some authors have pointed out that such agendas related to democratisation and market reforms were completely irrelevant for postcommunist societies and were only advanced by foreign donors (Hicks 2004). Other scholars highlight that foreign actors played a crucial role in 'promoting previously marginal issues such as women's rights or the environment' (Celichowski 2004, 66). The issue of improvement of election quality was promoted by foreign donors, but it is hardly foreign to post-Soviet societies given the electoral revolutions triggered by fraudulent elections in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova. Wolchik and Bunce (2006, 8) argued that election process, although often fraudulent, nevertheless taught people during communist rule 'to link regime legitimacy with the act of voting and to use elections not just to assess the quality of regime performance with respect to service delivery, but also to make demands for specific changes in public policy'. Hence, the electoral watchdogs target a highly important issue of election quality seen as relevant by local population. Events of the so-called Colour Revolutions showed that citizens pay great attention to issues of election quality and can mobilise against electoral fraud (Tucker 2011).

The notion 'pro-democratic' movements is used in the project to delimit election monitoring organisations from other actors that conduct similar tasks, but pursue other purposes. In this project 'democratic' is defined broader than minimum standard of democracy i.e. free and fair elections: 'By democratic institutions, I mean those laws and practices in which citizens and groups are given rights to assemble, speak, write, and associate freely; are able to participate in political decisions through elections of officials or voting on ballot issues; and have those rights protected by an accessible, open, and independent court system.' (Goldstone 2004).

The notion 'pro-democratic' stresses adherence of these organisations to

the broader democratic ideals and standards of non-partisan election monitoring. Such groups organise 'around ethical principles and effective methodologies to ensure they accurately characterize elections and counter disinformation with impartial analysis' (Merloe 2015). Furthermore, this definition highlights a self-proclaimed goal to facilitate democratic transition and development of democratic cultures.

Representatives of monitoring NGOs often state that their missions have broad goals, such as 'advancing democracy', 'combating corruption and promoting transparency', assisting with the 'conduction of free and fair elections' and 'qualitative institutional reforms'. On the one hand, these goals are abstract, and a number of activities can be included in projects related to elections, good governance or anti-corruption activities. On the other hand, such goals are likely to be far from the direct reach of civil society. Furthermore, they require certain interpretation from the activist that in turn, impacts on the action repertoire. Similarities in issues faced by post-Soviet societies can motivate NGOs to develop similar strategies of action addressing various goals related to the improvement of election quality. Focus on interpretations of the broader goals made by NGOs helps in understanding agency better and explains various strategic choices that lead to various outcomes (Jasper 2012, 39). Finally, scholars have noticed that success of social movements depends on the nature of their claims: social movements can target high and low profile issues, i.e. there are some claims are simply more difficult to meet than others due to the nature of certain policies (domestic or foreign) and are more or less threatening to the core interests of a respective state (Giugni 2004, 124; Kriesi et al. 1995).

Impact of Outcomes on NGOs' Strategies

Social movement scholarship offers sophisticated explanations of the possible success or failure of challengers. Resource mobilisation theory pays greater attention towards the strategies and tactics of movements, their interaction with elites, mobilisation of supporters, inter-organisational competition and behaviour (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1216–17). For example Gamson in his seminal work "The Strategy of Social Protest" concludes that specific strategic choices made by social movements could improve their chance for success. He argues that challengers are more effective when they are more centralised and even bureaucratised, when they use violent and disruptive techniques, and when they focus on a single issue or demand (1975).

Similarly, political context influences not only the strategies of social movements, but also possible outcomes. For example, Giugni distinguishes two aspects of the POS which is particularly relevant for the studies of the social movement outcomes: (1) structure of the state and formal/informal arrangements which govern decision-making; (2) structure of political alliances (Giugni 2004). The author summarises that policy change can be caused by movements when three important factors are combined: mobilisation occurs; powerful allies are present; and public opinion favours these claims. Based on this literature, this project focuses on several aspects of the political environment in which election observers operate, including coalitions and interactions with political parties and election administration bodies and foreign allies of election monitoring NGOs.

Although some scholars stress that social movements develop and can be successful only in democratic societies (Tilly and Tarrow 2015), other authors point to the contrary and show that social movements can reach certain goals even in non-democratic regimes. For example, Uba (2009) finds that 'a demo-

cratic regime is not a prerequisite for finding any significant impact of SMOs or interest groups' although results are based on the analysis of a very small sample of movements operating in a non-democratic context. Following the approach suggested by Kolb (2007, 23), this project understands the political impact of social movements as a response that it receives from the political system or other political actors. The Figure 2.2 illustrates a simplified depiction of the interrelation between contextual factors, resources and strategies, and outcomes of the civil society actors. It suggests that strategies are influenced by the political context, yet at the same time, implementation of these strategies reflects upon political and social context too (also see Rucht 1996, 189). In turn, implementation of strategies of social activism and political context simultaneously influence the possible outcomes (Schock 2012, 223).

The adapted model also depicts possible interactions and mutual impact of outcomes of movement activities and political context. The study suggests that political context is not a fixed set of factors, but a constantly changing and dynamic environment that is partly shaped by the activity of civil society.
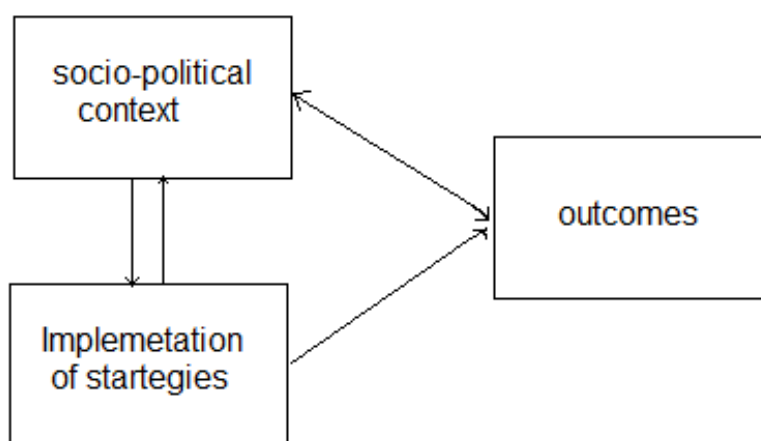
Figure 2.2: Social Movements Outcomes Model (adapted from Schock, 2012)

In general, social movement scholarships devote a lot of attention into understanding how strategic choices of civil society actors determine the successful outcome of collective action (Szymanski 2003, 5). In turn, the question of how outcomes of social movement impact further cycles of mobilisation and strategic choicesof challengers receives less attention. Ganz (2000, 1011) was among the first authors to emphasise that 'environmental changes may generate opportunities for social movements to emerge, but the outcomes and legacies of such movements have far more to do with strategies actors devise to turn these opportunities to their purposes - thus reshaping their environment'. Similarly, Soule and King (2006, 1873) suggested that movement efforts to influence policies 'often alters the playing field for subsequent movements'. Some authors show that achievement of policy change by movements signals to them that political opportunities are opened and future mobilisation is not only possible, but can be successful (McAdam 1999; S. G. Tarrow 2011). This conclusion seems to be logical: success leads to further mobilisation and development of social movements. Furthermore, successful policy reform reached by one social movement may open new institutional opportunities for other challengers with adjacent goals (Evans 2016, 17). Other scholars conclude that correlation between movement outcomes and development are not always straightforward. Looking into relations between movement success and financial contributions, Gupta (2009, 427) found a non-linear relation between movement's policy success and financial resources: initially, when challengers advance their goals, they benefit from the perception of efficacy, and donations increase; however, 'as successes continue to accumulate, they risk bleeding support and, in turn, weakening their financial health'. A similar trend can be noticed in foreign donations to election monitoring NGOs in three post-Soviet states: as soon as election quality improves or opposition wins, the amount of foreign assistance to civil society decreases. In turn, a decrease in

resources forces NGOs to change priorities and strategies of monitoring missions and develop new projects to ensure stable funding.

Discussing consequences of achieving legal change by the LGBT movement, Kane (2010) examines a special form of POS, namely opportunities partly created by the movement. He shows that if success is perceived to be generated by the movement, it can increase further mobilisation and reinforce development of the SMO. At the same time, when a legal change is achieved through court hearings or associated with non-movement actors, it might hurt the movement's ability to mobilise (Kane 2010, 270). Therefore, not only success or failure matter for the movement, but strategies to achieve any outcome play an important role in shaping further mobilisation, as well as the organisation structure and environment in which challengers operate.

Variety of Social Movement Outcomes

It is important to stress that social movement outcomes are not limited by the success or failure dichotomy. Burgeoning scholarship on social movement outcomes shows that challengers can be successful or fail to achieve their goals, but also that they can achieve some expected or unexpected outcomes that concern personal development, policy or regime changes. Outcomes of social movement activities can be intended and unintended, as well as internal or external in regards to a movement (Andrews 2004). The study relies on the typology suggested by Snow and Soule (2009) and summarised in the table2.1 below.

As stressed by Suh (2014), unintended and unexpected consequences impact the dynamic of movements, for example, by altering their internal structure or strategic approach. Following this line of thought, it seems plausible to assume that a certain set of strategies is adopted due to changes in the political context

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Table 2.1: Types of Social Movements Outcomes

	Internal to SMs	External to SMs
Intended	Intended internal (consciousness raising)	Intended External (desired policy or law passed)
Unintended	Unintended internal (disputes, splits)	Unintended external (repression, counter-movements)

that, in turn, can be partly conditioned by the outcomes of the NGOs activities. All three countries went through the cycles of protest mobilisation caused by fraudulent elections, although in Moldova the so-called Twitter Revolution is less associated with the electoral model of democratisation. At the same time, NGOs that monitor elections choose to rely on non-contentious repertoires that developed after short-lived mobilisation. Hence, in this project, transactional activism is treated as one of the outcomes of the NGOs activities developed deliberately and consciously by these NGOs.

Intended and unintended outcomes can manifest themselves on at least three different levels (Bosi, Giugni, and Uba 2016; also in Tarrow 2011): biographical outcomes; changes in specific policies, especially when they act in a more perceptive environment; and institutional change i.e. state structure, or 'extension of democratic rights and practices; formation of the new political parties (Amenta 2010). Possible short-term outcomes include policy changes, while long-term consequences may trigger changes in 'political institutions and practices; and finally, on the level of 'changes in political culture' (S. G. Tarrow 2011, 220).

Electoral monitoring NGOs attempt to work on both levels: the structural-institutional level; and on the level of more specific election policies-related claims. Their strategies are often aimed at the creation of an overall context of democratic governance and decision-making which involves multiple parties and stakeholders before addressing the specific policies. The study pays attention

to the external consequences of 'policy outcome', namely a direct improvement or decrease in election quality. Improvement of election quality or a decrease in manipulations is treated as an intended outcome of the pro-democratic social movements' activities. It is possible to hypothesise that changing the menu of manipulation performed by the incumbents is one of the examples of an unintended outcome of social movements and can be most visible in hybrid regimes.

At the same time, investigation focuses on the broad goals of the election monitoring NGOs and claims that are aimed at the structural-institutional level. Putting the election monitoring organisations in the centre of this investigation allows covering most of these relevant dimensions looking at the structures and strategic choices of the observers' organisations (development of transactional activism); as well as external outcomes such as improvement of election quality, development of democratic culture, introducing certain topics in public sphere, etc. The present study considers periods long enough to determine long-term and short-term influences of election monitoring movements. For example, changes in manipulation strategies between two subsequent elections might be considered as short-term consequences, quick reactions of the system, while a gradual decrease or increase of fraud and broader political changes are long-term outcomes of the social movements' activities. Such a dynamic approach helps to estimate what happens to these movements when the quality of an election improves (i.e. the proclaimed goal is reached) or when it decreases (i.e. failure) or when no changes in the quality of elections take place. While this major goal can be viewed as a 'high profile issue' (Giugni 2004; Kriesi et al. 1995) that is beyond the direct control of the movements, they might develop other intermediary goals to push the government towards better electoral integrity.

Interviews have pointed out that activists themselves can be critical about their own role in the improvement of election quality; at the same time, they

show different perceptions of how their NGOs can be relevant for domestic societies. These perceptions often correspond to the main roles of civil society actors described by scholars and several mechanisms through which they can improve democratic performance and enhance democratic consolidation. In turn, these roles played by election monitoring organisations depend on their understanding of their functions, resources and internal characteristics, together with the political context in which they operate.

Does Election Monitoring Improve the Quality of Elections?

Most of researchers agree that electoral manipulations and fraud are the main characterising features of elections in non-democratic states (Larry Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2002; 2006). Elections in such countries 'are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which fraud, civil liberties violations, and abuse of state and media resources so skew the playing field that the regime cannot be labelled democratic' (Levitsky and Way 2010; Przeworski 2015). Lehoucq's interpretation suggests that electoral fraud is a 'clandestine efforts to shape election results' (Lehoucq 2003) which is deeply 'rooted in each country's cultural and political milieu' (Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde 2009). Following the most general definition suggested by Sara Birch, the project approaches election fraud a an 'abuse of electoral institutions for personal or political gain' (2011a , 7)

A narrow research stream investigates the role of election monitoring organisations in fraud detection and prevention, drawing empirical evidence from various non-democratic regimes. Importantly, this literature has developed separately from civil society and social movement studies and is often based on quantitative research strategies. Results produced by this scholarship are often mixed: on the

one hand, they stress the ability of observers to prevent on-election day fraud (Lean 2013); on the other hand, they show that incumbents might change the menu of manipulation or location of fraudulent actions. Studies based on experimental research design pointed to the positive effects of electoral observation. For example, Hyde (2007) claims that even in the context of authoritarian elections, observers managed to decrease the vote share of an incumbent who was expected to rig elections. Similarly, scholars found out that in Moscow during the 2011 Duma elections, presence of electoral observers decreased the share of United Russia votes by almost 11% and increased shares of other parties (Enikolopov et al. 2013). It is worth noting that the non-partisan nature of monitoring and the lack of access to ballots by observers in the case of Russia excludes alternative explanations of this phenomenon (unlike in Argentina, see Casas et al., 2017). Some studies even suggest a so-called 'spill-over effect' of electoral observation. Studies of the 2008 elections in Ghana, Ichino and Schündeln (2012) confirm that voter registration decreased at monitored polling stations and those nearby if compared to precincts that were not controlled. Given that inflation of voter registers amongst pro-incumbent supporters is one of the most widely employed tactics of manipulation, authors demonstrate that electoral monitoring might lead to a decrease in various manipulation strategies related to registration performed by non-democratic incumbents (Ichino and Schündeln, 2012). In turn, Asunka et al. (2017) pointed out that electoral observation reduced not only electoral fraud, but also election-related violence during 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. Moreover, authors confirmed the existence of a spill-over effect, changes of strategies and an allocation of the manipulations deployed by political actors (2017).

In turn, a few scholars have doubted the ability of observers to improve the quality of elections. It has been suggested that monitoring can force incumbents

to adapt and substitute strategies of electoral manipulations with ones that are less verifiable, but also costlier (Harvey 2016; Simpser 2013; Sjoberg 2012). At the same time, results of a Russia-wide investigation conducted by Buzin et al. (2016) for the 2011 Duma elections found a negligible influence of the observers in Russian regions on the turnout and vote share of the ruling party on election day. However, this finding might be partly explained by a non-representative sample or general improvement of the quality of electoral procedures on election day in Russia. The only statistically significant effect of electoral observation could be found in Moscow, where shares of the ruling party 'United Russia' (UR) were 3% lower compared to unobserved polling stations (2016).

While being a very fruitful research methodology, field experiment research design has two significant drawbacks. Firstly, it only allows us to consider the short-term effects of election day observation, although multiple studies have indicated that the pre-electoral phase might be even more important in helping incumbents to stay in power (Birch 2011; Daxecker 2014; Norris and Es 2016). Moreover, field experiments do not allow researchers to control and compare the relative importance of other factors for the changes in electoral manipulations within the same study. At the same time there is a significant body of research that considers various political, economic and socio-cultural determinants of election fraud (see, for example, Bader and Ham, 2015). These studies rarely treat election observers as part of civil society groups with their own internal dynamics, strategies and diverse responses towards changes in available political opportunities. The present study is aimed at filling out this gap by taking an in-depth look at electoral monitoring organisations, their development and strategic choices, as well as the outcomes of their activities.

2.3 Synthesis and Research Question of the Study

The main conceptual building block of the study is the notion of 'transactional activism', broadly defined by scholars as 'the ties – enduring and temporary – among organised non-state actors and between them and political parties, power holders, and other institutions' (Petrova and Tarrow 2007, 79). Transactional activism is developed by professional NGOs and interest groups who use non-contentious strategies to achieve policy changes. This type of activism relies on a specific action repertoire composed of different sets of strategies (Císař 2013a). Therefore, to provide a better understanding of transactional activism in the post-Soviet states, the study investigates strategies of NGOs, i.e. the building blocks of a transactional activism repertoire. It focuses on the political segment of civil society investigating NGOs that monitor elections and broader democratisation processes in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Following arguments of resource mobilisation theory, this study analyses resources of election monitoring NGOs and attempts to understand how the availability of resources influences development of transactional activism. Scholars have argued that reliance on external funding promotes the development of certain internal features of recipient NGOs. At the same time, it gives them necessary independence from domestic political interests and citizens' contributions. The study also attempts to understand which internal characteristics of the monitoring organisations are relevant to transactional activism and thereby facilitate its development. For example, given that this mode of action relies on cooperation between civil society and political actors, it is assumed that NGOs develop a certain image to promote cooperation.

The political process model pays attention to external factors that influ-

ence strategic choices of social movements. The present study investigates how development of transactional activism is conditioned by a dynamic and changing structure of political opportunities. The investigation carefully reconstructs the political context of election monitoring and disentangles factors that influence different paths towards transactional activism and different repertoires that transactional activism covers. Based on the previous studies, the project suggests that, due to the differences in political context, monitoring organisations develop different sets of cooperative strategies: in a more open context, they rely on cooperation with state actors; while a closed and hostile environment helps to develop cooperation between NGOs. Although in all three countries, monitoring organisations rely on transactional activism, the set of strategies is slightly different depending on the external context and the resources available. To summarise, the present research attempts to understand various paths that lead to the development of a strategic repertoire associated with transactional activism in three post-Soviet countries. The focus on the monitoring NGOs and their representatives emphasises the dynamic and interactional nature of strategic choices consciously made by NGOs in response to activities of political elites, opponents and other civil society actors.

Another important aspect of research in social movements concerns the consequences of their activities. The study considers two interrelated aspects of election monitoring outcomes. Firstly, development of certain strategies and changes in tactics is considered to be an internal outcome of the election monitoring activities that should be carefully considered and explained. Investigation of internal characteristics and development of these NGOs can provide a better understanding of civil society in a non-Western context, its specific traits and future avenues of development and cooperation. Secondly, organisations are targeting such a 'high profile issue' as electoral integrity, which is difficult

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to obtain without political will. Studies of election monitoring present mixed evidence on the role of the presence of election observers for the improvement of election quality, but at the same time, most of these studies omit steps and intermediary changes that are targeted by the monitoring organisations in their work between elections. Hence, the study does not expect to develop strong causal links between the quality of elections and election monitoring. Instead, the project focuses on NGOs' own understanding of their goals and the steps they take to achieve the broad goal of 'free and fair elections'. Indeed, all organisations investigated in the study conduct electoral monitoring for the purpose of improvement of electoral process and democratic performance. At the same time, this broad and vague aim can be interpreted and achieved by these organisations in quite different ways. Therefore, the study looks beyond the linear success/failure dichotomy of the improvement of electoral integrity and instead investigates the organisations' understanding of intermediary steps to achieve the general and broad goal of better electoral integrity.

Although investigation of organisations' strategies and the results of their strategic interactions is often in the focus of social movement and civil society literature, there is still very little understanding about how these strategies appear and develop and which factors lead to similarities and differences in tactical choices. Furthermore, in-depth cross-country comparisons of divergent paths are still rare, as most of the studies focus on single case studies that describe a unique path to a certain strategic choice. In turn, this project carefully reconstructs multiple pathways of organisations development over several electoral campaigns, how they interact with each other and the political context, and what is their role for local societies. The project is aimed at improving our understanding of election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: the broader research question concerns the strategies of these organisations employed to

bring positive changes in electoral performance. Which strategies realised by these election monitoring organisations belong to a repertoire of transactional activism? How do context, resources and internal features of these election monitoring organisations shape their strategic choices? How and under which conditions do NGOs adopt similar strategies of transactional activism? And how do outcomes of election monitoring shape further the political context in which these election monitoring organisations operate?

3   Research Design

This study considers the development of strategies and related to them outcomes of election monitoring in three post-Soviet countries, namely Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. These country-cases have been selected due to the similarities of their historical development, non-stable political context and non-linear democratisation trajectory, swinging and fluctuating election quality, and diverse and numerous civil society actors supported from abroad. In order to understand strategies and different outcomes, the study puts these organisations in social and political context and discusses other factors that might impede or facilitate development of certain methods of action and achievement of certain outcomes. Methodologically, the biggest difficulty for investigating development of strategies as well as linking them with movement outcomes is proving the causal mechanism by which the change has been brought about. In so doing, the study relies not on the logic of correlation between dependent and independent variables but reconstructs the development of the sequence of steps that created certain methods of action.

The goal of the study is realised through a multi-stage research design: first, the research investigates the election monitoring organisations in three states and links their activities to the political context, resources and process of change in the quality of elections. This part employs a within-case analysis while, in the

next part, it follows a comparative strategy looking at the factors that influence the quality of elections in three countries. Following Goertz, it considers multi-method work to be based on 'cross-case causal inference AND within-case causal inference' i.e. 'complementary causal methodologies' (2017, 5). He states that the qualitative and quantitative dichotomy is less important and that case studies should be used to investigate causal mechanisms while cross-case comparison is used to explore the generalisability of the discovered mechanism (Goertz 2017). In turn, following the definition suggested by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001, 24), the study defines *mechanisms* as *'a delineated class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical of closely similar ways over a variety of situations. Processes are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformation of those elements'*.

The within-case analysis can be based on several qualitative and quantitative techniques that complement each other and address the possible biases in data. The present study has been designed following this logic: firstly, in-depth investigation of election monitoring organisations is conducted in order to understand the existing links between the context and strategies of the movements as well as to trace the role of observers in three countries. Secondly, these cases are compared to find a general pattern of strategic development and external factors that facilitate changes in election quality that correlate with the efforts of the domestic monitoring organisations.

The final empirical part (Chapter 7) presents a comparative analysis of three case studies. It emphasises the development of social movements and their strategies relative to the political context in each country. Following George and Bennett (2005, 233), this part considers 'development of contingent generalisations about combination or configurations of variables'. This method allows

specifying the pathways in which different conjunctions and configurations of variables relate to specific outcomes (George and Bennett 2005, 235). Although country cases selected for comparative analysis share number of similarities, the study highlights and compares divergent paths that lead to the development of similar transactional activism and strategies related to it.

3.1   Case Selection

3.1.1   Spatial Dimension

The case selection has been spatially limited to the post-Soviet region focusing on the hybrid regimes. Logically, if one wants to study a certain causal process or, in other words, 'if the main goal is exploring how causal mechanism works, then one chooses cases of the causal mechanism in action' (Goertz 2017, 66). Therefore, this study concentrates on the countries with stable election monitoring ecologies (Grömping 2017) that potentially can influence the quality of electoral process. Following these criteria, the Baltic States were excluded from the list of potential case studies, as they score higher on the levels of democratisation and sometimes do not even have local election monitoring organisations due to this process being completely outsourced to international monitoring missions. The closed authoritarian regimes in Central Asia (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) were also eliminated from the list of the potential case studies due to the lack of established domestic electoral monitoring and extremely low levels of electoral performance. The list of potential cases has been narrowed to those countries listed in the table A1 (Appendix A).

Authoritarian states like Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan were excluded from the analysis for several reasons: firstly, due to the specific char-

acteristics of electoral monitoring movements (e.g. non-established and vague nature); secondly due to the closed political context where influence of the civil society actors is extremely limited; thirdly, elections in these countries are mostly fictitious and data for the electoral analysis is often not available (e.g. in Belarus only final national level electoral statistic is available). Interestingly, Armenia has been experiencing a very recent change in its political context and as of 2018 these changes were still underway, hence when the analysis was designed, it was put into the 'authoritarian camp'.

Four countries have corresponded to the criteria of the political context and presence of domestic election monitoring organisations, namely Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. The latter was excluded due to very specific cultural and political traits and a geographical location that decreases the EU influence (e.g. Kyrgyzstan is not a part of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative). Therefore, the options for case-studies have boiled down to three post-Soviet countries, namely Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which can be broadly considered as the 'most similar systems' (Przeworski and Teune 1982, 33). The Freedom House rankings indicate that political context, media freedom and civil society development are similar in these countries: they share the 'partly free' ranking and 'not free' status of the media. Equally as important, the international political dimension deeply influences the domestic politics of all three countries, including their electoral performance and civil society development. Several previous studies pointed at considerable similarities in the political context, economic development, cultural traits and foreign policies in these countries. Not surprisingly, these states are often selected for comparative analysis of democratisation and institution building (Aliyev 2017), as well as civil society development in the post-Soviet space (Lutsevych 2013; 2016). Similarly, all three countries have unresolved ethno-territorial conflicts that shape the international and domestic

politics of these states (Transnistria in Moldova; Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia; Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk in Ukraine).

All three countries have joined the European Neighbourhood Policy since 2009 proclaiming a strategic alliance with the European Union and their adherence to democratic values and liberties. At the same time, these efforts irritated Russian policy-makers who claimed hegemony in the post-Soviet region. Therefore, domestic political situation in these states is often conditioned by their specific geographical location between two political centres and domestic controversies between 'pro-Russian' and 'pro-European' political forces. Clearly, these influences can have different effects on the quality of elections: while alliance with the EU and US is often conditioned on commitment to democratic procedures, Russia does not require such efforts from its allies. Hence, those governments who proclaim a pro-European path of development would be more likely to ensure better electoral integrity.

Selection of the country-cases was an important step in the designing of the project because of the particular attention paid to contextual factors that, to a large extent is expected to define the operation of the election monitoring organisations. The project focuses on country-cases similar to one other in terms of a number of important parameters, such as developed domestic electoral monitoring missions and a non-democratic context. In turn, the quality of elections is known to be different in these countries (see the Figure A1 in the Appendix A). Therefore, the cross-case comparison can shed the light on the efficiency of certain electoral monitoring strategies as well as on the constellation of external factors that facilitate or impede the activities of monitoring organisations and their outcomes. Importantly, the project acknowledges that it is extremely difficult to provide causal link between the election monitoring activities and changes in election quality and prove the efficiency of strategic choices by certain organ-

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isations. In turn, efficiency of monitoring practices is considered from the view point of activists and their reflection on strategic choices.

3.1.2 Temporal Dimension

The cases were not only limited spatially but also temporary: the project considers only the recent electoral cycles in each country. The main reason for the selection is the availability of information and the relatively fresh memories of activists about the elections and organisational development. Moreover, some organisations currently involved in electoral monitoring have been active in this field only for a decade or even less, so it is impossible to consider their role in earlier elections. Table 3.1 below summarises organisations considered in this study and the length of their monitoring experience. Based on the length of the experience of election monitoring organisations and for the sake of comparability, only electoral cycles of the last decade were investigated: in Georgia 2008-2016, in Moldova 2009-2016 and in Ukraine since 2006-2014. Such temporal provides rich information about development of the electoral monitoring organisations and enough data for the comparison of the electoral quality dynamics. The Ukrainian case was limited by the year 2014 due to radical changes that occurred in the political and social life of the country after the Euromaidan protests in 2013/2014, which do not allow proper comparison of the civil society actors before and after these events.

3.1.3 Electoral Monitoring Organisations

The main interest of this study lies in an understanding of the paths of transactional activism development and strategies of domestic observers, as well as

their role in the political life. This research puzzle makes election monitoring activities a central criteria for the organisations to be selected for the analysis. Although the fabric of civil society in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine consists of multiple NGOs, social movements and advocacy groups, this study focuses on those actors involved in electoral monitoring in any capacity.

Table 3.1: Election Monitoring Organisations in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia

Country	NGO	First Mission	Reports on Elections	Link to the website
Georgia	GYLA	1995	2008-2016	https://gyla.ge
	ISFED	2003	2008-2016	www.isfed.ge
	PMMG	2005	2016	www.pmmg.org.ge
	TI Georgia	2008	2008-2016	www.transparency.ge
	CDD	2012	n/a	www.cdd.ge/
Moldova	LADOM	1990s	2009	n/a
	API	2005	2009-2016	www.api.md
	IJC	2005	2009-2016	www.ijc.md
	CPD	2007	2009-2016	ww.progen.md
	Promo-LEX	2009	2009-2016	https://promolex.md
Ukraine	CVU	1994	2012 - 2014	www.cvu.org.ua
	OPORA	2007	2010 - 2014	www.oporaua.org
	CHESNO	2012	2014	www.chesno.org
	CiFRA Group	2012	2014	www.cifragroup.org

In some cases, it also considers organisations that used to be involved in monitoring, but either disappeared (e.g. LADOM in Moldova) or evolved into

new organisations (e.g. nInG in Georgia). Electoral monitoring organisations are active in all three countries at least since the early 2000s.

In Georgia and Moldova, there are central professionalised organisations created with the goal of election observation. In addition there are several organisations which participate in the monitoring of specific issues (legal aspects, media, gender balance, etc.). Ukraine has a similar monitoring movement structure but there exists two main election monitoring networks with similar goals, using different strategies and approaches towards monitoring. These two monitoring organisations have intertwined regional networks and headquarters in the capital. In addition, there are several minor organisations that conduct monitoring missions devoted to specific aspects of the election process.

3.2 Data Collection

The empirical study is based on two facets of evidence: (1) related to the election monitoring organisations and their activities, strategies and tactics of observation; and (2) related to the outcomes of their activities. The first, larger and more important part is predominantly based on semi-structures interviews collected during fieldwork and supplemented with documents produced by the organisations, as well as secondary data (e.g. media reports and newspapers articles, scientific studies). The second part of the evidence is based on reports produced by domestic and international monitoring organisations and electoral statistics available from the national electoral management bodies. At the same time, election observers were asked about consequences of their activities to represent their understanding of the roles they play in the political process.

3.2.1 Collection of Interviews

Semi-structured qualitative interviews are the first important source of information for this project. This technique of data collection is usually aimed at grasping the interviewees' point of view and understanding of specific topics (Bryman 2001). Therefore, this data was used to gain insights into the internal development of electoral monitoring organisations in different countries. Questions were related to the history and dynamics of their development, strategies employed in election monitoring, and relations with other civil society actors and the state bodies. Interviews were conducted with activists who take some leading roles within their organisations and, therefore, grasp the overall picture of the organisations' development and activities. When possible, interviews were also arranged with activists who built their careers in these organisations starting from lower levels (e.g. from a short-term observer to a long-term observer and to a core-team member) or who worked in several different organisations. The table 3.2 summarises the information about the interviews conducted in each country and categorises the interviewees. When possible, interviews were conducted with different stakeholders involved in the management of the electoral process, to get a comprehensive picture. For example, in Ukraine and Georgia, it was possible to conduct interviews with representatives of the Central Electoral Commission; in Moldova and Ukraine, donor representatives were open to communication. Moreover, in Moldova and Ukraine, interviews were scheduled not only with leaders of monitoring organisations but also with a long-term observer who provided more nuanced information about the work of their organisations in the field, not just an overall top-down general picture that directors of such organisations share.

Another type of question was related to the activists' perception of electoral quality in their country, changes in election fraud and a personal estimation of

their organisation's role in the improvement of election quality. During this part of the interview, the interviewees played the role of experts talking about a topic of which they have a profound understanding.

Table 3.2: Interviews Conducted during the Fieldwork

Country	Director or Founder	NGO Represen-tative	CEC Represen-tative	Donor Represen-tative	Other*	Total
Georgia	3	4	1	0	1	9
Moldova	5	2	0	1	0	8
Ukraine	4	10	1	1	1	17
Total	12	12	2	2	2	34

This expertise often helped in understanding the documents produced by the organisations and the programmes or events that they have introduced for citizens. Interviews were collected during the four months of fieldwork, conducted in three countries between March and August 2017. The interviews were scheduled through e-mail contacts or through the social networking website Facebook.com. After first contact with some local organisations, other contacts were retrieved using what is often referred to as a 'snowballing technique'. Very often, local activists offered to share contacts with their partner organisations and assisted with the scheduling of interviews with other stakeholders (CEC representatives, donor organisations).

Every research based on interviews data faces two important predicaments: firstly, the question of research ethnics and secondly, the question qualitative data

validity. Researchers have addressed various aspects of ethical research process in social movement studies. The present study took a reflexive approach towards the data collection during the recognising the activists as knowledge producers (Chesters 2012). Furthermore, social movement scholars have called for the acknowledgement and better understanding of differences in social and political context of the research setting (Gillan and Pickerill 2012; Smeltzer 2012). In this case, my own origin and post-Soviet background as well as personal experience in election monitoring designing research and helped navigating fieldwork in the conscious and ethical manner. At the same time, I have tried to address potential bias as an 'activist-researcher' (see critical review by Gillan and Pickerill 2012) and limited any personal involvement in the investigated organisations.

Specifically, during the fieldwork and data analysis process the following practical steps were implemented to ensure ethical treatment of interview partners and obtained information. The question of ethical treatment of information obtained from interviewees was addressed through the informed consent for the recording asked by the interviewer at the very start of each interview. Each participant had to agree that an interview was audio recorded and that they could be cited directly. The vast majority of activists agreed to be both recorded and cited as no potentially harmful information was disclosed during the interviews. In one case no recording or direct citations were allowed for the personal reasons and this limitation was strictly observed in the project. Finally, some parts of the conversation, although they were recorded were labelled by some activists as 'off-the-record' information. Hence, no direct citations were made and no name tags were attached to this sensitive data. In general, the project strictly followed preferences of interviewees, although in most of the cases no limitations were set by the participants themselves. Finally, ethical treatment of the obtained information means that it has not been passed along to other scholars or made

public. All interview data was stored in offline external hard drive that was always in the researcher's possession.

In turn, validity of qualitative study does not carry the same connotations as validity in qualitative study and is neither companion to reliability, nor to generalizability (Creswell 2009, 190). As Brinkmann (2014, 294) stressed, 'interviews normally concern things experienced in the past, this significantly involves considerations about human memory and about how to enhance the trustworthiness of human recollections'. The study acknowledges that data collected during interviews might biased towards more recent elections while information about the past might be not full or entirely reliable. Despite criticism, information obtained through the collection of interviews or oral history techniques has proved particularly important 'for the reconstruction of informal decision-making structures and of the motives for decisions in administrations and organized groups' (Bosi and Reiter 2014, 129). At the same time, historical research and social movements studies have long acknowledged that information obtained from the interviews might not be objective, but 'shaped by the politics, practices, and events that selectively document protest' (Clemens and Hughes 2002, 201). In line with this argument the project recognises fluidity and contingency of the interviewees' memories, but at the same time stresses the greater value of subjective interpretation and definition of strategic choices 'and against the scholar's monopoly of knowledge' (Della Porta 1992, 173). Rigorous qualitative research often talk about 'truth-value' i.e. credibility of the results or degrees of consistency and neutrality of a researcher, rather than validity, reliability or generalisability (Appleton 1995). In turn, ensuring validity of the obtained interview data means 'that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures' (Creswell, 2009, 190). The present study has applied number of procedures catalogued by Creswell (2009, 191-193) including data triangulation and

provision of thick case description. While the latter is presented in the case-study section (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), the data used for the triangulation purposes and information verification is listed in the sections below. Other types of data employed in this study included documents by the organisations, particularly reports produced during monitoring campaigns, electoral returns and secondary sources.

3.2.2 Documents produced by the election monitoring organisations

All documents analysed during this study can be divided into three broad categories: (1) reports produced by organisations (interim/final); (2) messages and updates on electoral observation, media statements, and events announcements (published mostly online, often presenting regional updates or some outrageous cases of misconduct); (3) internal information e.g. instructions for observers, internal documents like the Charters or Code of Conduct established for the observers.

The main purpose of the document analysis was to find information on organisational structure, monitoring mission and monitoring priorities, as well as electoral violations identified by observers. The first and second types of documents provided information that was collected during the elections, so it was not distorted by time and personal memories of activists; hence it offered more reliable account of monitoring missions and quality of elections. Documents of the third type gave additional data on the structures and priorities of organisations, their electoral monitoring methodologies and strategies of information collection. These documents also offered historical perspective on the priorities of organisations and their changes during the investigated period of time. While reports and other types of statements have been retrieved from official websites

of the organisations, representing more or less comparable sources of information, the internal documents were not always shared by the observers. Therefore, the third source of information served only as an additional source of information and often supplemented data from the interviews.

3.2.3 Electoral Statistics

Availability of electoral returns varies from country to country: data from the earlier elections is often either not available at all or represented in a summary form. The Central Electoral Commission of Moldova provides full information on electoral results since the 2007 local elections; as of March 2016, data on the level of precincts was available in tabular format on the official CEC website and could be easily accessed by any interested party. The Georgian Central Electoral Commission has limited availability of the data on its website (as of January 2017), but provided the results of almost all national level elections since 1999 upon e-mail request. Some data files were distorted and had missing values and therefore required additional automated downloads with the help of R software.

Table 3.3: Election Cycles Investigated in the Project

Country	Elections	Year	Link to the website
Georgia	Presidential	2008, 2013	http://cesko.ge
	Parliamentary	2008, 2012, 2016	
Moldova	Presidential	2016	
	Parliamentary	2009, 2010, 2014	https://www.cec.md
Ukraine	Presidential	2010	http://www.cvk.gov.ua/
	Parliamentary	2006, 2007, 2012	

Data from the Ukrainian elections on the precinct level is accessible since early 2000 and is fairly accessible for automated downloads with the help of R and Python software. Importantly, easily accessible data on electoral returns can be indicative of the openness of political elites to share information that can be checked by electoral monitoring activists and citizens. In turn, in many post-Soviet countries including Georgia and Moldova, political activists support additional websites that allow the retrieving of electoral results from previous elections.

3.2.4 Secondary sources

As has been mentioned above, each case study starts with the introduction of a short historical overview, and the socio-economic and political context in which activists operate. Structures of political opportunities are known to be among the main factors that facilitate or impede the influence of challenges. Therefore, the projects put particular emphasis on this variable, testing its importance against the main explanatory variable (activity and strategies of monitoring organisations). Data for the investigation of political opportunities in each country were studied through several sources, mostly academic publications by country-specialists. Furthermore, they were supplemented with media reports and online resources supported by the monitoring organisations in each country. For example, in Moldova, the Association for Participatory Democracy 'ADEPT' supports an online platform[1] with a comprehensive collection of information on political processes and elections in Moldova since its independence. This source of information contains not only a detailed account of electoral results, exit-polls and election monitoring reports, but also comments of some scholars who study polit-

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[1]ADEPT Election information platform is available at `www.e-democracy.md` (last access 16 January 2020)

ical processes in Moldova (e.g. a widely cited comment by Botan on the change of Parliamentary seats distribution formula in Moldova in 2010). Another example of such a source of information is a Georgian portal of election data supported by the main election monitoring organisations (ISFED, GYLA and TI Georgia). This portal[2] represents a collection of materials on the electoral process in Georgia such as electoral returns, vote shares of political parties, legal documentation and comments of the electoral specialists and scholars. Moreover, it hosts the incident map (also known as 'Map of Violations') that visually represents the geographical spread of all incidents that election monitoring organisations discovered during elections. It is worth noting that such maps are widespread in post-Soviet states and provide an outstanding tool to trace the development of electoral misconduct. In Ukraine, a similar web platform is supported by OPORA[3] activists, serving as an important source of information on electoral violations and their evolution throughout several electoral cycles. In Moldova, no similar maps are available to the best of my knowledge; all information on electoral misconduct has been retrieved from the reports of electoral monitoring missions.

3.3   Data Analysis Strategy

This project can be divided into two logical parts that rely on different data analysis strategies. The first part of this study is aimed at the identification of changes in election quality in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, and finding out the causal mechanism of changes in electoral integrity in each country. The three country-cases are considered separately with the help of the process tracing technique. The second part is a comparative investigation between three country

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[2]Elections information Portal available at `www.electionsportal.ge` (last access 20 January 2020)

[3]Map of Violations, in Ukrainian *'Mapa Porushen'* is available at `www.map.oporaua.org`

cases that is aimed at the validation of findings and the discovery of general patterns. This part relies on a comparative method that is widely used in the social sciences.

3.3.1 Case Studies and Process Tracing

Case studies have made important contributions in the analysis of election monitoring organisations. George and Bennet (2005, 17) defined a case as 'an instance of a class of events' that in turn refers to the 'phenomenon of scientific interest'. In the present research, organisations that monitor elections are defined as such a phenomenon. Gerring (2007) stresses that a case is 'a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time. It comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference attempts to explain.' In fact, 'case study' can refer to three types of epistemological efforts, namely to the research strategy, the effort of theory construction, and an in-depth empirical investigation performed with the help of various data-gathering and data analysis procedures and methods (Vennesson 2008, 229). This section considers the third aspect of the case study, namely procedures associated with the analysis of the role of monitoring organisations in the electoral process in three countries.

Following the definition developed by George and Bennett (2005: 206), this project defines a case study as a method which attempts to 'identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between the independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable'. Applying the process-tracing strategy, the project goes beyond variable-based and correlation discussion and introduces constellation of factors that facilitate development of certain election monitoring strategies. Performing a case study, analysis often starts with a detailed description of the case and its settings.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyse multiple sources of data to single out the evidence for each phase of the case evolution (Creswell et al. 2007, 199). Such a detailed account reveals patterns of adoption of certain strategies conditioned by various factors or constellations of factors. To systematise and analyse the collected information, interviews, reports and some secondary data sources were coded using the MAXQDA 18.1 software, following the universal codebook (see table A2 in appendix A). Content analysis has number of advantages particularly relevant for the study. Transparency and a reliance on a clear set of coding rules allows relatively easy comparison between different cases, especially when the information about the strategies was compared. The coding manual emerged from the previous studies of transactional activism and was supplemented by codes that appeared during the analysis. Content analysis also allows for longitudinal studies to trace development of certain aspects over time (Bryman 2001, 189), e.g, the development of election observation missions within the time period. This information was hard to retrieve from the interviews, thus the study has predominantly relied on document analysis to retrieve details of the past development of missions. Collected information either described the electoral monitoring organisations – their history and development, strategies and activities – or described electoral performance and manipulations detected by the observers.

Goertz (2017, 59) argues that 'the central goal of the case study is to investigate causal mechanisms and make causal inferences within individual cases'. In doing so, researchers often use a process-tracing technique that refers to an 'examination of intermediate steps in a process to make inferences about hypothesis on how that process took place and whether and how it generated the outcome of interest' (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 6). This method seems to be particularly useful for in-depth investigation of the development of the election monitoring organisations and their strategies, as well as their role in electoral integrity.

Causal effect produced on the dependent variable by an independent is 'the difference between the systematic component of observations made when the explanatory variable takes one value and the systematic component of comparable observations when the explanatory variable takes on another value' (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 82). Nonetheless, documentation of regular patterns of association leaves the actual causal mechanism in a 'black box' (Vennesson 2008) i.e. it does not explain the way in which X influences Y. Process tracing methods rely on a different ontological perspective on causality, namely a 'mechanismic understanding' of causality or 'the dynamic interactive influence of causes on outcomes and in particular how causal forces are transmitted through the series of interlocking parts of a causal mechanism' (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 25). Unlike correlation-based methods, process-tracing focuses on exploration of the causal mechanism(s) making 'within-case inferences about presence/absence of causal mechanisms' (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 4). The study assumes a non-linear path of the adoption of the similar strategies by the monitoring organisations. It argues that there might be several paths and factors that lead to the development of similar strategies.

Bennett defines causal mechanisms as 'unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate in specific contexts to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities' (2008: 207). Treating strategies of electoral observers as the main outcome, the study reconstructs various paths that lead to their development, taking into account resources, structure of political opportunities and international pressure as determining factors. Furthermore, the link between activities of the organisations and quality of elections contains the strategies of influence that election monitoring organisations use to improve the quality of elections. Figure 3.1 formalises the expectations of what the 'black box' of the causal link between electoral observa-

tion mission and electoral performance could contain. Based on the experience of the previous elections ('electoral performance in $t1$)' monitoring missions employ certain combinations of strategies, given the political context, which leads to changes in electoral performance ($t2$). Figure 3.1 also highlights the importance of the international context and pressure exerted on domestic political and civil society actors. International actors influence both domestic political context and the strategies of election monitoring organisations.
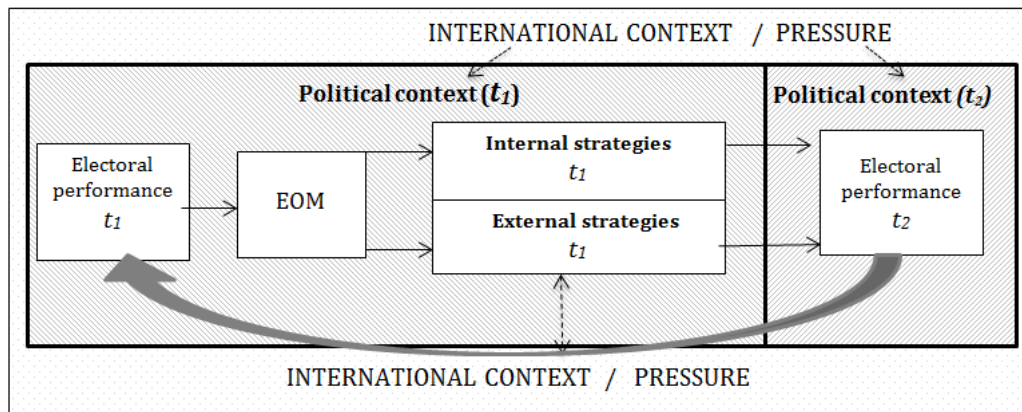
Figure 3.1: The 'Black box' of Election Monitoring Influence

3.3.2   Data Analysis: Cross-Case Comparison

Patterns of organisations' strategies highlighted during in-depth case analysis are compared in the final chapter and point at some general findings about the monitoring organisations development and their role for election quality. Importantly, the design of the comparative study implies that, during the previous steps, the researcher asks a set of standardised general questions to ensure the acquisition of comparable data from each case study (George and Bennett 2005, 69). Hence, in this study the process-tracing and case studies are used as complementary research strategies. Such within-case in-depth investigation and

cross-case comparative study seems to be the most fruitful way to reconstruct causal explanations and find out the role of social movements. If within-case studies are aimed at identifying mechanisms and necessary variables for specific outcomes, the cross-case comparison helps to weigh the extent to which each variable matters for the outcome. In fact, Ragin (1987, 16) stresses that a comparative method makes the investigator familiar with each case – in order 'to make meaningful comparisons of cases as a whole, the investigator must examine each case directly and compare each case with all the other relevant cases'. Similarly, George and Bennett suggest that 'the strongest means of drawing inferences from case-studies is the use of combination of within-case analysis and cross-case comparison' (2005: 18).

Previous research into social movements and, particularly, the consequences of social movements, stressed considerable difficulties with the identification and measurement of social movement outcomes (Klandermans 1989, 2:391). In turn, Giugni, McAdam and Tilly (1999) have suggested that these difficulties can be partly solved by taking a comparative perspective and looking at similar movements in different contexts to see how activities of the movements produce the outcomes. In turn, the present study compares development of the transactional activism of the election monitoring organisations in three countries in a dynamic manner i.e. investigating several electoral cycles and the long-term growth of observer organisations.

3.3.3 Electoral Returns Analysis: Brief Note on the Electoral Forensics Methods

Analysis of electoral returns retrieved on the precinct level from the official data sources were aimed at balancing the picture of electoral misconduct reported

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by the domestic monitoring organisations and secondary sources. Two types of electoral forensics analysis are applied: firstly, analysis of digits distribution; secondly, analysis of turnout and vote shares. Electoral forensics analysis is widely applied by scholars and activists and is particularly useful when electoral monitoring organisations cannot cover all electoral precincts and have reasons to believe that voter preferences have been artificially distorted on election day.

The first approach uses the so-called digit-based tests i.e. investigates distributions of the first significant digit in electoral returns (Cantu and Saiegh 2011); second significant digit (Mebane 2006; Pericchi and Torres 2011) and the last digits (Beber and Scacco 2012). In a nutshell, distributions of the second significant digits should approximately follow the distribution described by Benford's Law, while last digits have to be uniformly distributed (see explanations for both rules below). Although successfully applied to some cases (e.g. analysis of electoral Fraud in Russia), it has been widely criticised by scholars as unreliable (Diekmann 2007; Kalinin 2016). Furthermore, some research concludes that such signalling behaviour requires almost universal control over electoral administration that is not possible in hybrid regimes.

The second approach detects anomalies in turnout and candidates' share of votes that presumably were manipulated. It has been suggested that a turnout distribution ought to be normally distributed. In case turnout distribution or vote shares deviate from unimodal distribution or skewed towards higher or lower numbers, it is considered to be a sign of artificial augmentation of vote tallies (Borghesi and Bouchaud 2010; Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin 2009). Assuming that non-distorted electoral statistics should resemble a normal distribution, researchers have used several tests to calculate departures from unimodality, skeweness and dispersion of distribution. For example, 'A Guide to Election Forensics' (Hicken and Mebane 2015) suggested a DipT test developed by Har-

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tigan & Hartigan that 'measures multimodality in a sample by the maximum difference, over all sample points, between the empirical distribution function, and the unimodal distribution function that minimizes that maximum difference' (1985). It worth noting, that real data never fits assumptions of the normal distribution, but it can point at potential abnormalities that should be investigated further. In addition to the test of normality, Myagkov and his colleagues developed other indicators of election fraud (2009: 31-32):

- Relationship between turnout and candidate's share of the eligible electorate. In absence of election fraud if turnout increases, all candidates should increase, or at least not suffer from it;

- Econometric estimates of the flow of votes from one election to the next.

This study relies on the electoral forensics methods that analyse anomalies in electoral returns applying the following diagnostic methods:

- deviations from normal distributions, skewed distributions;
- high percentages of turnout/voting at home/absentee voting/early voting or invalid ballots;
- correlations between turnout and the winning party/candidate's results;

Although analysis of electoral returns can be viewed as unbiased objective information, it is limited to the election day itself and does not capture pre-electoral manipulations and possible post-electoral issues. Moreover, the electoral returns cannot be assessed directly and researchers use proxies to identify various traces of fraud in electoral statistics. In Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, strong distortions and artificial augmentation of votes are rarely observed. Therefore, in the present study, electoral forensics tools serve a secondary purpose to confirm

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the observations of electoral monitoring organisations or fill the gap in reports that could not be retrieved (e.g. reports from election day in Moldova in the April 2009 Parliamentary Elections). In this sense, analysis of election quality resembles a mixed methods research design (Creswell 2013) although, the statistical analysis only supplements main qualitative research approach. Importantly, in case of Ukraine 2006, 2007 and 2010 elections the chapter relies on the previous results of analysis by more skilled and experienced scholars.

4 Monitoring (Free and Fair?) Elections in Georgia

This chapter investigates election monitoring organisations in Georgia carefully reconstructing development of political context and changes in the availability of resources between 2008 and 2016. The main aim of this chapter is to present the development of transactional activism in Georgia during this period of time explaining how strategies of election monitoring organisations were shaped. Furthermore, this chapter shares understanding of Georgian activists of the role civil society plays for the improvement of election quality. Monitoring organisation have always been part of the civil society scene in Georgia, although they flourished together with other civil society groups after the Rose Revolution in 2003. The chapter starts with a brief historical overview and outline of main characteristics of civil society. Next it introduces Georgian monitoring organisations giving short descriptions of their work and approaches towards monitoring. In the following sections political context and resources are discussed explaining main determinants of election monitoring organisations development and summarising methods of internal development and external strategies of monitoring organisation in Georgia. In the concluding remarks two main aspects are discussed: determinants of transactional activism and the roles of monitoring organisations.

4.1 Civil Society in Georgia in the context of post-Soviet Development

Apart from the Baltic States, Georgia is often viewed as a rare case of the triumph of democracy in the multitude of post-Soviet autocracies and hybrid regimes. In the past decade, the country experienced several peaceful turnovers in power, has good relations with the EU and the U.S., low levels of corruption and a flourishing civil society. These flattering characteristics were not attributed to Georgia right after it gained independence in April 1991: as almost all post-Soviet states it experienced instability and even civil war. The first non-Communist government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia was formed in October 1990, and overthrown in putsch at the beginning of 1992 followed by several years of 'disintegration of public order and criminalization of state structures'(Bertelsmann Stiftung 2003a). The first signs of the stabilization of the situation in the country were associated with the former Communist Party secretary Eduard Shevarnadze whose return to Georgia followed by a landslide victory of his party in 1995 Parliamentary elections. Despite overwhelming support, the institutional building and economic reforms in Georgia were delayed during the rule of Shevarnadze (BTI 2003). Nonetheless, in the late 1990-s Georgia had some democratic institutions, such as independent media outlets and a number of non-governmental organisations critical of the Shevardnadze's regime (Mitchell 2006). On the other hand, organisation were monitored by the state and had limited opportunities for independent advocacy. Although Shevardnadze's rule was more benevolent to civil society compared to the neighbouring countries, Georgian civil society experienced few positive developments during the 1990s (Khutsishvili 2009).

Georgian Rose Revolution of 2003 is one of the most prominent examples

of regime turnover in the post-Soviet space ousting Shevardnadze's regime from power. The Rose Revolution was the first breakthrough of its kind in the former Soviet Union, and it was immediately recognized in the West as a 'major democratic advance' (Mitchell 2006, 670). Similarly to other states, the true causes of the protest wave were related to the discontent with the government's social policy and the corruption of the political system (Nakashidze 2016, 124). Civil society is known to be important for sparkling electoral revolutions on the post-Soviet space publicising outrageous evidence of electoral fraud. Broers (2005, 341) suggests that unlike youth social movements, civil society played crucial role in Rose Revolution as it 'emerged as a major player discrediting the November elections at three key levels: enhancing transparency, organising protests in the aftermath, and portraying protests through the media to 'create' revolution'. Consequently, in that period, election monitoring organisations that collected and disseminated information about election fraud gained their prominence in Georgia.

The new energetic and West-oriented leader Mikheil Saakashvili came in power in 2004 after a landslide victory during presidential elections, while his party, the UNM received overwhelming support during the parliamentary elections. New political forces inherited from Eduard Shevardnadze corrupt and malfunctioning institutions, high criminal rates, destroyed infrastructure and poor economic conditions. Mitchell (2009) concludes that between democracy and state building Saakashvili's government prioritized the latter. Saakashvili political party the United National Movement, wanted to modernize Georgia, but 'without running democratic risks': while the state became more efficient, the president and his party drifted towards autocracy (Fairbanks and Gugushvili 2013). At the same time, because the issue of strengthening democracy in Georgia was ignored, the state building efforts of Saakashvili's administration were not as successful as

they could be. Nonetheless, Georgia's performance on many aspects related to combating corruption has improved since 2004, particularly compared to other post-Soviet states. The civil society activists have also confirmed that the 2003 Rose Revolution was a turning point that brought radical improvement of electoral integrity, nonetheless, according to some accounts, these improvements have slowed down during Saakashvili's reign.

Despite the delayed democratization, assaults on the political opposition and independent media as well as high levels of poverty, Saakashvili's government received overwhelming support from the Western states. Mitchell (2006) stresses that Georgia's strategic location in the Caucasus region, proximity to the Middle Eastern countries, and contentious relationships with Russia are main reasons that made Georgia so important for the Western states. At the same time, Georgian pro-Western inclinations in foreign policy became immediately clear after the 2003 Rose Revolution articulated by the educated president Saakashvili who was partly educated in the USA. Long-term commitment of the Georgian rulers to pro-European and pro-American path has been often considered as an example of successful democracy promotion effort of the Western states; nonetheless, the development of democratic institutions, including civil society, has been slow and not always unidirectional. Since 2008, Georgia has been labelled as a 'hybrid regime' earning a democracy score ranging from 4.6 to 4.9 on Freedom House's Nations in Transit reports. In such regimes, although the opposition faces pressure from the government, elections are at the heart of the political process and citizens' voting behaviour is a decisive factor in politics. At the same time, even if the electoral process is 'genuinely democratic according to basic requirements, it may deny some citizens from advancing their interests (Wigell 2008, 239).

Apart from the political will and democratic aspirations of the government,

there are other aspects that have strong influence on both the civil society development and electoral behaviour, such as economic performance and ethnic composition. Unlike neighbouring Russia and Azerbaijan, Georgia is not rich in mineral resources and high oil- and gas-generated revenues. On the one hand the economic development was not as rapid as in Azerbaijan or Russia in the time of high oil prices; on the other hand lack of mineral resources did not help autocratic leaders to preserve their power in Georgia. After the Rose Revolution, economic development was not even and was determined by the stimulation of consumption rather than production: Cordonnier et al. (2008, 73) mention that as of 2006 private and public consumption constituted 90% of the national GDP. Given the low levels of production in Georgia, the consumption growth was mostly conditional upon the foreign investment (Gürsoy and Kalyoncu 2012) and remittances from abroad (Gerber and Torosyan 2013). Poverty and economy based on agriculture indicate that local civil society might not be able to access domestic funding and support from the local citizens. Studies indicate that economic vulnerability increases the probability of voters to sell their votes (Canare, Mendoza, and Lopez 2018). Hence, poverty and instability produce higher propensity of Georgian voters to sell their votes in exchange for the immediate benefits as well as high impact of the social programmes initiated by the government on the eve of elections. Both of these peculiarities have been highlighted during interviews and reflected in the reports of the electoral observers as crucial for Georgian electoral integrity.

Another aspect that strongly influences the voting behaviour in the post-Soviet states is ethnic composition and tensions between titular population and minorities. Unlike in Moldova and Ukraine tension between different groups is not pronounced at the moment, hence language issues and ethnic diversity do not constitute an important part of the political agenda in Georgia. According to

the 2014 Population Census [1], 86.83% of the population are Georgian national-
ity; the second largest group is Azeri that constitutes only 6.27% and Armenians
4.53%. Some studies also indicate that ethnic minorities voting patterns since
independence are consistent with the voting patterns of the titular population
(George 2014). Nonetheless, domestic observers stress that areas where Azeri
and Armenian minorities reside showed higher levels of electoral misconduct, par-
ticularly in 2012-2014. Broers (2005, 335) claims that 'authoritarian enclaves' of
Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli consistently show higher voting turnouts
and higher levels of support for the governing parties (mostly UNM). By default,
these indicators do not point at violations, but they often raise suspicions of the
observers who blame specific cultural traditions of these regions, and low levels
of integration to the Georgian political life due to the language barriers. There-
fore, in the remaining part of the chapter, the ethnic aspect of voting will be
considered only in conjunction with the work conducted by the organisations in
those regions during elections.

Georgian third sector is well developed, particularly when compared to its
neighbours and most of the post-Soviet states in general. USAID quotes the
Georgian National Agency for Public Registry (NAPR) according to which there
were 23,561 registered "non-profit, non-commercial" organisations in Georgia in
2016, notably, this number has increased 9% since 2015 [2]. At the same time, the
total number of persons employed by non-commercial organisations has decreased
since 2012, probably due to the decrease in funding available to organisation (see
table 4.1).

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[1]Geostat - National Statistics Office of Georgia - Population Census 2014. Available at
`http://www.geostat.ge` (access 13 December 2018)

[2]USAID notes that these totals also include public organisations e.g. daycare and
it is impossible to determine the exact number of the CSOs in Georgia. See the US-
AID CSO Sustainability Index for Central And Eastern Europe And Eurasia 20th Edition -
July 2017(99), available at `https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/`
`1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf` (access 20 May 2019)
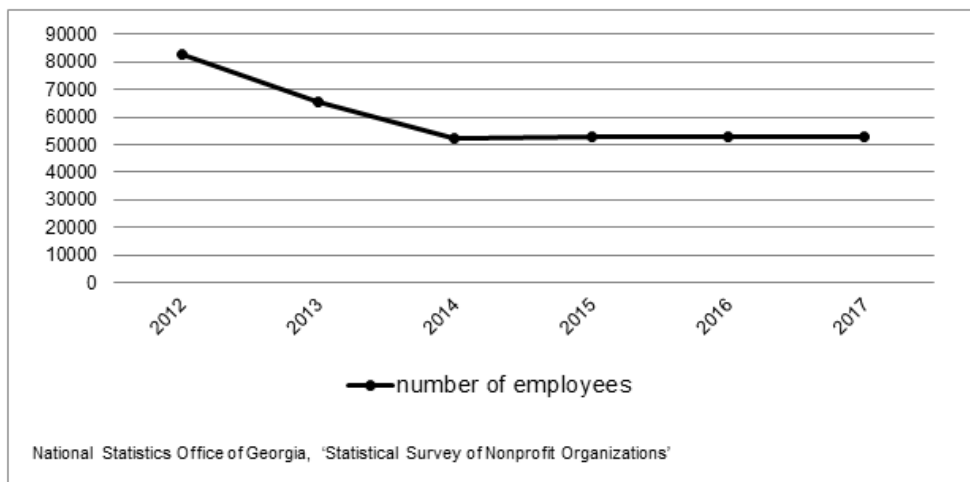
Figure 4.1: Number of the Non-Profit organisations Employees in Georgia

Georgian organisation rely on support from foreign donors and enjoy a non-oppressive and rather cooperative political environment. At the same time, citizens are rarely involved in activities offered by organisation: as for 2014 less than 5% of respondents reported participation in any activity organised by local organisation (political rally/training/meeting) [3]. These factors strongly influence civil society development in Georgia and strategies of election monitoring organisations for which transactional activism is one of the main strategic choices.

The CSO Sustainability index compiled by NDI illustrates a persisting NGO-friendly legal environment that has improved in 2004 and remains open and favourable for more than decade. Data available from the Varieties of Democracy dataset confirms that levels of CSO involvement and participation in the political process remain high for the past decade. At the same time, the state executes minimal control over CSOs, and does not impede their formation and operation unless they are engaged in activities to violently overthrow the government.

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[3]Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) "Volunteering and civic participation in Georgia, 2014" available at `https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/vl2014ge`
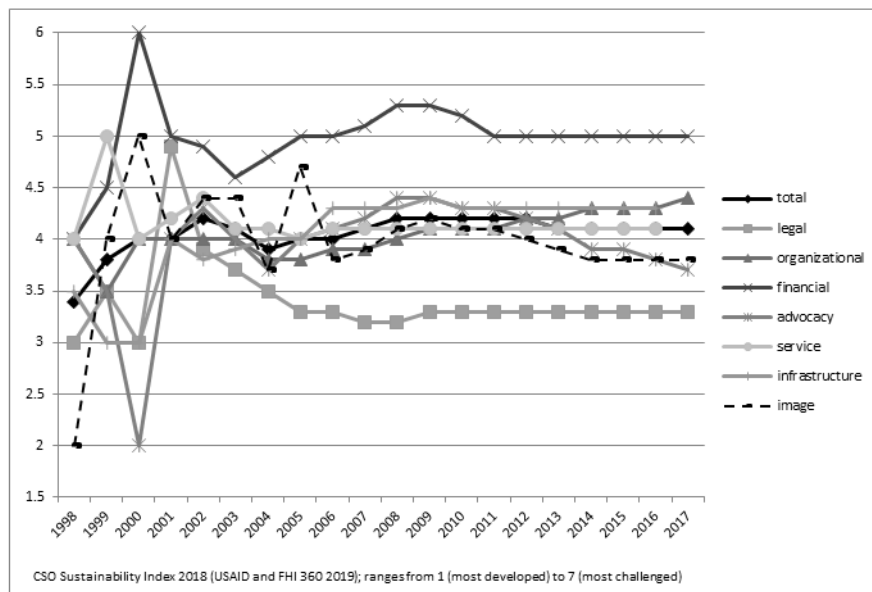
Figure 4.2: USAID CSO Sustainability Index for Georgia 1998-2017
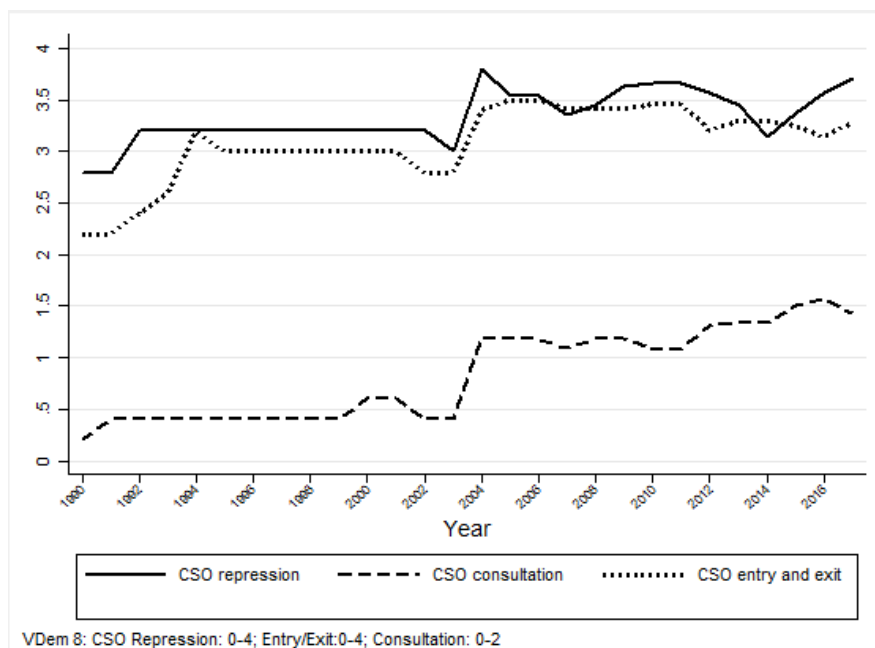
Figure 4.3: VDem 8: CSO Entry/Exit and CSO Participatory Environment

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The CSO Sustainability index notes growing success of advocacy campaigns by local organisations and openness of the state actors towards such cooperation: while in 2010 only few campaigns launched by organisation were labelled as successful, the 2012 elections and change in government coalition opened a new era in civil society – state relationships that continues to develop in a positive way.

Election monitoring organisations are some of the oldest, strongest and the most reputable organisations in the country. Given the strength of the non-state sector in Georgia, these organisations enjoy relatively free domestic context as well as support of the Western donors. This environment facilitated development of transactional activism along with more contentious activities. The next sections of this chapter introduce organisations engaged in election monitoring activities in Georgia, review political context in which election observation was performed between 2008 and 2016 and discuss resources and strategies developed by the Georgian observers. The chapter questions the role of these organisations and attempts to understand their role and performance in Georgia given specific strategies developed by the Georgian election monitoring organisations.

4.2 Monitoring Organisations in Georgia: History of Development

Election monitoring has been conducted in Georgia since early 1990s, while earliest reports and secondary data on monitoring missions is available from early 2000s. Monitoring NGOs came on the forefront of pro-democratic activism after the Rose Revolution and remain central actors in Georgian civil society. It is also worth noting that communication with these organisations has been established

relatively easily, although language barrier did not allow conducting field work in the Georgian regions. Hence, findings presented below are based on the views and interpretations of the headquarters employees and directors of the organisations. At the same time, all Georgian organisations compile numerous reports and share almost all events and statements online in Georgian and English languages which made it relatively easy to access historical information as well as data on the regional level events.Three strongest organisations ISFED, GYLA, TI Georgia involved in monitoring different aspects of the electoral process although they are not united under the auspices of the office coalition. In addition to the efforts of large nation-wide organisations, during the election period, smaller organisations or more narrow-focused organisation join these monitoring efforts (e.g electoral processes in prisons and hospitals or specific geographical zones).

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) was established in 1995 and has observed all national and local elections since then (eighteen campaigns in total). This organisation is a classic example of the so-called 'watchdog' organisations that monitor the electoral process in Georgia. organisation has a clear hierarchical structure with the central office located in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, four regional branch-offices, and 73 representatives in Georgian districts. The ISFED election monitoring mission covers all the stages of electoral process i.e. pre-elections period (3 to 4 months or even up to 6 months in 2012); observation on the precincts on the election day and control over post-election period, e.g. assessment of district election commissions and precinct election commissions. During the observation period, the organisation issues interim reports and each monitoring mission concludes with the final report and conclusion on the quality of the electoral process. The long-term monitoring can start before the campaign is even announced with a detailed scrutiny of the political environment in which the campaign will be conducted. The pre-

electoral monitoring is carried out by long-term observers who are hired from the district representatives of ISFED. Number of observers (both long-term and short-term) is different from one campaign to another, but LTOs always cover all geographical regions. The long-term monitoring mission usually focuses on several aspects that have been expanded since 2008, but main areas of control remain unchanged. As ISFED project coordinator Nino Khitarishvili explains: *'during the preparation phase we always update our methodology of pre-electoral monitoring. We pay attention to the last previous elections: what has worked, what was good, what did not work'* (from the interview with the programme coordinator).

Remarkably, the number of short-term observers employed by ISFED has decreased since 2008 (table 4.1). During the 2008 presidential election, ISFED covered almost all polling stations with its observers (more than 3000 precincts). This was supposed to be a 'disciplining and preventing measure' to ensure lack of manipulation of the procedures on election day. Although, 2012 campaign was extremely important, local monitoring missions have not covered all the precincts in the country with their observers on election day (see table 4.1). In 2012 a representative sample of precincts was selected across the country to provide reliable information on the outcomes of election though the parallel votes tabulation procedure (PVT). Undoubtedly, decrease in the funding for the electoral monitoring missions might be another reason why the election day mission has been reduced in size.

Table 4.1: ISFED Reports 2008-2016: Precinct Coverage

National Elections	Domestic Precincts Coverage
Extraordinary presidential (January 2008)	100% coverage (3249 observers)
Parliamentary elections (2008)	n/a
Parliamentary Elections (October 2012)	24.7% coverage (902 of 3650 precincts)
Presidential elections (October 2013)	24.9% coverage (910 of 3656 precincts)
Parliamentary elections (October 2016)	27.5% coverage (1000 of 3635 precincts)

The methodology of election day monitoring has two main aspects: the overall electoral process during the election day and incidents if any misconduct happens. For this purpose ISFED establishes two call-centres, namely 'SMS-PVT' that collects eight reports in the form of text messages during the day. Another centre is an 'Incident Centre' where up to 20 lawyers assist observers with some disputes and give them consultations about writing complaints. ISFED arranges up to five mobile groups that cover precincts with observers and provide legal support if any violations occur or deliver complaints from precincts to the district electoral commissions. Finally, ISFED instructs its observers not only to report on violations, but also prevent them when it is possible:

> *Our main priority is not just observing and writing down and not interfering there, we want to improve the situation as well. So, we try to improve the situation and if it does not work, we write a complaint and try to have this outcome later from DECs or some courts. It is statistical observation, as well as qualitative observation to improve the situation and to interact and affect the environment*
>
> *(T.Bartaia, ISFED deputy director)*

Although ISFED's main role is comprehensive observation of all stages of elections, its activities are not limited to the election campaign itself. Between elections, ISFED monitors and verifies composition of the voters lists, helps local authorities to develop skills relevant for effective election processes, and advocates various legislative changes. Other activities of the organisation include project in the fields of civic education and local self-government, including monitoring of composition of the election administration, their accountability and transparency, access to public information in government agencies and local budget formation; protecting rights of recruits and land-owners, analysis of issues

of socially vulnerable groups of population; promotes media monitoring and observes the gender balance in the local self-government bodies (Sakrebulos).

Transparency International – Georgia (TI Georgia) belongs to the world-wide anti-corruption movement that unites 100 chapters across the globe being one of the biggest TI chapters in Europe. The Georgian chapter has existed since 2002 and initially has focused only on anti-corruption activity due to the importance of the issue for the country. As its main goals TI Georgia proclaims combating corruption and promotion of accountability and transparency[4]. The first electoral monitoring mission dates back to 2008 elections. According to the organisation's representatives, the TI Georgia started growing rapidly after 2011 when the new director joined the organisation that led to the development of new projects and availability of more foreign funding. Since 2011, the areas of activity include monitoring of Georgian judiciary system (e.g.: reforms and high-profile criminal cases); monitoring of parliamentary activity (legislation, party financing, and other activities); issues related with budget and financial system; media (e.g.: assessment of public broadcasters, media ownership, pressure on media outlets and journalists) and issues of corruption (implementation of anti-corruption law, transparency of public institutions, etc). As of September 2017, the chapter consisted of the central office in Tbilisi and three regional offices (in Batum, Kutaisi and Zugdidi) with 41 permanent employees and 18 interns. Approximately third of all employees in TI Georgia have legal background and are employed as lawyers in different offices.

Due to the anti-corruption agenda TI Georgia focuses on the pre-electoral phase with the specific emphasis on cases of administrative pressure on voters and issues of party financing. According to the representatives of the organisation, TI

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[4]TI Georgia Mission Statement, available at `http://www.transparency.ge/en/content/mission` (accessed 14 July 2017)

Georgia pioneered the monitoring of party financing and was the first organisation that employed the IFES party financing methodology. Other organisations in the post-Soviet region started monitoring this aspect later and often relied on the expertise of their colleagues from TI Georgia. This example of experience sharing between regional organisations contradicts the image of the organisations in the post-Soviet countries always being the passive recipients of money, knowledge and skills from the civil society actors in the European democracies. On the contrary, the Georgian activists confirmed the broad ties that they support with different organisations in the region through conferences, workshops, meetings and direct communication.

The national-level elections monitoring missions usually cover 300-400 precincts selected based on the information about possible manipulations or past problems noticed previously at these polling stations. For example, in May 2008 they monitored election day procedures in the Kvemo Kartli region and targeted the most problematic districts during the 2008 Presidential elections. The TI report states that 'in order to protect its monitors from possible pressure from local officials, TI Georgia recruited its election day monitors from outside the region of Kvemo Kartli' (TI Georgia 2010).

Being one of the oldest NGO in Georgia, the **Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)** focuses on the legal aspect of elections and monitors all electoral processes since its foundation in 1994. The association was founded by the alumnae of the universities' law faculties "who were dedicated to make legal profession independent and to increase the network that would involve young and clever students who wanted prosperity for future Georgia and development as a democratic country" (Lela Taliuri, GYLA election monitoring project coordinator). GYLA is a membership-based organisation with more than 800 members, and 8 regional offices that cover the whole country. The network includes cur-

rent members, former members and numerous interns. To become a member one should be a law student and formally apply for the membership providing two reference letters from the current GYLA members.

In one of the electoral monitoring reports GYLA states that "The purpose of the GYLA Observation Mission is to study to what extent the Election Administration, political subjects, media sources, public officials and State authorities observe the election legislation and established standards in a pre-election period, on the Election Day and in the process of summarizing election results and reviewing complaints" (GYLA 2008). Lela Taliuri describes the organisation's specificity in the following words:

> We are lawyers, this is our niche. So we look at all processes through the legal perspective. We draft complaints and elaborate them. We aim to improve the practice and the legislation as such... It means that through our complaints we eliminate violations and we also prevent further violations

Besides elections, GYLA works on professional development of Georgian lawyers, human rights defense, creation and development of the legal basis for the civil society functioning. GYLA has been actively involved in a number of anti-corruption projects (for example 'The Government of Georgia under the Sun', 'Freedom of Information in Georgia', 'Monitoring the Budget Spending') and media freedom issues. The election monitoring mission is organized by GYLA separately from other organisations, while other activities like drafting of recommendations or advocacy campaigns are often conducted in close cooperation with ISFED and TI Georgia. The pre-electoral period is observed by at least 18 long-term observers (two per each region) who might start their work even before the beginning of the beginning of election campaign.

Long term and short term observers are hired among law students who are members of the GYLA network. LTOs report to the regional coordinators and they check information and send relevant data to the headquarters. On the election day GYLA covers polling stations only partially, but selects the most problematic ones, based on the information about potential issues or past problems discovered during previous campaigns. In addition to static observers, GYLA organizes the mobile groups of observers that monitor 'hot polling stations'. The information on problematic polling stations is collected by the call centre and from the media reports. Although during elections the main tool of the GYLA observers is submission of complaints, the organisation representatives stress that 'writing as many complains as possible is not an ultimate goal (interview with Lela Taliuri).

Table 4.2: GYLA Precinct Coverage (2008-2016)

National Elections	Domestic Precincts Coverage
Extraordinary presidential (January 2008)	350
Parliamentary elections (2008)	n/a
Parliamentary Elections (October 2012)	215
Presidential elections (October 2013)	384
Parliamentary elections (October 2016)	500

After the election day GYLA carefully follows the development of the complaints and if they were satisfied by the respective bodies. For this purpose GYLA introduces its observers into the district election committees as well, so they could follow the reaction on complaints from precincts and summarization of results. Moreover, the organisation follows its complaints and monitors the behaviour of all state bodies that are involved in elections: election administration, courts, state audit office (in the field of party financing), and activities of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections. Therefore, the post-electoral period in GYLA is also subject to thorough control. Results of this monitoring are always represented in the form of several interim reports and final

reports. GYLA not only covers cases that are clear violations of the law, but also points at situations that cannot be interpreted straightforwardly and require further legal investigation. For example, in 2008, there were several borderline cases: e.g. arranging a citizenship for a foreign national who appealed to the president Saakashvili during his visit in Adjara or mobilization of pupils and students to meet president Saakashvili. Such events are used to develop suggestions on the improvement of the legal base.

Aspects that have been monitored by GYLA show considerable overlap in topics with other organisations, particularly with TI Georgia who also looks into administrative pressure or funding of electoral campaigns. Undoubtedly issues related to the electoral process are limited that causes certain overlap. At the same time, due to the methodological differences observers risk coming up with somehow contradictory assessments. GYLA mission coordinator has mentioned that 2016 parliamentary elections have received more critical evaluation form GYLA rather than TI Georgia. According to the interviewees, these differences did not create any confusion and had no impact on the relations between civil society and government.

Other organisations conduct electoral monitoring missions focusing on some narrow aspects or regional issues. For example, the **Public Movement Multinational Georgia (PMMG)** monitors all polling stations in regions where Armenian and Azeri minorities reside. This organisation works in a close cooperation with international donors and local authorities: for example, the CEC representative has mentioned PMMG on multiple occasions as a partner organisation in these very specific regions. It is worth noting, that areas attract very high attention from both domestic and international observers.

The PMMG monitoring methodology is based on employing long-term ob-

servers to monitor the pre-electoral campaign. The LTOs are hired from the permanent staff of the organisation and, if finances allow, some extra candidates are considered. In total, pre-electoral monitoring is conducted by 12 to 14 LTOs. Importantly, long-term monitoring has not been an initial strategy of the PMMG, it has been conducted since 2012. Before that PMMG had funding available only for the on-election day monitoring. In turn, more resources were channelled to the organisation because foreign donors attributed particular importance to the area of residence of the minority population: traditionally it gives higher levels of support to the UNM party. PMMG also invests a lot of efforts in educational programmes and training to prevent misuse of the voting system due to the low knowledge levels.

Another organisation involved in monitoring the electoral process in Georgia is **Centre for Development and Democracy (CDD)** established in 2008 and conducted its first monitoring mission during 2012 parliamentary elections. The executive director Ketevan Chachava explained that CDD inherited its networks and expertise from another **nGnl** that ceased to exist shortly after 2012 parliamentary elections:

> nGnl was one of the biggest domestic observer organisation that conducted PVT, it had 1500 people mission, so it was one of the largest organisations in Georgia together with ISFED. But nGnl died due to some internal issues. So, when I have left it, I had a network and I had high trust among those people, that was transferred it all to CDD. We did not start from zero, we were known and we had high trust: nGnl was a partner with IRI, it had well developed monitoring structures, observing full election cycle across the country.

She also stresses the cooperative style of work of this NGO: CDD works with the

broad range of actors e.g. political parties, electoral administration, and other state agencies. Its priority is to monitor problematic precincts such as those located in hospitals or prisons. For example, in 2016 it covered only 11 precincts in different regions of Georgia. Between elections CDD conducts various educational campaigns for the Georgian citizens for example 'New Initiative for a Peaceful Future' (NIPF) project aimed at creation of the opportunities for dialogue between young people from Georgia and breakaway Republic of Abkhazia. The information about the CDD is limited to the interview with the director due to the inactivity of its website. As of February 2019 it is unclear if the organisation operates or stopped any activity.

* * *

Civil society was always actively involved in Georgian political life benefiting from open and non-oppressive political context and support from the Western donors. Given this favourable environment, Georgian election monitoring organisations developed a cooperative and non-contentious type of activism vis-a-vis local authorities that helps them to achieve their goals through personal networks and negotiations. Activists acknowledge that their impact is strongly related to two important external factors: political will of Georgian elites and pressure from the Western donors. Using these elements electoral monitoring NGOs navigate the improvement of election quality and advocate for legal improvements. The section below investigates five national election campaigns starting from early presidential elections in 2008 until the parliamentary elections in 2016 covering the first peaceful transition of power occurred in Georgia in 2012. All campaigns saw active involvement of the Georgian observers who have worked under the rapidly changing political conditions. Their reports and analysis of electoral statistics indicate the gradual improvement of the electoral quality in Georgia.

4.3 Political Context of Election Monitoring in Georgia (2008-2016)

The worst political crisis since the Rose Revolution hit Georgia at the end of September 2007 when Georgians protested outside the Parliament in Tbilisi and demanded the resignation of allegedly corrupt Saakashvili's government[5]. Previously divided and weak Georgian opposition parties formed an ad hoc coalition 'National Council' and organized anti-government demonstrations. These protests started as peaceful demonstrations triggered by detention of the oppositional politician Irakli Okruashvili were caused by general dissatisfaction with the authoritarian tendencies in Saakashvili's rule and growing poverty[6]. Saakashvili denied allegations of corruption and blamed Russia for orchestrating the crisis, recalled the Georgian ambassador from Moscow and expelled several high-ranked Russian officials [7]. On the 7th of November 2007 police used force against peaceful demonstrators and the violent clashes broke out. After violent clashes the nationwide 15 days state of emergency was declared, the oppositional TV station Imedi TV was raided and stopped by the police after broadcasting statements of political opponents of Saakashvili. Next day after a violent crackdown of demonstration the president called for negotiations and also announced early presidential elections to be held in 2008. In addition, Saakashvili has also agreed

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[5]Reuters World News 'Thousands protest against Georgia president' September 28, 2007 / 4:28 PM available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-opposition/thousands-protest-against-georgia-president-idUSL2885338820070928 (accessed March 2017)

[6]BBC News 'Mass protest in Georgian capital' Saturday, 3 November 2007, 05:45 GMT, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7074585.stm(accessed March 2017)

[7]The Guardian 'State of emergency in Georgia as street protests turn violent' Thu 8 Nov 2007 15.17 GMT available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/08/russia.georgia (accessed March 2017)

to hold a popular referendum and consult the Georgian citizens about the scheduling of the parliamentary elections that the opposition demanded to conduct in spring 2008 [8].

4.3.1 Presidential Elections in 2008

Georgian president is elected for the five years term. To be elected in the first round, a candidate should receive 50% of votes plus one vote otherwise the second tour of elections is held in two weeks. In the second tour a candidate who receives a simple majority wins the competition. Although officially it was declared on the 25th of November, in fact, the electoral campaign started three weeks earlier after the statement made by Saakashvili about the early presidential elections. Hence, the beginning of campaign took place under the state of emergency and restrictions of broadcasting of some media outlets including the oppositional Imedi TV channel. Moreover, some observers stressed that during the electoral campaign 'election law was amended twice: 22 November and 7 December' (GYLA Final Report p. 16) that complicated the electoral monitoring by the local watchdogs. The Central electoral Commission reported that in total 74 international organisations (1906 observers) and 34 domestic missions were registered to monitor elections[9].

The ISFED pre-electoral report highlights a number of issues related to the intimidation of voters, including public workers and private individuals; pressure on local observers; creation of unequal opportunities for electoral subjects. The most profound problem could be summarised as 'non-existence of clear line be-

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[8] Civil Georgia 'Saakashvili Calls Snap Presidential Polls, Referendum' 8 November 2007, available at `https://civil.ge/eng/detail.php?id=16262`(accessed 10 March 2017)

[9] Election Administration of Georgia "The List of International organisations registered at the CEC for January 5, 2008 Extraordinary Elections of the President of Georgia"

tween the party and the state' that lead to the widespread use of administrative resources by UNM as well as direct distribution of material goods to voters (IS-FED Pre-Election Period Monitoring Report 2008, 11). Results of observation established that elections were conducted in a very tense political environment with numerous violations in the pre-electoral period and on the election day leading to the conclusion that the electoral process did not correspond to the standards of democratic elections.

Analysis of electoral returns shows significant levels of positive correlation between turnout and share of votes for Saakashvili ($r(3316) = .46, p < .000$). In turn, share of votes for his major competitor, Levan Gachechiladze, correlated negatively with the turnout: ($r(3316) = -.40, p < .000$) suggesting that higher levels of turnout benefited only incumbent, but not the opponent. Moreover, other signs of artificial augmentation of votes could be traced in electoral returns from 2008 presidential elections: for example, the shape of the turnout distribution considerably deviates from the expected normal distribution; vote shares distribution for the leading candidate are positively skewed with a very fat and long tail of higher percentage values. Such results could be observed on the occasions of artificial augmentation of votes or high levels of voter mobilisation through administrative pressure on behalf of the incumbent. Combination of these indicators confirms findings of the election observers who labelled the election process as not free and fair. Alongside with the 2008 presidential elections two national plebiscites took place: on the date of holding parliamentary elections; and Georgia's integration into NATO. Both questions have been answered positively by more than 75% of the population and the 2008 parliamentary elections took place on the 21st of May 2008.

Table 4.3: Results of 2008 Presidential Elections in Georgia

Candidate	Number of Votes	Vote Share
Levan Gachechiladze (Unified Opposition)	515501	26.03%
Arkadi Patarkatsishvili (Initiative Group)	142662	7.27%
Davit Gamkrelidze (The New Rights)	81365	4.12%
Shalva Natelashvili (Labor Party of Georgia)	13053	0.66%
Mikheil Saakashvili (United National Movement)	1074698	54.27%
George Maisashvili (Initiative Group)	15722	0.79%
Irina Sarishvili-Chanturi (Initiative Group)	3332	0.17%
Invalid/spoiled ballots	32913	1.67%
Turnout	1980391	56.27%

4.3.2 Early Parliamentary Elections 2008

Following results of the public referendum the parliamentary elections were moved to the spring time and conducted on the 21st of May 2008. Prior to elections Georgian Parliament has introduced a number of changes in electoral laws. Firstly, 50% of MPs would be elected in the majoritarian districts through a simple majority and at least 30% turnout rate (OSCE/ODIHR 2008). Other important changes included decrease of the electoral threshold from 7% to 5% for the political parties to enter the parliament; increased number of CEC from 5 to 13 persons and extended deadline for voters to check their personal information in the voters' list (ISFED Pre-electoral Report 2008). The pre-electoral period was again marred by violations that were reported by a number of domestic electoral observers, e.g. political campaign obstruction, use of administrative resources, voter intimidation and votes buying.

In total, 34 domestic electoral monitoring organisations and 62 international organisations were registered by CEC to observe Parliamentary elections. During the pre-electoral phase and during election day ISFED and TI Georgia reported cases of observers' harassment and denial of registration by the members of counting commissions. On the election day international observers reported a number of serious violations that included issues with the results tabulation (OSCE/ODIHR 2008). Most serious complaints filed by the election monitoring activists were solved by courts after the election day. Results of electoral forensics analysis supports claims of the observers and shows that UNM clearly benefited from the increase in turnout throughout the country ($r(3546) = .45, p < .000$), while the share of votes received by leading opposition parties even decreased when more voters casted their ballots. Distribution of UNM votes deviates from the expectations of normal distribution being skewed to the right, towards high values. In turn, distribution of votes for other political parties also deviate from the assumptions of normal distribution, but show opposite trends: in case of United Opposition distribution is skewed towards lower values (see Appendix B, figure B13 - B15). Similarly to the previous elections, electoral forensics analysis in line with conclusions of election monitoring organisations casts considerable doubt whether the quality of 2008 electoral procedures correspond to the standards of democratic elections.

Due to the misconduct during electoral campaigns, doubts in fairness of election day and final results, the rule of the president Saakashvilli was not considered to be democratic; observers noticed considerable deterioration of electoral quality even compared to 2004 parliamentary elections. Despite pressure, Georgian civil society was actively involved in comprehensive monitoring of both election campaigns in 2008; furthermore, following popular protests of opposition and pressure from domestic civil society and international actors, in 2008 govern-

ment has reduced electoral threshold from 7% to 5% creating opportunities for higher diversity in parliament (Gilbreath and Balasanyan 2017). In October 2010 Georgian Parliament passed several important amendments that came into effect after the 2013 Presidential elections. Following these amendments Georgia has switched from president-parliamentary to the premier-presidential type, i.e. strengthening the PM at the expense of the president (Mueller 2014). In turn, a number of scholars agree that this reform has been initiated by the President Saakashvili in order to extend his rule in the capacity of a prime minister after the 2013 presidential elections when his second and final presidential term would expire (Jones 2013; Fairbanks and Gugushvili 2013). Indeed as Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009) note, incumbents often try to change political institutions in their own favour. Therefore, 2012 Parliamentary elections became particularly important as the elected prime minister would become a new strongman after 2013 while the positions of the president would be weakened.

Table 4.4: Results of 2008 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia

Party	Party list	Constituency	Total Seats	+/−
United National Movement (UNM)	59.69	61.58	119	-16
United Opposition	17.8	19.43	17	2
Christian-Democratic Movement	8.65	3.99	6	6
Labour Party	7.48	4.77	6	6
Republican party	3.82	5.26	2	2
Right Wing Alliance Topadze Industrialists	0.93	1.11	0	–
Christian Democratic Alliance	0.89	1.71	0	–
Georgian Politics	0.47	0.52	0	–
Traditionalists - Our Georgia and Women's Party	0.46	0.52	0	–
Sportsman's Union	0.19	0	0	–
National Party of Radical Democrats of Georgia	0.18	0.14	0	–
Our Country	0.13	0.1	0	–
Total Voter Turnout (%)	50.8	51.03		
Total Voter Turnout (#)	1,774,647	1,771,211		

4.3.3 Parliamentary elections in 2012

The October 2012 Parliamentary elections became one of the most important political events in the recent Georgian history because for the first time in Georgia, power was peacefully transferred from the ruling party to the opposition. In total, 14 parties and two electoral blocks were competing for seats in the 150 member Georgian Parliament. In reality, competition took place between two main competitors: the United National Movement, which was founded by

Mikheil Saakashvili in 2001 and took power through the 2003 Rose Revolution, and the Georgian Dream coalition [10], organized and funded by a billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. Some of the NGO representatives recalled that *'when Bidzina Ivanishvili appeared, he became a messiah for opposition, he united all opposition parties, and of course, he is a billionaire, he has huge resources'* (interview with the TI Georgia representatives). The coalition was not united by a certain policy position, but represented an 'anti' movement representing a disgust with the Saakashvili's government (Fairbanks and Gugushvili 2013). In turn, UNM warned against Ivanishvili's connections with Russia where the billionaire made his fortune (De Waal 2012). The tense pre-electoral period culminated with protests sparkled by a human rights scandal. Facts of torture in Gldani Prison No. 8, near Tbilisi disclosed by opposition shook Georgian society to its core (Mueller 2014) and immediately caused multiple demonstrations in the capital on the eve of the election day (Fairbanks and Gugushvili 2013). In its final report ISFED has noted: "Due to the tense political background, there was a lack of pre-election campaigning focused on discussion of election programs and thematic debate. Rather, the pre-election campaign involved plentiful use of compromising information, multiple violations of law, active use of hate speech, violent and aggressive clashes" (ISFED Final Report 2012, 5). Furthermore, the mixed electoral system has disproportionally favoured two main competitors, while no other contestant managed to overcome the 5% threshold (Mueller 2014).

In total ISFED included more than a hundred cases of pre-electoral misconduct in its final report. Other observers have also brought to the public attention cases of intimidation, arrests of the opposition supporters and violent acts during

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[10]The Georgian Dream Coalition included the following political parties: Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia, Conservative Party of Georgia, Industry Will Save Georgia, Republican Party of Georgia, Our Georgia – Free Democrats, National Forum. Another coalition that participated in elections but did not get any seats the 'Christian Democratic Union' consisted of Christian-Democratic Movement and European Democrats of Georgia

the pre-electoral campaign. Moreover, all watchdogs indicated broad use of administrative pressure on different groups of public employees and misuse of state resources in favour of UNM. Fairbanks and Gugushvili (2013, 123) suggest that UNM was ready to make the votes appear from the thin air, but they 'scrapped the idea once they realised the size of Georgian Dream's lead and the degree of scrutiny' by international and domestic observers.

Election forensics tools applied to the 2012 electoral returns results have confirmed that certain manipulative practices were used, but most likely were employed before the election day: distribution of votes casted for the UNM party is strongly skewed towards the larger figures, while Georgian Dream votes cluster around smaller values, both distributions visibly deviate from the assumptions of normality (Shapiro-Wilks test $p < .000$). Importantly, results from monitored and not monitored precincts are equally skewed in favour of the UNM party (see Figure N in Appendix B) showing that monitoring on the election day did not have prevent abnormalities in final vote tallies. This allows cautiously suggestion that the pre-electoral phase has become much more important in winning votes for the UNM. In turn, unlike during 2008 elections, UNM vote share does not show a significant correlation with the turnout: $r(3642) = -.06, p < .001$. At the same time, GD vote share slightly increases with the increase of turnout, which can be explained by successful mobilisation of voters by the opposition party ($r(3642) = .18, p < .000$). To summarise, basic electoral forensics analysis provides additional support to the statement made by observers indicating abnormalities in electoral returns and suggesting that the incumbent party used illegal means to ensure additional votes. Analysis also supports the claim that due to the close and almost universal monitoring by the electoral observers, most of the misconduct took place during the electoral campaign.

Given such imbalance and heavily skewed playing field the eventual victory

of GD became even more remarkable. Although some manipulation was reported, alongside political pressure on the opposition it is widely accepted that the elections were free of large scale fraud, and voters drove the transfer of power in Georgia. For the first time since twenty years in Georgian politics the president who is officially the leader of the UNM party commanded not a comfortable parliamentarian majority of his own party, but the oppositional parliament. Researchers stressed that this could be one of the rare examples of democratic development on the post-Soviet space and peaceful co-habitation of the ruling party and opposition. Some authors conclude that the 2012 parliamentary elections mostly have turned into a 'plebiscite for change' (Mueller 2014).

Table 4.5: Results of the 2012 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia

Party	Party-list		Constituency		Total Seats	$+/-$
	%	Seats	%	Seats	85	83
Georgian Dream	54.07	44	53.25	41	65	-54
United National Movement	39.68	33	41.39	32	0	-6
Christian Democratic Union	2.0	0	2.3	0	0	-6
Labor Party of Georgia	1.22	0	0.94	0	0	-17
New Rights	0.42	0	0.67	0	0	0
Other parties & invalid votes	4.61	0	1.45	0	0	0
Total	100	77		73	150	
Turnout (%)			62%			

4.3.4 Presidential Elections 2013

In October 2013 fourth presidential elections since independence took place in Georgia. According to the law, Georgian president can be elected for two consecutive five years terms; therefore Mikheil Saakashvili who served as a president since 2004 could not run for the post. In total 23 candidates managed to collect 0.75% (26,530) of signatures of the eligible electorate and got registered as official candidates. Three leading contestants were Giorgi Margelashvili (Georgian

Dream), Davit Bakradze (United National Movement), and Nino Burjanadze (Democratic Movement-United Georgia). The candidate from the ruling party, Giorgi Margelashvili, was elected in the first round with the 62.1% of votes followed by the oppositional UNM candidate with only 21.7%. After Margvelashvili's victory the Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili resigned leaving behind 'a hand-picked successor, Irakli Garibashvili' (Samadashvili 2014, 60).

Scholars and election observers noted that the political campaign was dominated by the tension between two political figures who did not take part in the contest themselves: the former president Saakashvili and then-prime minister Ivanishvili, but overall they refrained from using hate speech and mutual accusation. ISFED observers reported that 'pre-election promises made by presidential candidates were mostly similar' (ISFED Final Report 2013, 6). In turn, political candidates could be distinguished in terms of their stand on the foreign policy priorities: while Giorgi Margvelashvili and Nino Burjanadze promised to regulate relations with Russia, in the view of the European choice of Georgia, Davit Bakradze stressed the importance of the Euro-Atlantic path of Georgia (ISFED Final Report 2013). In total 55 international and 57 local monitoring organisations were accredited to observe elections.

Despite certain levels of polarization, the election day has not been marred with severe violations, hence this campaign was labelled as free and fair and results have been accepted by all domestic and international actors. Reports of the monitoring missions painted a more optimistic picture stressing that less signs of misconduct has been observed. For example, no cases of observers intimidation has been noticed before or during election day, although activists from different political camps experienced harassment. ISFED lists a number of improvements in legal procedures and endorses the role of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Free and Fair elections for the improvement of the pre-electoral

environment. TI Georgia noticed that administrative pressure has been applied less compared to the previous campaigns (Interim Report, 24 October 2013) and GYLA concluded that for the Government "ensuring democratic environment of the 2013 presidential elections was its priority" (GYLA Final Report 2013). In general, observers stressed that violations during election day were mostly procedural and could not influence the outcome of elections.

Improvement of election quality can be also noticed through statistical data that does not show any considerable deviation from the expected behaviour. The turnout and vote shares of the leading candidates represented bells-shaped distributions expected in clean data, variables were not skewed or spread more than expected. At the same time, share votes casted for Margvelashvili slightly increased with the increase in turnout ($r(3644) = .25, p < .000$), while votes for Bakradze showed opposite trend ($r(3644) = -.24, p < .000$); results of the third candidate, Burjanadze, did not have such effect ($r(3644) = -.004, p < .765$). This might be related to both, illegal attempts to influence voters' choice or with more successful mobilisation strategies.

In 2013 several important constitutional amendments came into force changing Georgia's form of government from president-parliamentary to premier-presidential (Shugart and Carey 1992). Following the constitutional amendments, the vast majority of the legislative and executive powers were shifted to the government, so president had no longer power to draft bills (article 67 of the Constitution), take a position in a political party (article 72) or submit the state budget (article 93) (for detailed description see Fumagalli 2014).

Table 4.6: Results of the 2013 Presidential Elections in Georgia

Candidate	Votes	Share of Votes (%)
Giorgi Margvelashvili (GD)	1 012 569	62.12
Davit Bakradze (UNM)	354 103	21.72
Nino Burjanadze (Democratic Movement-United Georgia)	166 061	10.19
Shalva Natelashvili	46 984	2.88
Other candidates	50 271	3.08
Invalid ballots	30 988	1.87
Total	1 660 976	46.95

4.3.5 Parliamentary elections in 2016

October 2016 Parliamentary elections concluded the first electoral cycle when the peaceful transition of power occurred in Georgia. Elections took place under conditions of economic backlash, high rates of unemployment and devolution of the national currency. Although Georgian citizens have expressed disappointment over the economic situation since 2012[11], Georgian Dream took a leading place due to the lack of any sound political alternative (BTI 2018 - Georgia Country Report). During the past few years the United National Movement experienced an internal split over the role of its former leader Mikheil Saakashvili and did not pose any serious political competition to the Georgia Dream (BTI 2018 Country Report - Georgia, 2018). At the same time, certain progress was reached in international affairs: on the 1st of July entered into force the Association Agreement

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[11]NDI Public Attitudes in Georgia, June 2016: "Since October 2012 you and your household are..." 'worse off' reported by 32%; stayed the same reported by 51% and 'better off' reported by 17% of respondents. Opinion poll available at `https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2016ge/LIFECOND12` (access 14.01.2019)

with the EU which was signed two years earlier. This agreement introduced a preferential trade regime that has increased market access between Georgia and EU[12]. Although results of this new agreement for Georgian economy were not yet clear by the October 2016 elections, the Georgian Dream has benefited from the decades of the attempts to bring Georgia closer to the EU.

Electoral monitoring organisations have noted that the election campaign was conducted in a competitive environment with unbiased and pluralistic media landscape although contenders 'again failed to conduct political discussions without using hate speech and instrumentalising vulnerable groups' (GYLA Final Report 2017). Number of violations were identified during the pre-electoral period including campaigning by unauthorized persons, alleged political intimidation and blackmailing of politicians, and vote buying incidents. Number of political scandals broke out which were assessed as attempts to 'manipulate public opinion' (GYLA final Report 2017, p.13). On the election day at the majority of precincts elections were conducted without any violations during opening the polling stations or during the election day, although some procedural issues and even violent acts were detected during the counting procedure (ISFED 2016 Final report, p.6-8).

In turn, use of electoral forensics tools helps detect certain abnormalities associated with the results of the winning party. On the one hand, the distribution of the GD vote share departs from the assumptions of normality, on the other hand share of GD votes correlates positively with the turnout ($r(3585) = .32, p < .000$). At the same time, the vote share of UNM is distributed normally and it has a slight negative correlation with turnout ($r(3585) = -.17, p < .000$). Vote shares of political parties that gained seats in the Parliament do not show any

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[12]European Commission: 'Countries and Regions. Georgia' available at `http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/georgia/index_en.htm` (accessed 12.02.2019)

signs of misconduct or artificial behaviour suggesting that main competition took place between GD and UNM.

Table 4.7: Results of 2016 Parliamentary Elections

Party	Proportional		Constituency		Total Seats	+/−
	%	Seats	%	Seats		
Georgian Dream	48.68	44	46.49	71	115	67
United National Movement	27.11	27	25.89	0	27	−19
Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	5.01	6	5.55	0	6	New
Free Democrats	4.63	0	4.75	0	0	−8
Democratic Movement − United Georgia	3.53	0	2.19	0	0	0
State for a People	3.45	0	3.52	0	0	New
Labour Party of Georgia	3.14	0	1.63	0	0	0
Republican Party	1.55	0	1.25	0	0	−9
Industry Will Save Georgia	0.78	0	1.13	1	1	−5
National Forum	0.73	0	1.26	0	0	−6
Georgia for Peace	0.22	0	0.15	0	0	New
Georgian Idea	0.17	0	0.13	0	0	New
Tamaz Mechiauri - for United Georgia	0.16	0	0.32	0	0	New
Georgian Groupe	0.12	0	0.1	0	0	0
Communist Party	0.1	0	0.13	0	0	New
Other Parties	0.063	0	0.08	0	0	0
Initiative Group	–	–	4.31	0	0	0
Total Turnout (%)	51.94	–	49.74	–	–	–
Total Seats	–	77	–	73	150	–

These indicators might support the results of observation that suggested that each political party in power attempts to use state resources to gain advantage during elections. At the same time, compared to previous elections, in 2016 observers did not doubt the democratic nature of process as a whole. Although results at 10 polling stations were cancelled, observers noted that detected irregularities could not impact the overall result of elections. The competition resulted in Georgian Dream gaining the constitutional majority (see table 4.7).

4.3.6 Political Context and Electoral Misconduct in Georgia: Concluding Remarks

Since the early 1990s Georgian political process remains highly personalised and, as Jones (2013) concludes, most of the prominent politicians were brought into power by protests and contention rather than 'normal' political process. Parliamentary elections in 2012 were the first time when the transit of power occurred peacefully in Georgia followed by a year of relatively peaceful co-existence of the governing party and opposition. These important elections, similarly to the previous cycle in 2008, attracted attention of international actors as well as caused mobilisation of the domestic civil society. In contrast, the 2013 presidential elections and 2016 parliamentary elections were characterised as less polarized and subsequently, less pressure was produced by civil society and foreign actors on the Georgian government. Variations in electoral violations is often explained through the political context: the more tense and aggravated the context is the more likely some violations to occur.

This observation generally supports the trend mentioned by activists in all three countries: electoral manipulations occur only during important elections and they are used by political parties to gain support of the voters. Unlike in

countries like Russia, incumbents do not have enough power to skew the playing field completely, even if we consider 2008 pre-electoral manipulations committed by Saakashvili and UNM. Activists have also noticed changes in the types of misconduct they observe (see table4.7). For example, ISFED coordinator Nino Khitarishvili traced several changes in electoral misconduct since 2008:

> *Issues that we observe are changing all the time. For example, in 2012 it has been a very competitive environment and there have been many physical assaults and attacks on the party activists < … > In 2013 it was a very calm situation, no major violations. In 2016 there were more violations. We saw some votes buying cases, and use of administrative resources and people who were not allowed to take part in the campaign < … > but we cannot say that in 2016 there were more violations regarding physical attack or more use of administrative resources. There were all of them, but a smaller amount*

GYLA representative suggested that state bodies react differently on complaints from the domestic observers during different elections: in 2013 presidential elections and 2014 local elections CEC reacted better at complaints from civil society actors and studied them thoroughly, while during 2016 parliamentary elections that were 'more interesting and more important' EMB tried to avoid any complaints and did not investigate them. At the same time, GYLA representative explained that some activities of the incumbents between elections are motivated by upcoming elections, hence also required attention from the monitoring organisations:

> *When election subjects are making a blog and name their mayor*

candidate or some municipal government launches some social aid
programmes. For example, they had free medical checks, and they
are financing them, so we consider this to be interesting and we
conduct monitoring.
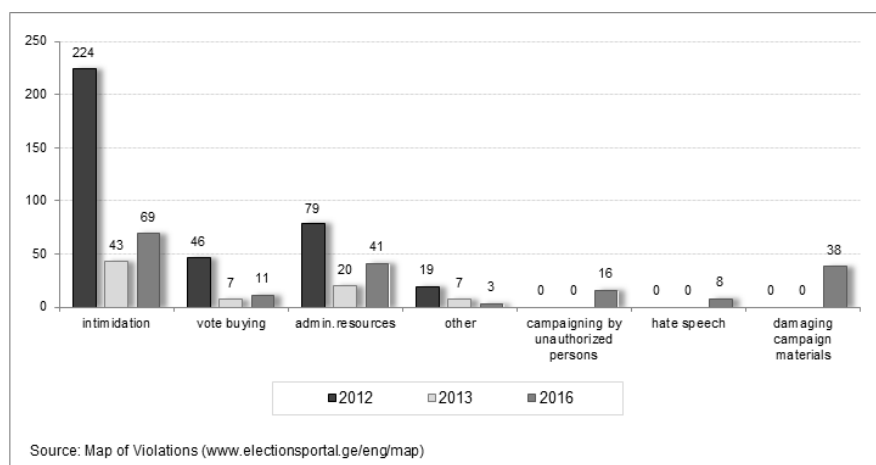
Figure 4.4: Pre-Electoral Violation: National Elections in Georgia 2012-2016

Another significant problem that Georgian activists have mentioned concerns the so-called 'legal administrative resource', namely increases of governmental spending on the social projects in the pre-electoral period. Undoubtedly, such technique is not a Georgian invention; it is widely used everywhere in the post-Soviet region. At the same time, observers stress that although the number of such cases increased, civil society can do very little about that because the law is not violated and it is difficult to complain about these facts. These borderline cases are hard to qualify as electoral manipulations, but they notify citizens about such cases.

Election day is unanimously labelled as 'clean' by the election observers who stress that they have not seen blatant violations at least since 2012. Although in 2016 there was an increase in the amount of violations during the process

of ballot counting and summarisation of results (see figure4.5)it is explained through the lack of skills, rather than an attempt to alter results. In total, the amount of violations during election day is decreasing and is not related to any efforts of changing vote tallies. Election manipulations, if any, have moved to the pre-electoral period and became much more subtle in Georgia.
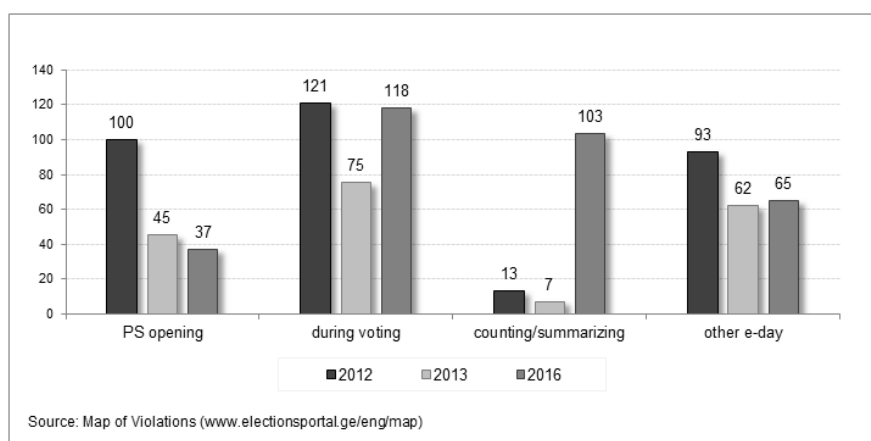
Figure 4.5: Election Day Violations: National Elections in Georgia 2012-2016

Undoubtedly, election quality has improved since 2008, but how much this has been a result of the civil society actors' work is hard to estimate. Observers claim that without permanent pressure and control from the civil society actors, electoral rules will not be improved, political playing field will be even more skewed in favour of incumbents, while citizens and international actors will have no access to information on electoral misconduct. At the same time, they have to adjust their projects to these improvements and find other aspects to monitor and control.

Gradual approximation with the EU favoured by the majority of Georgian population can serve as an alternative explanation of the improvement of election quality. Western partners required elections to be labelled as free and fair and

would be impossible without commitment towards high democratic standards[13].
Consequently, the political will of Georgian elites was extremely favourable to-
wards improvement of the electoral integrity as well as openness towards coop-
eration with international and domestic actors engaged in the electoral process
in Georgia. Close cooperation with the EU also facilitates development of the
friendly environment for the civil society. Such open political context clearly sets
important prerequisites for the development of transactional connection, mostly
between organisation and the state actors. Civil society activists became part
of the government after the Rose Revolution, making dialogue and cooperation
between civil society and government easier (e.g. through personal networks).
During Saakashvili's second term, political context developed into more oppres-
sive and civil society actors have less impact and less attention from the state.

After the 2012 elections and peaceful change in the ruling coalition, political
context became more instrumental for the development of strong ties and coop-
eration between election monitoring organisations and the state actors. Despite
the pressure exercised by civil society on local political actors directly or through
international actors, activists claim that their relationships with the state are
rather cooperative than contentious: for example, they participate in working
groups with the representatives of the state agencies, help developing amend-
ments to electoral laws, stakeholders pay attention to the reports compiled by
these monitoring organisations. Many skilled activists started employment in the
state bodies in recent years, particularly after the first peaceful change in govern-
ing coalition in 2012. For example, Tamar Zhvania was elected as a chairwoman
of the Georgian Electoral Commission in 2013 and re-elected in 2018. Between
2004 and 2007 she was the ISFED Executive Director and her candidacy was

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[13]The European Neighbourhood Policy http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/
en/sheet/170/the-european-neighbourhood-policy (accessed 12.02.2019)

proposed by eleven prominent NGOs (TI Georgia 2013). The CEC representative has confirmed that the Georgian electoral management body in its work closely cooperates with the most prominent and impartial organisations that have experience in election monitoring as well as international donors behind them.

Georgia is known to have a particularly open and diverse CSO participatory environment and easy entry rules for new organisation. Interviews agree that these features have downside and not always facilitate promotion of 'good civil society'. For example, every electoral cycle, numerous organisations are created with the aim of election monitoring, a large number of them are connected with political parties who are not allowed to put their observers on the precincts. Not always these organisations help promote democratic values and electoral integrity. Georgian observers stress that the number of domestic monitoring organisations is constantly increasing while the number of international organisations and their observers remains more or less constant since 2008 (see table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Number of monitoring organisations accredited by CEC Georgia

Elections	Domestic		International	
	NGOs	Observers	NGOs	Observers
Presidential 2008	34	n/a	75	n/a
Parliamentary 2008	34	13 245	62	1 848
Parliamentary 2012	50	58 967	61	1 131
Presidential 2013	60	19 746	65	2 241
Parliamentary 2016	91	29 354	55	1 440

Experts suggest that such organisations are 'fake observers' that have developed as a consequence of the civil society openness. Political parties establish affiliated monitoring groups that instead of acting impartially get involved in the procedures on behalf of some political competitor. They are sent to the polling

stations to give political parties *'more power and < ... > interfere in the election process'* (A.Mikeladze, CEC Spokesperson). They create noise and exacerbate the political environment to overshadow reports of the impartial organisations. Activists noted that names of these NGOs can be similar to names of the most prominent and visible organisations. Although it has never been stated directly in the on-the-record interviews, there were doubts that this was just a coincidence occurred on multiple occasions, implying that there was a deliberate effort to attack reputable organisations.

> *Year by year, election by election we have many fake organisation here, especially party-affiliated who just want to be represented on the election day and to run the processes. It is both, ruling and opposition parties affiliated. So, almost each party has its own observers who always run out from their mandate and do not behave [as observers]. They breach the Local Observers' Code and they do not follow ethics as they should. < ... > There are so many [of them] and because of their presence the PS are overcrowded. They make noise there and they try to dictate to the commission members and when there are no violations, they try to create some problems.*
> (L.Taliuri, GYLA)

The CEC and some international organisations have issued recommendations for the political parties to decrease the number of observers, but the situation has not changed. At the same time, legally CEC does not have any power to combat such 'satellite NGOs' because registration rules should be equal to all organisations. Prominent monitoring organisations tried to fight against satellites with the only available tool i.e. 'naming and shaming them': *In our public statements several times we had to name their names, say that they were shouting, dictating*

the commission members and intervening in the process (GYLA representative). Such 'fake observation' has only been mentioned by Georgian observers as a significant issue that interferes in the domestic electoral process.

Despite all efforts, observers complained that citizens do not pay much attention to their reports. In general, public opinion polls indicate that Georgian citizens do not show high levels of trust towards the domestic organisations: levels of distrust are gradually growing in the recent years, while the largest share of populations is rather indifferent towards local organisation (figure 4.6). At the same time, Georgian citizens remain rather passive: evidence from the Map of Violations shows that only 3% of all violations were reported by citizens, while the majority shared by the observers. Although such low levels of activity might be due to the sophistication of manipulation techniques that are hard to detect to an average citizen (figure 4.7). Due to inactivity and low levels of trust, Georgian election monitoring organisations, work with state actors and foreign donors rather than mobilise the local citizens.

Georgia has undergone a long way from being an authoritarian state plagued by corruption to the flagship of democratisation and civil society development not only compared to South Caucasus neighbours (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014), but also the whole post-Soviet space. Western leaders often painted Georgia as a friend and ally in this tumultuous region. Although the country went through hardships of multiple transitions (Fairbanks and Gugushvili 2013) and difficult institution building, it has been often acknowledged that civil society played an active in Georgia even under early years of the post-transition authoritarian rule (Broers 2005) and without such active and engaged civil sector, current success in democratisation would not be possible.
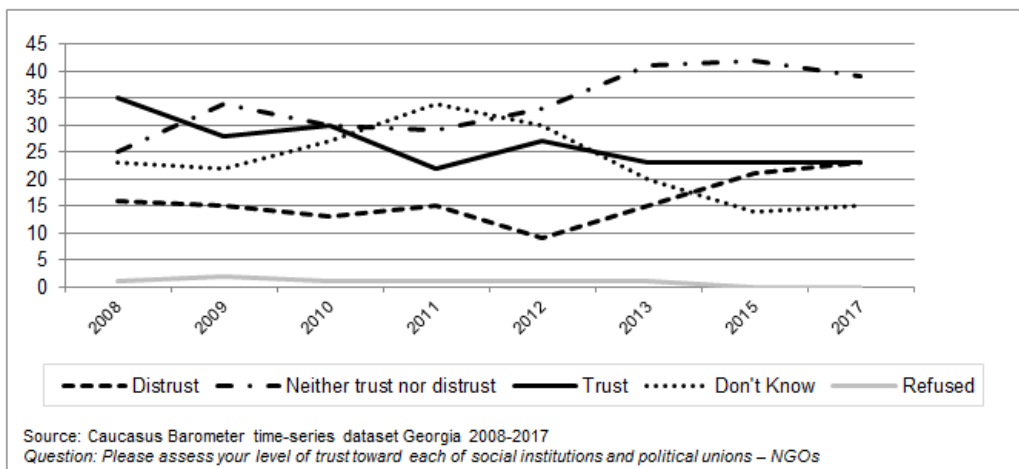
Figure 4.6: Trust toward organisation in Georgia 2008-2017
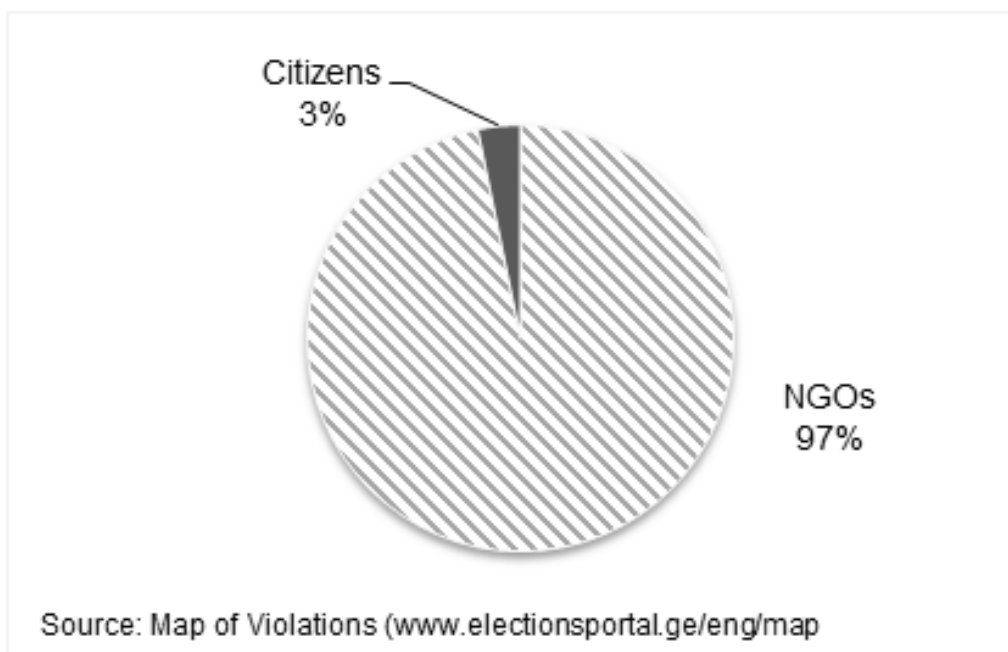
Figure 4.7: Georgia: All Reported Violations (2012-2016)

4.4 Resources of Georgian Election Monitoring Organisations

Activists in Georgia acknowledged the strong dependency of local NGOs on foreign donors: 'if there is no money, there is no mission' or 'if we get enough money, we can cover other issues'. Election monitoring in Georgia was always supported by the EU and USA (see figure 4.8), but the flow of foreign was not always equal:

> The turning point was 2011, when the donor organisations realised that civil society is dying and it needs support, so more money started coming to Georgia in order to strengthen civil society organisations. This was also a reason why the 2012 elections were much better. And, of course, Ivanishvili appeared on the political scene at the end of 2011. This also played its role because in the previous years opposition did not have enough finances

Donor dependency is not necessarily viewed as a negative thing by the Georgian activists: they agree that as service providers should get resources for their work, but these resources are not available from the domestic sources. Moreover, if they start receiving financial resources from local political actors, they become dependent on them and cannot be considered as impartial any more. Hence, foreign funding is viewed as a guarantee of their independence from the *domestic political interests*. NGO representatives also stress that foreign donors do not tell them 'what to observe and how'. If the application for funding is supported, organisation are free to establish priorities and use their own methodology.

Figure 4.8: Funding of Election Monitoring in Georgia: Network of Donors
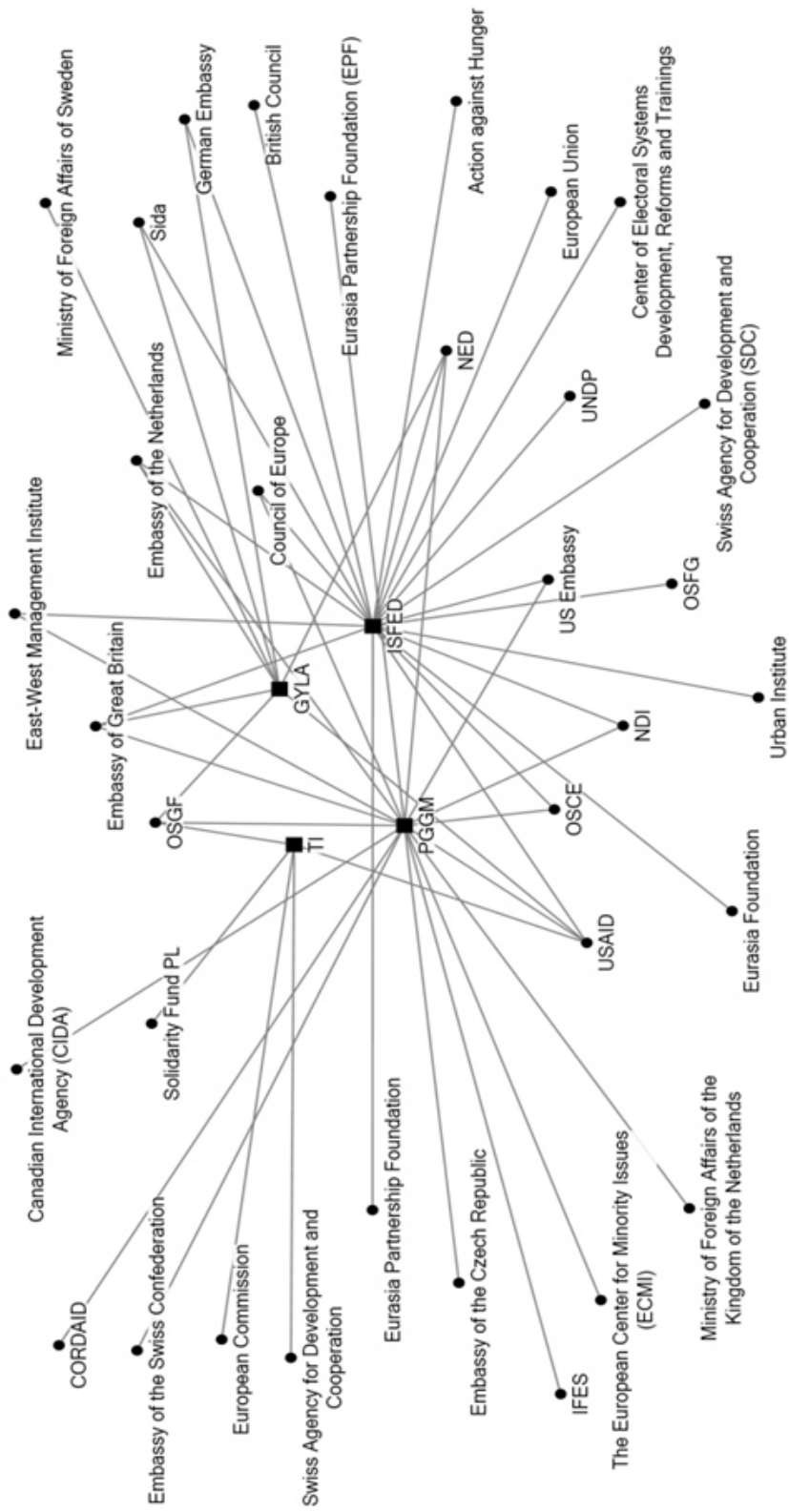
Source: ISFED, TI Georgia, GYLA, PMMG Final Reports (2008-2016)

Furthermore, powerful donors, such as foreign embassies also play an important role in pressuring Georgian government to conduct clean elections and abstain from electoral manipulations. Data from the interviews suggest that influence of the local monitoring on the Georgian government is indirect:

> *What is important, we have very good relationships with donors, international organisations and influential foreign embassies. They have a huge impact on the decisions of the government and of course the government understands that if something goes wrong, we go to the US Embassy and they will tell our government: 'Don't do it!'*

TI Georgia representative also recalls that the growth of the organisation started from 2011 when new executive director joined TI. The main reason for the NGO's growth was more financing and new projects added to its activities. TI Georgia had to hire more employees to implement these new activities (from the interview with L.Natroshvili). Data on funding of TI projects confirms this observation, nonetheless shows that low levels of funding fall on the years when less contentious elections took place (see figure 4.9 and 4.10).

Similarly, ISFED strongly relies on the foreign aid to support its projects. At the same time, election monitoring is much less covered by the external funding compared to the 'good governance' projects (figure 4.11 - 4.12). Some interviewees claimed that electoral observation is one of the least funded aspects of civil society in Georgia: funding dropped after 2008 elections. Similarly, Mitchell (2006) mentions that foreign donors distributed financial aid directly to the government rather than to civil society as a sign of trust in Saakashvili's democratic intentions. Consequently, decrease in funding lead to more competition between monitoring organisations and decrease in cooperation between organisations.
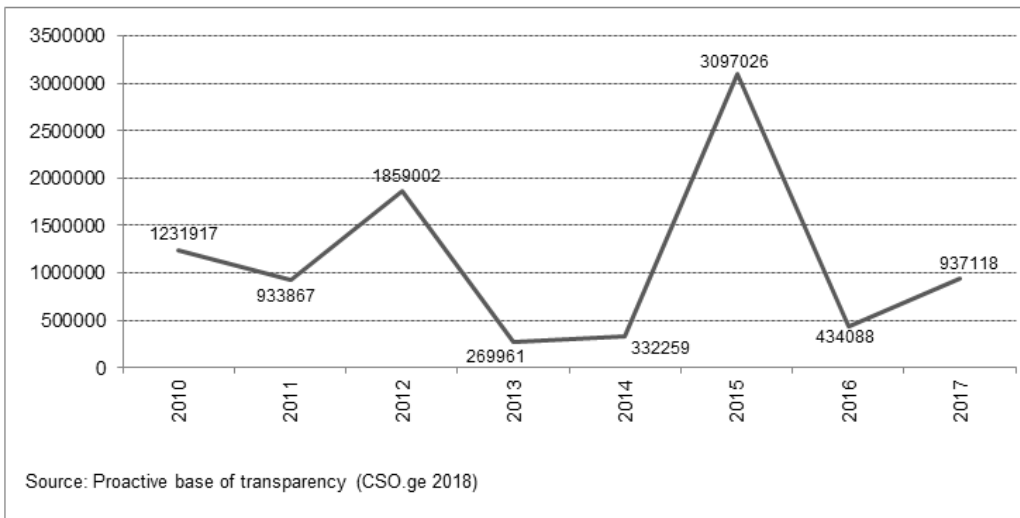
Figure 4.9: TI Georgia Grants by Foreign Donors (2010 – 2017)
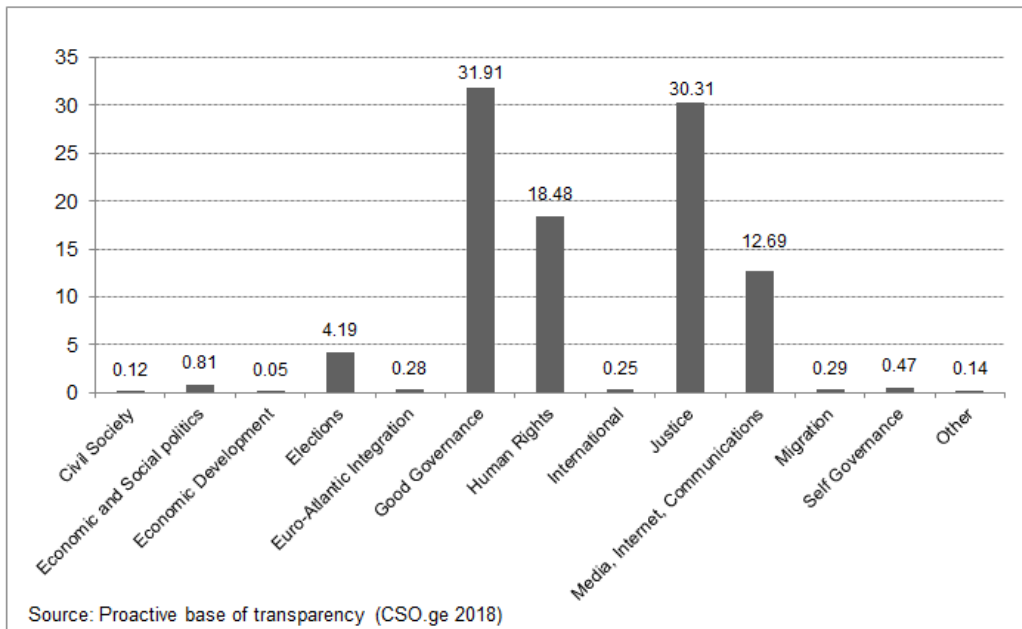
Figure 4.10: TI Georgia Project Budget 2016

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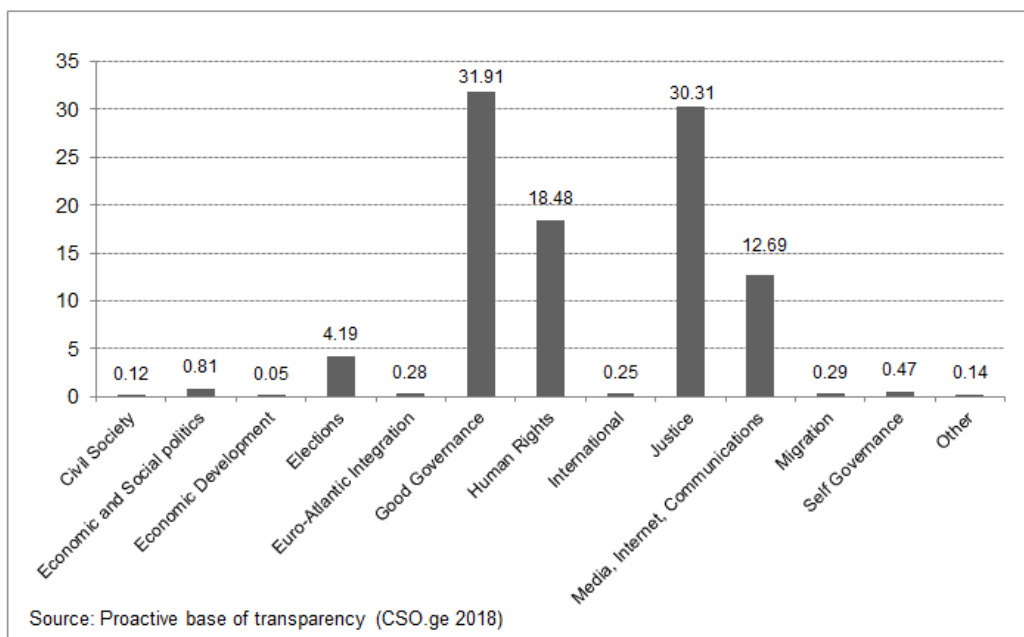
Figure 4.11: ISFED Projects Funding 2007-2018
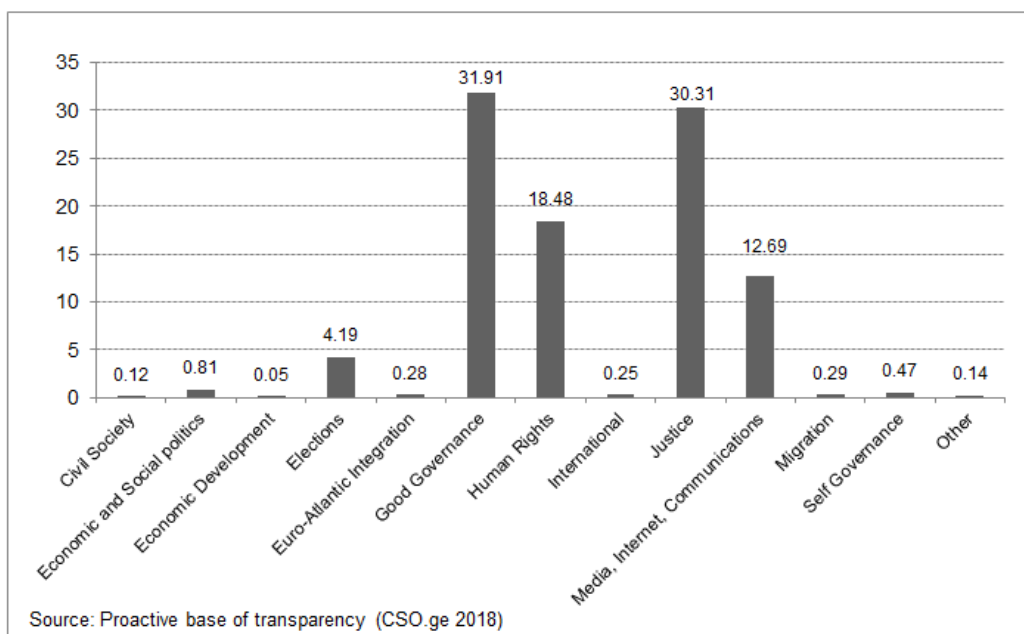
Figure 4.12: ISFED Budget Allocation 2007-2018

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4.5 Strategies of Election Monitoring Organisations in Georgia

Strategies and structures of the monitoring organisations in Georgia often resemble each other. Strategic choices of monitoring organisations can be broadly divided into external (aimed at the political environment, or other organisations) and internal (aimed at the development of the organisation itself). Sections below discuss specific traits of the internal and external strategies developed by the observers in Georgia.

Table 4.9: Georgian Election Monitoring Organisations: Internal Methods

Method	Example from Georgian organisation
Hierarchical structure of organisation	Data collection and reports system
Professionalisation and high standards for observers	Training for LTOs and STOs, development of skills
Impartial and balanced reporting	Reports highlight positive and negative sides
Organisation specialisation	Each NGO covers specific aspect of electoral procedure (also related to labour division)

4.5.1 Internal Methods of Development of Georgian Election Monitoring Organisations

Methods of organisational development are aimed at building spotless reputation and presenting themselves as unbiased political actors not involved in political fight. Interviewees from all organisations stressed that reputation legitimises their conclusions about electoral process. Hence, internal methods of action are aimed at development of such public image and delivery of unbiased, expert knowledge on electoral performance or other projects.

1. Hierarchical structure of the organisations

Three largest national monitoring organisations in Georgia are organized as hierarchical organisations with the bottom-up system of reporting and information collection. Interviewees confirmed that the ISFED was created as a hierarchical organisation and this structure proved to be efficient in data collection and analysis (see figure 4.13). Such top-down configuration means that there are several levels of data collection and one centre of analysis of all collected information. This structure and mode of operations resembles similar watchdogs in Georgia and other post-Soviet countries. Hierarchical structure of organisations and systems of reports ensures that data from different regions collected by different observers can be compared and produce unbiased and trustworthy pictures.

At the same time, ISFED is membership-based with roughly 400 members who meet annually to make collective decisions on organisation's leadership and priorities. Once every three years the joined meeting of the ISFED participants elects nine members of the Board who in turn appoint the executive director. The director controls the activities of the organisation and development of the main strategic fields[14]. This indicates that ISFED attempts to have some bottom-up input and principles of rotation ensure that the organisation is up to date. Therefore members from all regions and offices influence ISFED's agenda and project development. Despite this sign of more internal democracy compared to similar organisations in the post-Soviet space, ISFED and other organisations use a top-down approach in organisation of electoral monitoring missions instructing observers and collecting their reports.

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[14]ISFED.History Available at the official website: `http://www.isfed.ge/main/about/history/eng/` (in English, access: 28. June 2017) Also in ISFED reports available at `http://www.gndem.org/sites/default/files/ISFED` (in English, access: 28.June 2017)
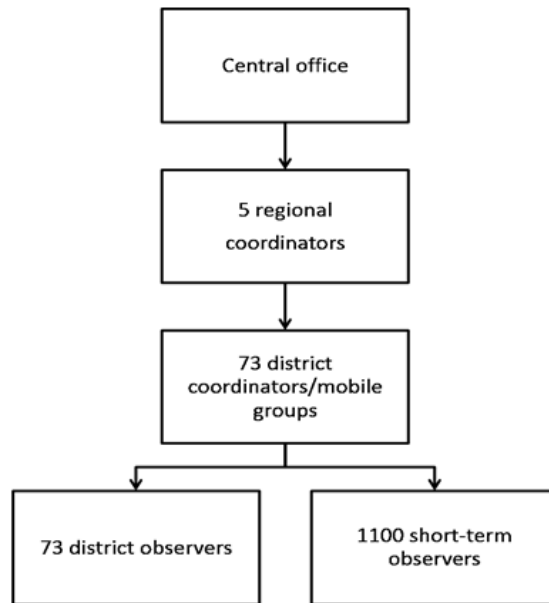
Figure 4.13: ISFED Structure of Monitoring Mission
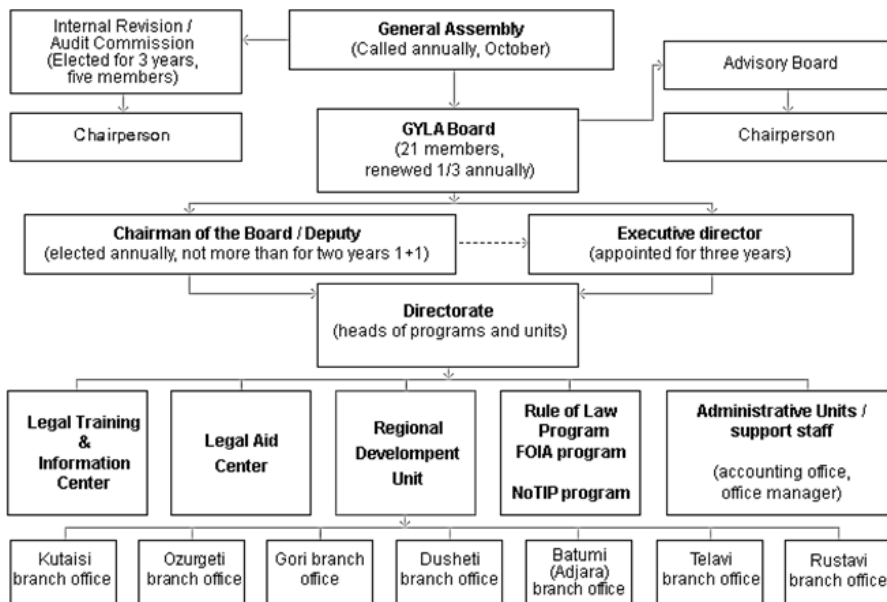
Figure 4.14: GYLA Structure of Monitoring Mission

Similarly, GYLA has hierarchical structure that helps data collection from the regions to the central office during monitoring campaigns. Although this association is based on the principles of rotation and elected executives, the backbone structure has several regional branches that are subordinate to the headquarters in Tbilisi (see figure 4.14).

Organisations usually start monitoring activities several months before the election day employing regionally-based long-term observers who control electoral campaign and observer behaviour of all electoral subjects. LTOs report to the central office of the election monitoring mission and analytics compile several interim reports during the pre-electoral period based on the reported information. On election day observers cover part of the precincts based on different selection criteria (e.g. representative sample, 'problematic' precincts, special precincts or certain geographical areas). During the election day observers are supported by mobile groups and call centres. Most of the organisation also monitor higher levels of electoral administration i.e. district election commissions and central election commission. During election day monitoring organisation hold several press-conferences to publicise performance of electoral subjects and keep citizens up to date with the electoral events. The monitoring mission usually finishes with a final report that is shared with domestic media outlets and foreign donors.

2. Professionalisation of the staff and high standards for observers

Permanent employees in all organisations have higher education and some of them are educated abroad; legal background is the most common among the election monitoring activists in Georgia. All organisations invest considerable resources in training programmes for the LTOs and STOs. Long-term observers are recruited from the district representatives and are often involved in the projects conducted by ISFED beyond electoral campaign, for example, assessment of legal

environment, development of changes in laws, assessment of policy implementations. As PMMG representative summarised: *'methodologically [election monitoring] is a high profile programme, for example, for the pre-election monitoring, you need special guys, you need special knowledge'*.

ISFED long-term observers are responsible for recruitment of the short-term observers in their regions *'because it is easier for them to find impartial observers in their places'* (interview with the ISFED coordinator N.Khitarishvili). For recruitment ISFED uses their personal networks or open calls and social media although the recruiting observers is not a problem for ISFED and they have their own network of experienced monitors, activists mentioned that they prefer to rotate observers to keep them motivated and bring representatives of different generations with different experience together (interview with the ISFED coordinator N.Khitarishvili).

Observers are obliged to take part in training programmes before every campaign, no matter how experienced they are. These programmes are aimed at ensuring high standards of monitoring and uniformity of results. Monitoring elections always requires quick reaction and clear distinction between actions that are aimed at electoral rigging or performed without any malicious intent. Observers' training are aimed at teaching the LTOs and STOs of the 'correct' interpretation of events adopted by the certain organisation.

Observers confirmed that they have no difficulties in recruiting LTOs and STOs to control different stages of elections. In fact, work for the leading election monitoring organisations is considered to be a prestigious start of a career. TI members proudly stated that being an elections observation is very popular among young people, so they never experience issues with finding volunteers for their projects. For example, for the 2016 parliamentary elections TI Georgia has

received three times more applications than required. Such high levels of competition even for short term positions indicates that in Georgia being involved with the organisation is prestigious and improves further career chances. Obviously, this competition might also indicate the high levels of unemployment in Georgia, particularly among younger generations, but this does not explain interest in short term on election day monitoring. At the same time, such short-term contracts that cover only travel and phone expenses cannot attract those who look for a permanent and stable income. Training offered to the observers can also explain why election monitoring might be attractive for the young citizens: they get an opportunity to learn certain aspects of the local legal system and improve their resumes and employment opportunities. Even if they are not being hired by one of the major organisation, involvement in electoral monitoring missions with important civil society actors is always a positive aspect of the job experience (TI Georgia, G.Chikhladze).

Given high competition for the election monitoring positions, requirements to the professional level, experience and code of conduct are quite high even in case of short term observers. It also requires high levels of work ethics: if observers breach the code of conduct, they will never be invited to work with election monitoring missions again. For example, GYLA excludes from any work those members who were supportive towards some political actors.

3. Impartial and balanced reporting

Unbiased and neutral reporting is one of the basic strategies that observers use to encourage policy-makers to pursue further reforms or give their feedback on positive changes. The balanced reporting has been stressed by the interviewees several times: for example, *'we collect information from each part involved in the conflict and present the situation as it was'* (T. Bartaia, ISFED). Observers

suggest that this strategy has been efficient and political parties reference monitoring reports when information can benefit them:

> *Political parties observe our monitoring reports and they use them as a [reference point] how we assess the situation, what we say. Sometimes they refer to it, I remember one case on TV the political party mentioned: "Even ISFED proves that!" So, they use it if it is beneficial for them.*

Very often observers compared earlier and more recent election campaigns and pointed at the improvements of election quality. Reports produced by the observers that provide a comprehensive assessment of elections often stress the positive developments that took place since previous elections. Observers often mention the governmental agencies that were opened to cooperation with the civil society representatives and helped to improve the electoral context.

4. Specialisation of Organisations

Each organisation focuses on the specific aspect of the electoral process as well as other aspects of political processes in Georgia. This method is closely related to the labour division supported by the organisations (this external strategy is explained below). The general profile of each organisation defines aspects on which each NGO focuses its election monitoring activities, e.g. TI Georgia has an anti-corruption focus and specialises in pre-electoral fraud and political finances. In turn, GYLA as an association of lawyers follows legal disputes related to the elections that can last long time after the campaign is over. Specialisation of monitoring organisations defines their methodology and funding applications.

Table 4.10: Georgian Monitoring Organisations: External Strategies

Method	Example from Georgian organisation
Involvement in political process	Observers have right to complain and appeal to the EMBs and other state structures
Dialogue between organisation and state agencies	IATF regularly submits responses to the claims on electoral malpractice reported by the organisation
Advocacy of election laws changes	Campaigns conducted by single organisation and coalitions including change of electoral system from mixed to proportional representation (successful)
Cooperation with domestic organisation	No official coalition, but joined statements produced by major organisations; shared media centre during elections
Labour division between domestic NGOs	Monitoring organisations develop very clear specialization and monitoring focus.
Promotion of changes in values and culture	Educational programmes, projects to teach critical thinking, introduction of democratic values
International coalition building and Expertise sharing	International coalitions: ISFED is a membership of ENEMO, EPDE; TI belongs to the network of other TI chapters; International and domestic conferences and workshops for similar organisations in the post-Soviet region
Legitimacy through the international laws	International documents as a source of legitimacy of their evaluations
'Preventive reporting'	Publicising results of elections based on PVT before the official announcement. Earlier also turnout (PTT)

External Strategies of Georgian Election Monitoring Organisations

Monitoring organisations developed a range of external strategies that strongly rely on cooperative with other actors. According to the law, Georgian monitoring organisations are not just spectators, but can be actively involved in the election process. This regulation defines strategies used by the activists and transactional activism in Georgia that relies on cooperation with the state actors rather than organisation. At the same time, monitoring organisations are involved in the networks of international cooperation and communication that help obtaining funding and work as channels of skills and expertise sharing.

1. Involvement in the electoral process

The Georgian electoral rules treat observers as a part of the electoral process and allows direct participation i.e. if any violation has been disclosed by the observers they can submit a complaint on behalf of their organisation. This feature of Georgian electoral process has been widely debated not only by politicians, but by the representatives of the organisation themselves. It is worth noting that the right of observers to take such an active part in the electoral process is not approved by all organisation. On the one hand, organisations such as GYLA use complaints as the main tool to combat electoral misconduct. As stressed by GYLA coordinator, organisation does not make writing this the ultimate goal:

> *And also we want somehow to change the practice and it means that we consider that through our complaints we eliminate violations and we prevent these violations. Everyone knows that if there is GYLA's observer and if something is wrong, he or she will definitely write a complaint. Not because it is our aim to file hundred complaints, but our desire is to let everyone know that they should obey the law.*

On the other hand, organisations with a softer and more cooperative approach prefer not to get involved in the electoral process and rarely use their legal right to submit complaints. According to the view of the CDD director Ketevan Chachave, organisation should not interfere in the process because there are other actors (e.g. police and prosecutors) who 'have to do their job properly'. Nonetheless, complaints writing and deep involvement in the electoral process on all stages is one of the main strategies of Georgian monitoring organisation. Despite such active involvement, observers in Georgia would like to appear as impartial actors 'above the political fight'. Reports and statements by the organisation are often considered by 'other actors who pay attention to how we assess the situation and we have this experience of being impartial and neutral and assess the situation as it was' (ISFED, T.Bartaia).

2. Dialog between organisation and State Officials

Cooperative relationships with the state agencies belong to the most important strategies used by organisation and main feature of transactional activism in Georgia. Such cooperation might be explained by two important factors: firstly, civil society activists often move between the positions in organisation and in the state administration and government. Secondly, by law election observers are acknowledged to be an integral part of the electoral process possessing the right to file complaints and participate in court hearings.

To improve the quality of elections, there has been created an Inter-Agency Task Force on Free and Fair Elections (IATF) that consists of the representatives of several state bodies that are involved in the electoral process. All interviewees have mentioned the IATF as a positive development in the relationships between domestic organisation and the state, particularly the responses that IAFT compiles regarding the violations reported by the organisations. The first time the

IATF responded to the organisation' claims was after the May 2010 elections of local authorities. In turn, ISFED, GYLA and TI Georgia welcomed such a response to their efforts from the state bodies and compiled a joint statement to review the government's answers. This statement not only presented the views of the organisation but also directly quoted the IATF's statements initiating a discussion between state and non-state actors. This is a vivid example of dialog between the state bodies and local watchdogs on the topic of electoral violations. Although the opening of the dialogue does not meant that all malpractice is addressed, such responses from the state officials indicate that they pay attention to the NGOs and take them almost as equal actors in the electoral process showing, at least on paper, their intentions to improve the situation with elections. Georgia is the only country out of three investigated cases where such dialogue between state officials and organisation could be traced.

Apart from the written dialogue between election monitoring organisations and state bodies, some activists stress that they deliberately try to develop and support the cooperative nature of relationships between various stakeholders and civil society. For example, when CDD director Ketevan Chachva talks about cooperation with the political parties, she mentions several times that political actors *'know that we are there to assist them and not to criticise them'*.

Finally, some activists mention that close informal ties between their employees and some state agencies. Although career 'upgrade' from organisation to the state agencies is a relatively normal path for the activists in Georgia, the opposite can also happen. Some organisations hire former state employees, other organisations are established by those who used to work for the high state officials[15]. These links are often used to help organisation to access non-public

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[15] These details were obtained during the off-the-record conversations with one of the organisation leading employee who specifically asked to use this information without disclosing their name and NGO affiliation.

information (e.g. planned budget spending) or to push for changes in electoral laws.

3. Advocacy of election laws changes

All organisations' representatives have described development of recommendations and advocating for legal changes as one of the main directions of their work. Success of such efforts depends not only on cooperation between NGOs, but also on political will. For example, GYLA coordinator described different outcomes of the advocacy campaigns:

> We had good cooperation in 2013 because many of our recommendations were accepted, and in 2012 only two of our recommendations were considered, but after the huge struggle. In 2013 the government changed and the new government had a political will, so they took [recommendations] into consideration. Mainly, if it comes to their interest, coincides with their political will, they will take these recommendations, otherwise – no.

4. Cooperation with domestic organisation

Although the civil sector in Georgia is one of the most developed in the post-Soviet space, cooperation in election monitoring never took the form of any official coalition or umbrella movement. At the same time, organisation representatives unanimously agree that cooperation between main non-governmental organisations plays a crucial role in pushing reforms and changes in the Georgian society. Despite the lack of official union of watchdogs, leaders of all organisations claim that they have long-term experience of cooperation and often act together when lobbying and campaigning for certain legal changes. One of the ISFED representatives Nino Khitarishvili mentioned during the interview that co-

operation between organisation mainly occurs on the level of core teams and directors of these organisations during the pre-electoral period or in advocating legal changes after elections are over. When it comes to electoral monitoring, instead of uniting and agreeing on the division of funds from donors, each election monitoring organisation chooses a particular niche in which they work. Hence, lack of cooperation is usually explained by different methodologies of monitoring and focus on different aspects of the election campaign. For example, in case violations have been witnessed by several observers from different organisations, they usually try to collect evidence on their own and do not pass it between missions. Although all organisations pay a lot of attention to the pre-electoral phase, all of them issue separate reports and only create shared statements in case of some glaring violations by political actors. Even when organisations monitor similar aspects of the electoral process, their observers collect information separately and do not share evidence.

Some activists mentioned that cooperation occurs on the level of advocacy campaigns, but not on the level of election monitoring. Interestingly, organisations rarely mention each other in their final reports on the election monitoring, even when reports state some changes achieved through general effort of the domestic organisation. Cooperation is aimed at strengthening the voice of organisation and producing stronger impact on the domestic political actors and, if necessary, attracting attention of the influential foreign actors.

Generally, organisations' representatives confirmed that in Georgia cooperation between election monitoring NGOs is underdeveloped. For example, the CDD director explains: *"our domestic observers' organisations are not that great in uniting, we all have different methodologies and donors"*. These differences are put aside only under extreme conditions, for example, when violence breaks out on election day. She also notices that if organisation in Georgia had better

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cooperative skills, they would have achieved better results in advocating important changes. Low levels of cooperation can be also indirectly proved by high levels of overlap in topics addressed by organisation in their monitoring missions.

5. Labour division between organisation

Representatives of Georgian organisation stress that all civil society actors have different focus and work in their own niche. Georgian organisation admit that labour division between organisations is inspired by the donors, at the same time it requires development of specific expertise in the particular field. As characterized by the TI Georgia electoral monitoring programme manager Levan Natroshvili, the three largest organisations in Georgia involved in election monitoring, focus on different phases of electoral process: while TI Georgia historically focuses on the aspects of misuse of administrative resource and party financing (i.e. pre-electoral phase); the ISFED is an organisation aimed at election monitoring, so it observes all stages and particularly focuses on the election day; GYLA mostly focuses on electoral trials and disputes (post-electoral phase). It is worth noting that this labour division is not always coordinated by the organisations themselves, Natroshvili also mentions that *'donors coordinate and divide certain fields for certain organisations'*. Therefore, the electoral monitoring space is finely split between multiple organisations that observe each aspect of the electoral process.

Simultaneously, analysis of reports indicates that monitoring aspects often overlap in the activities of most of the organisations. The increased attention to specific topics might be explained by two non-mutually exclusive factors: firstly, organisation identify the most problematic areas in their country and focus their work on these topics; secondly, these projects are more likely to attract funding from foreign donors. Overlapping projects might strengthen the impact of the

organisations on policy-makers because of increased interest and control over some specific topic. At the same time, activists were very careful talking about overlapping spheres and stressed that even if a topic is the same, each organisation develops an individual approach to it or unique monitoring methodology. Such careful division of tasks can be related to the applications for funding and attempt to divide spheres in which each election monitoring organisation can develop its projects.

6. International coalition building and sharing of expertise

Representatives of the leading organisation reported their involvement in domestic and international coalitions that often help to share knowledge and information. International funding applications and information provision to the foreign donors to impact Georgian government remains the central aspect in the international cooperation introduced by the organisation. Simultaneously, most of the Georgian organisations belong to some professional networks of similar organisations abroad: ISFED is part of ENEMO and EPDE platforms that unite monitoring missions from various European countries. As participants of these networks, ISFED representatives take part in the conferences and seminars as well as monitoring missions in neighbouring states. Such international cooperation is important for sharing expertise and knowledge and development of skills necessary for the local monitoring organisation. TI Georgia is a part of the world-wide anti-corruption movement 'Transparency International' and GYLA cooperates with a similar organisation based in the USA.

Another aspect stressed in civil society literature is the importance of knowledge transfer from the Western donors to the organisation in the post-communist recipient states. Some scholars state that organisation in CEE became knowledge and skills donors themselves and are better equipped to assist organisation

from the same region due to similar experience of recent transition (Petrova 2014). In turn, Georgian organisations stressed that they are not only passive receivers, but also actively share their own experience. For example, TI Georgian representative confirmed that organisation in Georgia were the first ones to start monitoring party financing and developed methodology that could be suitable for the Eastern European political context. Since 2016 the 'Money and Politics' conference has taken place annually in Tbilisi with the support of international donors and local organizers.

> *TI was one of the first organisations that started monitoring party financing and misuse of administrative resources. There is an organisation IFES, they have good expertise in that and they started spreading it back in 2008 and they started with TI Georgia and many other TIs in other countries. I have been recently invited to Albania, they also start such monitoring... In case of TI-Moldova and TI-Ukraine we had some emails from them about these issues, we also worked with Promo-LEX. I was an expert and they brought some study about elections and I have contributed with Georgian experience. We also had some training together and conferences.*

> *(L.Natroshvilli, TI Georgia)*

Interviewees stressed that knowledge and skills do not flow any more in one direction from the West to East: in the past decades local organisation have accumulated enough experience to develop their projects and mainly require funding from the foreign donors rather than their knowledge. Sharing expertise with domestic and foreign counterparts seems to be one of the most important prerequisites for the building of cooperation networks.

7. Legitimacy through the international election standards

Although it has not been as obvious as in the case of Moldovan watch dogs, Georgian observers often quote and rely on the international standards of electoral quality. Observers base their work on the OECD/OSCE recommendations that, as stated by GYLA Coordinator, 'are very popular in our country and other organisations and parties rely on them'. Importantly, Georgian observers mention their direct connection with foreign donors rather than appeal towards international standards. Unlike in other countries, observers' reports from Georgia rarely mention international standards as a point of reference, rather judge electoral integrity according to the domestic laws and standards. In turn, between elections, domestic observers advocate the improvement of national electoral laws based on the international standards and best practices.

8. 'Preventive Reporting'

This strategy means strategies that are used by electoral observers to report results of elections before the local electoral management body does so. One of the most wide spread strategies used by domestic observers is parallel vote tabulation or PVT. To conduct PVT electoral monitoring organisations select a representative sample of precincts and place observers on these precincts on election day. This sample allows collecting information on electoral results announced by the precincts commissions and relying on a statistically representative sample of precincts to make reliable projections of the overall electoral results (see for example, figure4.15).

Results from a smaller sample are calculated faster than across the country and electoral observers can announce the tentative results before the Central Electoral Commission. If official results are very different from those announced by the observers, this lays ground for suspicions and may result in recounts or

cancellations of results on some precincts. ISFED uses this technique since 2003 and for several campaigns it has also conducted parallel turnout tabulation (PTT) i.e. reported not only results, but also number of voters who came to the polling stations. Although later the PTT has been cancelled as it did not provide any additional information and *'was more a headache for our observers because they should count [voters entering precincts]. And we don't see the need of it because ...turnout is not manipulated. It used to be, but not any more'* (T. Bartaia, ISFED). After 2008 PTT was cancelled, but PVT is still conducted by ISFED to ensure correct reflection of electoral results. This example not only indicates the preventive measures employed by observers, but also how their strategies have been adjusted to the changes in political context.

Candidates	PVT Projection	Margin of Error	Range: Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Giorgi Margvelashvili	61.9%	0.7%	61.2%	62.6%
Davit Bakradze	21.8%	0.6%	21.2%	22.4%
Nino Burjanadze	10.2%	0.3%	9.9%	10.5%
Shalva Natelashvili	2.8%	0.1%	2.7%	3.0%
Giorgi Targamadze	1.1%	0.1%	1.0%	1.1%
Koba Davitashvili	0.7%	0.1%	0.6%	0.8%
All other candidates	1.5%	(varies)	(varies)	(varies)

Source: ISFED (2013) News Section 28.10.2013 'PVT Projections'

Figure 4.15: ISFED PVT Results: 2013 Presidential Elections (top 6 candidates)

9. Promoting changes of values and culture in local societies

Organisations representatives present themselves not only as local watch-dogs only visible during elections, but also as actors who play an important role in the society as promoters of changes in values and attitudes towards democracy. Between elections they conduct various seminars, workshops, conferences and other educational activities for the state employees and citizens of Georgia.

Such events are usually aimed at promoting democratic values, improvement of participation and citizens' involvement in government, improvement of the legal culture and respect towards laws as well as sharing information about Georgia's Western partners such as the European Union. The impact of such programmes is difficult to assess. Some organisations are more critical against the Georgian society: their representatives stress low levels of trust towards the organisation among the broader population. Other activists stress that their impact is through support of democratic institutions, alliance with the EU and NATO expressed by the citizens. In the past decade more than 50% of Georgian population preferred democracy according to the recent opinion polls, although this number has dropped in recent years.
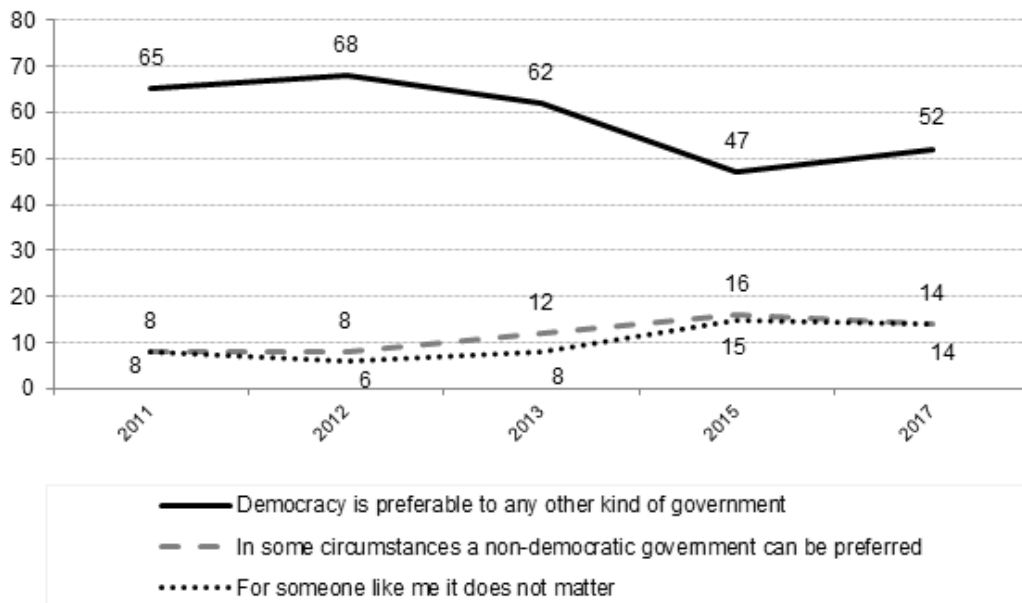
Source:Caucasus Barometer (2018): Time-series dataset Georgia
Question: Which of these three statements is closest to your opinion?

Figure 4.16: Attitudes Towards Democracy in Georgia)

4.6   Monitoring Elections in Georgia: A Short Conclusion

As Broers (2005, 340) found out, Georgian organisation had to become political and align with the opposition during the Rose Revolution in 2003 because staying neutral 'was considered by some leading representatives of civic groups as an inadequate response to the state's attempts to reduce political space available for civil society activity'. Being one of the strongest actors in the pro-democratic movement in Georgia, watchdog organisation perform not only election monitoring activities, but are deeply involved in policy making, advocacy and monitoring of other political processes on the national and regional level. Election monitoring organisations belong to the elite of civil society in Georgia and represent a good example of transactional activism in the post-Soviet region. Their external strategies rely on cooperation the state and foreign actors. At the same time, cooperation between domestic NGOs is not well developed and relies on loose ad hoc issue coalitions. In turn, some activists suggested that 'more cooperation is needed' as it cant help combating negative development such as slow reforms implementation, use of administrative resources during elections and fake observation.

Analysis of the Georgian political context and resources nexus shows that the former is more instrumental for the development of transactional activism among organisation. Organisations established communication with state representatives, particularly since 2012 change in governing coalition and take part in a number of working groups and committees that work on the improvement of the electoral laws. Simultaneously, a certain consensus on the importance of election quality has emerged, particularly after 2012. Although incumbents make

attempts to skew the playing field, they use half-legal and very subtle methods to take advantage of their position in power and never apply direct methods of manipulation. In turn, presence of election observers in 2013-2016 became less a disciplining measure and more a part of electoral ritual.

Open legal and political environment has two important negative implications. Firstly, the big number of election monitoring missions increases competition between them and decreases levels of cooperation between organisation who struggle for the same funding opportunities. Secondly, the number of election monitoring groups has grown dramatically in recent years (see table 4.8), particularly the number of partisan groups with questionable democratic intentions and close links to political parties. Georgian organisation confirm that voices from the 'good' and independent organisations often get lost in the noise and they are not heard by policy makers or by the Georgian citizens. Although election monitoring became an integral part of the electoral process in Georgia for several decades, it is losing its strength and importance with less funds going from the foreign donors and increased competition in the civil society sector.

Resources are rather limited for the local organisation and no viable alternatives to the foreign funding exist. All election monitoring organisations complain that funding available for their mission is decreasing and election observation is 'one of the least funded areas of NGO activity in Georgia' (K. Chachava, CDD). Limited resources and open political context leads to the development of strategies that heavily rely on cooperation with the state bodies and other direct non-contentious activities. Furthermore, local observers often talk that organisation have to 'teach Georgians democracy'; they see their role in provision of information and skills, rather than just publicising misconduct. These efforts also attempt to increase trust in organisation and engagement of citizens as they still remain low in Georgia despite higher levels of democratisation (Paturyan and

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Gevorgyan 2014, 257).

From the interviews it became clear that organisations portraying themselves as not involved in the politics, although this neutrality is a part of their ideology, rather than the matter of fact. One of the most important internal methods of work is reliance on the professional highly educated employees. Due to the high job competition, election monitoring organisation can conduct rigorous selection among employees and impose strict code of conduct on the observers. In turn, activists stress that employment with the reputable organisation is a good career path and moreover, it increases chances of being employed with the public sector. Although moving from civil society to the state employment is the most attractive career path, some activists return to the organisation *'to work for the common good independently from politicians'* (interview with the PMMG representative).

The impact of election monitoring in Georgia on the quality of elections is hard to estimate. As acknowledged by the observers themselves, improvement of electoral quality in Georgia after the Rose Revolution is related to the political will of elites, rather than activities of civil society. At the same time, the indirect pressure of the electoral watchdogs (e.g. through foreign actors) can be a strong factor directing that political will of Georgian authorities. Observers actively share information on the quality of electoral and democratic processes with foreign actors, such as the EU. Georgian government is interested in having good reports related to its electoral performance that legitimise their rule in the eyes of foreign investors and political partners. Therefore, electoral manipulations became extremely subtle and almost came to none in the recent years. In turn, observers develop new methods of monitoring and areas that they can control and cover by their activities.

In general, transactional activism in Georgia is based on cooperation and

expertise is particularly important for the organisation that target such difficult issues as the electoral process. Undoubtedly, these issues require deep knowledge and understanding of the electoral process, legal system and international experience. Hence, Georgian organisation provide authorities with the important expert knowledge and contribute to the development of the electoral system through the direct involvement in policy-making or education of state employees and polling station employees. Finally, stronger civil society in Georgia seems to produce higher levels of institutional and social trust compared, at least compared to its autocratic neighbours, Azerbaijan and Armenia (Ishiyama, Mezvrishvili, and Zhgenti 2018). This trend has been partly recognized in the interviews with the NGO leaders, who claim to be a part of the educating and democratising force in Georgia for the Georgian citizens.

5 Electoral Monitoring in Captured State: Case of Moldova

The chapter explores election monitoring organisations that rely on transactional activism in Moldova. The main goal is to present the evolution of organisations and how their strategies are shaped by the political context and available resources. The chapter reconstructs paths of the NGOs' development between 2009 and 2016 taking into account political crisis and change in governing coalition in 2009 as reinstalled direct presidential elections in Moldova in 2016 as the focal points of political process in this country. It relies on the understanding of activists of these events and their own role in the political process and, particularly, in the improvement of election quality. The chapter starts with a short historical overview of social and economic development of Moldova and main characteristics of the local civil society. Next it introduces monitoring NGOs providing a short description of their work and focus of monitoring missions. In the following sections political context and resources are discussed as the main determinants of monitoring organisations development. The chapter summarises methods of internal development and external strategies of monitoring NGOs in Moldova. Concluding part discusses two important aspects: firstly, determinants of transactional activism and secondly, the roles of monitoring NGOs.

5.1 Historical and Socio-economic Development of Moldova after post-Soviet transition

Moldova is often characterised as the poorest state in Europe which national politics are strongly influenced by larger international actors who grant loans to the local government on the one hand and internal splits along ethnic and linguistic cleavages (Crowther 2013). The country is situated at political crossroads between Russia and the EU that polarises political discussions, especially on the eve of elections. This often manifests in complicated national and language identification of Moldovan population and divisive strategies of political actors.

Another limitation of Moldova's democratic progress and civil society development is the high degree of the 'state capture' i.e. 'extent to which government policy-making is unduly influenced by a narrow set of interest groups in the economy who provide private benefits to politicians' (EBRD 1999, 117). This phenomenon has serious implications for domestic politics, shaping the political context in which civil society operates and defines the electoral process. For example, as of 2017-2018 the key political figures of the Republic of Moldova also are involved in business that results in prioritising their own interests rather than tackling key society's issues. In turn, this has a negative impact on trust that citizens put in their elected leaders as well as elections themselves. Moreover, Moldova's politics and civil society development are heavily influenced by a protracted territorial conflict and de facto independence of the Transnistrian region infamous for human rights violations and difficulties its residents face when trying to express their political preferences. Civil society operations remained difficult in this region throughout the whole period and NGOs from the 'mainland'

Moldova were mostly not allowed to operate in Transnistria (for further details see USAID CSO Sustainability Reports 2010, 2012, 2016). At the same time, this topic attracts the attention of the international community and many NGOs have programmes that focus on the issues related to Transnistria. The lack of central government's control over the territories to the right side of Nistru River makes it impossible to conduct electoral campaigns and establish polling stations in the region as well as conduct any election monitoring in that territory.

Societal divisions and non-democratic legacies are reinforced by poor economic performance; more than a half of the country's three million citizens still live in rural communities (see table 8 in Appendix C). Previous studies on the relationship between economic performance and quality of elections have convincingly argued that economic vulnerability of the population makes it easier to perform such electoral violations such as votes buying or administrative pressure on public employees (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004). Furthermore, poverty and high unemployment rates force young and active people to seek better opportunities abroad while a disproportionately large amount of children and elderly remain in the country. According to the official statistics, about 10% of the population work abroad[1]. The objective and systematic data is hard to obtain because many workers take illegal jobs abroad without proper documents and not being registered as working abroad., while alternative estimations showed that 'number of Moldovan voters living abroad sums up to 20% of the total number of voters' (LADOM 2009, 3); the share that has barely decreased over time. Remittances from legal and illegal workers often keep Moldovan economy afloat and help to survive many Moldovan families, especially those residing in

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[1]This information is taken from the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova in 2017, although alternative estimations suggest that the share of population working abroad might be as high as 30% in 2010-2012 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2012 — Moldova Country Report. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012) and up to 15-20% in 2016 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2018 Country Report- Moldova. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018)

rural areas. Undoubtedly, these factors have deep influence on political processes in Moldova, including elections and context in which NGOs operate. Some researchers claim that this disproportion contributes to the conservative electoral choice of the population who remain in Moldova and long lasting domination of Communist Party (PCRM) in government, while pro-democratic and liberal forces remained weak for a long time (March 2006). Simultaneously, migration of young and highly educated population abroad drains civil society from important human resources, leaving it underdeveloped and weak.

In general, civil society in Moldova has received limited scholarly attention predominantly focused on the issues related to the conflict in breakaway Transnistria region and human rights violations or in relation with the short-lived protests against rigged 2009 Parliamentary elections (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu 2009). Studies generally conclude that civil society in Moldova is weak due to the number of factors, such as the lack of economic foundations and small middle class, weak rule of law, low level of trust among citizens and public trust in governmental authorities, judicial system and NGOs and other factors that are restrictive for the civil society development in Moldova (Tirdea and Chobanu 2018). McDonagh (2008) concludes that Moldavian elites respond better to the incentive-based rather than socialisation democracy promotion strategies. Hence, cooperation with local civil society that is central for the socialization into the European norms does not play decisive in promoting democracy in Moldova. Similarly, Lupu (2010) suggests that the EU could influence Moldova's domestic politics through the mechanisms of the conditionality related to the macroeconomic assistance that was necessary for the country's survival. In turn, the place and role of civil society in this macroeconomic game is rather unclear.

Varieties of Democracy data shows three clear periods in the civil society development in Moldova: since independence to late 1990s levels of civil society

repression were moderate, civil society was not significantly controlled by the government and at the same voices of NGOs were heard to a certain degree. During the Communist Party rule (2001-2009) civil society was substantially repressed and explicitly controlled by the government, while any consultations between authorities and NGOs almost disappeared. After the democratic forces came to power levels of repression and control decreased substantially, while consultations appeared again. After 2012 this trend was reversed when incumbents from pro-democratic camp managed to consolidate power. USAID CSO Sustainability Index criticises Moldovan NGOs for low levels of organisation development, management skills and lack of strategic planning explaining it with the lack of long-term funding. Most of the Moldovan NGOs depend on the foreign financial aid that supports their operation, although recently a '2 Percent Law' was introduced that allowed Moldovan citizens to designate part of their income tax to a civil society organisation of their choice. As USAID Report notes, Moldovan NGOs 'increased their constituency building efforts' and improved links with individuals to be able to benefit from these donations (USAID 2017, 160).

Overall, Moldovan NGOs seek more funding from domestic donors although remain dependent on the foreign funding. In turn, some positive changes have been noticed in the development of legal basis for the CSO operation as well as cooperation with the government since 2009. Despite the lack of mutual trust between civil society and state actors (Emerson and Cenusa 2018), studies note that the legal environment has been improved since 2009, there are no legal impediments of NGOs registration or functioning throughout the country aside from Transnistrian region (USAID 2017, 161).

VDem: CSO Repression: 0-4; Entry/Exit: 0-4; Consultation: 0-2
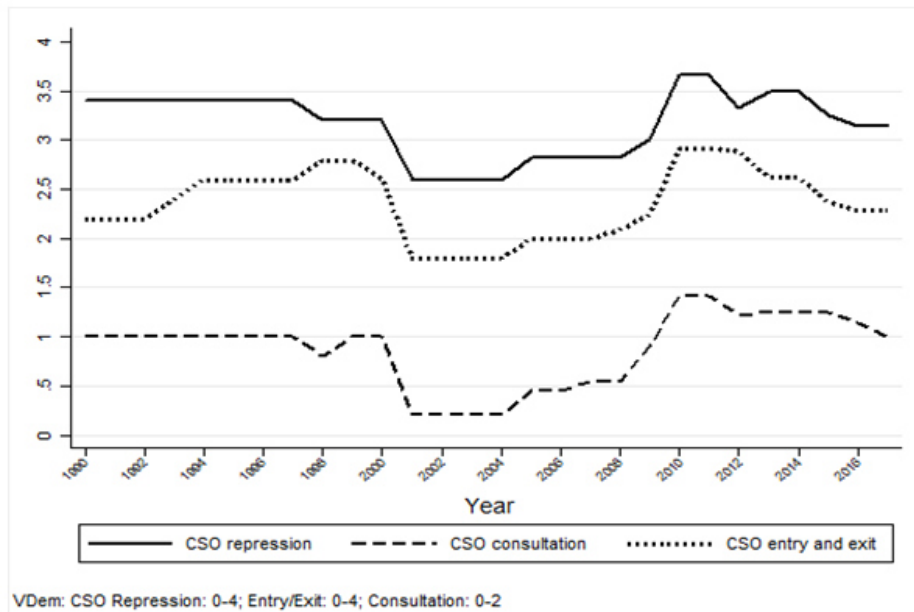
Source: "V-Dem Country-Year Dataset v8", Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project

Figure 5.1: V-Dem 8: CSO Entry/Exit, Repression and CSO Participatory Environment in Moldova

CSO Sustainability Index 2018 (USAID and FHI 360 2019); From 1 (most developed) to 7 (most challenged)
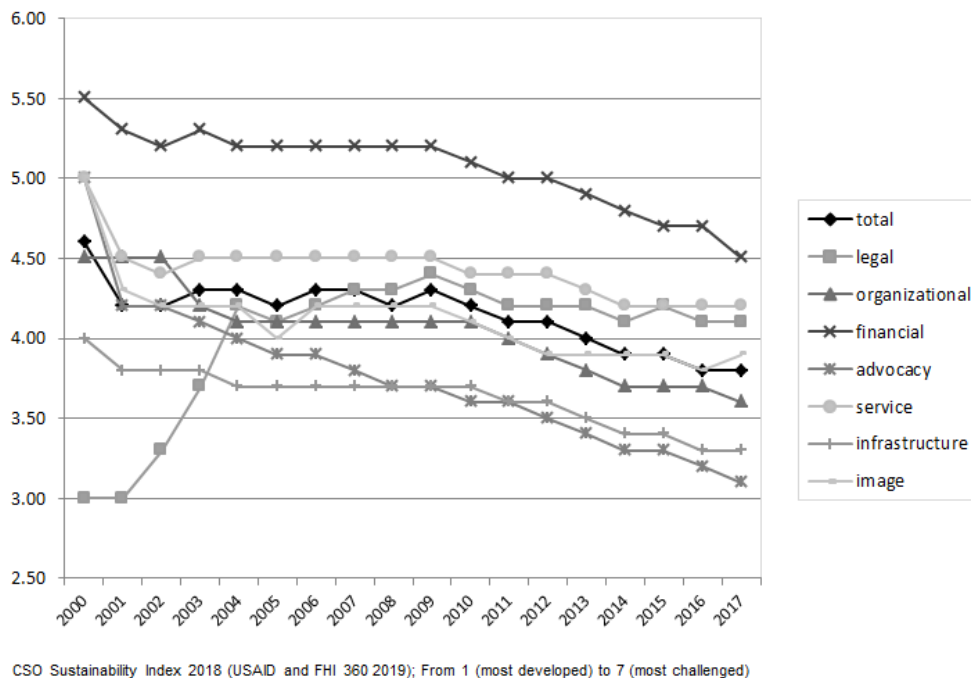
Figure 5.2: USAID CSO Sustainability: Moldova 2000-2017

Although interviews with the election monitoring organisations have confirmed limitations of political context, non-participatory culture of the Moldovan society and strong donor dependence of local monitoring organisations, they also pointed at the fact that civil society actors are fully aware of these limitations and attempt to work and circumvent this restrictive environment. Despite limited political space and resources, local activists have developed strategies that help them to achieve goals related to the improvement of election quality. Working on this topic they rely on non-contentious transactional activism based on cooperation. The chapter starts with a brief description of organisations involved in election monitoring and traces their development, activities and perceptions of political context starting from 2009 political crisis and finishing with the 'unexpected' presidential elections in 2016. While each section focuses on the development of these NGOs during each electoral campaign, the concluding remarks review the context development and outcomes of election monitoring efforts. Next, resources of monitoring organisations in Moldova are investigated. This section also investigates internal development and external strategies employed by the monitoring NGOs. Chapter concludes with the discussion of the development of transactional activism in Moldova and its specific characteristics.

5.1.1 Election monitoring Organisations in Moldova in 2009-2016: a brief description

Civil society attributes a lot of attention and importance to the task of election monitoring in Moldova. Elections are observed by several reputable NGOs with the national coverage united under the auspices of the Coalition for Free and Fair elections 'Coalitia 2009' that also includes a number of local NGOs, clubs, grass roots associations. Development of Coalitia 2009 is discussed in greater

detail further in the chapter, but it is worth noting that all organisations that perform electoral monitoring are founding members and governing board of this pro-democratic movement as well as its main driving force. Electoral monitoring network in Moldova consists of one 'central' organisation that focuses on the monitoring of all stages of the electoral process from the start of political campaign to the announcement of results. Other organisations observe certain aspects of electoral campaign, e.g. gender balance or media performance. Each organisation involved in the movement for free and fair elections in Moldova are briefly introduced below.

As of April 2009 **League for Defence of Human Rights of Moldova (LADOM)** was the only nation-wide electoral monitoring organisation in Moldova. LADOM, initiated its monitoring campaign as early as October 2008. Such a long period of pre-electoral monitoring can be explained by the necessity to control activities of political parties, public authorities and CEC long before the official start of the pre-electoral campaign. Since the beginning of monitoring, LADOM issued at least five interim reports summarizing main features of the pre-electoral period and behaviour of various actors. The pre-electoral period and political campaign was monitored by 37 long-term observers (there are 37 regions in Moldova in total; hence, LADOM has probably employed one long-term observer per district). On the election day on the 5th of April, LADOM employed 2000 short-term observers covering all electoral precincts in the country. Despite the fact that two members of Coalition-2009 were organisations devoted to media issues, LADOM conducted its own media monitoring activities, although conclusions reached by all organisations were similar. Elections in July 2009 were also monitored by LADOM's mission that included '4 regional coordinators, 62 long-term observers and 1579 short-term observers placed in the localities of all rayons (districts) of the republic' (Ladom Second Interim Report 2009, p.2). The increased number

of long-term observers may indicate the importance of the inter-electoral period and tense political situation that ought to be closely monitored.

In 2009 LADOM observed elections for the last time and after that the mission stopped any election monitoring activities. Representatives of other organisations mentioned that LADOM might have been a victim of the pressure from the state after the April 2009 parliamentary elections. As explained by one of the Coalitia 2009 representatives, LADOM presented a different view on the quality of electoral process: *'I am not sure what has happened there, but Coalitia 2009 has agreed on one conclusion, and after a day, LADOM voiced another'* (N.Panfil, Promo-LEX). Despite the agreed estimation of elections as 'incorrect and partly free'[2], LADOM presented a more positive estimation which was a direct violation of Coalitia-2009 regulations. After the July 2009 campaign LADOM stepped down from all monitoring activity and is not involved in the Coalitia-2009 anymore. As of 2017 it was not possible to find any witnesses of those events or any traces of LADOM activities.

In April 2009 **Promo-LEX Association** observed elections for the first time, focusing attention of its mission on the Transnistrian region. Established in 2002, Promo-LEX employed professional lawyers to promote and ensure observation of human rights in Moldova and had often drawn attention to the Transnistrian region, where the situation was particularly arduous. By 2009 these organisations have successfully represented several cases in European Court of Justice and gained a reputation as an impartial and professional organisation both at home and abroad (from the interview with C.Turuta, Promo-LEX Coordinator). Except traditional focus on Transnistria and election monitoring, Promo-LEX gradually develops other projects related to the issues of human rights, citizens'

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[2]Coalitia-2009 website Press Communication 01.05.2009 'Elections Incorrect and Partly Free' Available at http://alegeliber.md/en/alegeriincorecte-34.html (access 10 October 2017)

participation and good governance. For example, Promo-LEX conducted multiple educational campaigns for the citizens, particularly young people to explain the importance of elections and voting. All projects and campaigns of Promo-LEX are realised in the framework of the 'Human Rights Monitoring' or 'Monitoring Democratic Processes' programmes that are closely linked to each other.

The 'Human Rights Monitoring' was initiated earlier and has always paid special attention to the observation of human rights in Transnistria and in Moldova in general through such tools as strategic litigation, lobbying of legal norms, public discussions and promotion of dialogue between civil society and state actors. The main purpose of this programme is development of awareness and promotion of the international standards and enforcement of national legislation and policies that protect the observance of human rights in Moldova. Activity reports also indicate that since 2008 Promo-LEX acts as a linking node between civil society actors and various donors. Being a well-established and reputable organisation, it creates opportunities to develop civil society in Moldova. For example, a 2008 report on the Situation with NGOs in Transnistria shows that Promo-LEX arranged events linking potential donors with the local recipient NGOs through fairs, exhibitions and educational projects[3].

In 2011 Promo-LEX realised the separate 'Civil Society' Programme aimed at facilitation of the NGOs development in Transnistrian through study trips, re-granting services, forums, fairs and individual coaching [4]. Since 2014 Promo-LEX has joined a nation-wide campaign against domestic violence that addresses

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[3]ANALIZA SITUAȚIEI ONG DIN REGIUNEA TRANSNISTREANA RAPORT available at http://www.promolex.md/upload/publications/ro/doc_1233069906.pdf (access 12 March 2017)

[4]PROMO-LEX ASSOCIATION Activity Report - 2011, Chisinau 2012, available at https://promolex.md/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Raport-2011_eng_final-AR.pdf (access 26 March 2017)

this issue through educational events and art performances[5]. In April 2015 the organisation was accused of destabilising the situation in the Transnistria[6] and its activists were banned from entering the region (USAID 2017, 163). Despite these impediments, NGO continue monitoring the situation in the region.

Promo-LEX election monitoring missions have developed gradually. In April 2009, it deployed only a small mission of 14 observers who monitored pre-electoral situation and 10 precincts on election day where residents of Transnistria could cast their votes. The successful monitoring experience in April 2009 allowed Promo-LEX to continue its observation activities and even expand its mission covering all polling stations where Transnistrian voters could cast their ballots. After LADOM stopped all election monitoring activities, Promo-LEX took the available space and expanded its mission to the national level. Starting from 2010, it has conducted monitoring missions that covered all stages of the electoral process and all regions except the left bank of Nistru river.

Usually, election monitoring missions start several months before the election day and involve long-term and short-term observers who gather information and regularly fill out reports on electoral campaign events and contestants' activities. This information is collected by the regional coordinator who verifies only technical aspects of the report (if the observer filled out all required information) and forwards it to the analytical team. This ensures that all pieces of information are structured in a unified way and can be analysed and compared. Every monitoring effort results in several reports issued by Promo-LEX. These reports usually comprise all information on the electoral process that could be

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[5]Promo-LEX Campaign 'Violence-Free Family – Violence-Free Society!', October 13th, 2014; Promo-LEX Campaign 'Preventing Violence through Art', November 25th, 2015

[6]International Federation for Human Rights, Moldova: Judicial harassment by the Transnistrian Security Committee of Promo-LEX, FIDH member organisation, 22 April 2015, available at: `https://www.refworld.org/docid/555da77030.html` (accessed 30 December 2019)

verified and supported by some evidence. Promo-LEX stresses its hierarchical organisation and strict labour division inside of the organisation.

Table 5.1: Coverage of Precincts by Promo-LEX Observers

Elections	Pre-electoral period	Election day
April 2009	10 LTOs	10 precincts (14 observers)
July 2009	n/a	276 observers
November 2010	42 LTOs	2500 observers (100%)
November 2014	42 LTOs, 32 medium-term	2500 observers (100%)
October 2016	42 LTOs	1981 domestic, 44 abroad
November 2016	42 LTOs	1981 domestic, 36 abroad

Media Monitoring in Moldova

Local NGOs traditionally had a very strong focus on monitoring of mass media, particularly during elections. Opinion polls indicate that more than 80% of Moldovan population receives political news from TV channels and this number remains stable even with the recent development of the Internet and social media. IRI opinion poll also indicated that between 2008 and 2014 around 70% of Moldovan citizens reported high levels of confidence in the Moldovan media outlets[7]. This importance of mass media makes it one of the most powerful tools used by politicians during electoral campaigns and requires control by the civil society actors. There are several organisations that focus on media performance during the electoral campaign: Centrul Independent de Jurnalism

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[7]1. Moldova National Study November 10-25, 2008 International Republican Institute Baltic Surveys Ltd /The Gallup Organisation with funding from the United States Agency for International Development, available at www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2009 (access 16 April 2017); 2. Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova (September 20 –October 20, 2014) International Republican Institute Baltic Surveys Ltd./The Gallup Organisation with funding from the United States Agency for International Development, available at www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014-11-1320Survey (access 16 April 2017)

(CIJ), Asociația Presei Independente (API), and Asociația Presei Electronice din Moldova (APEL). The study focuses on two of these organisations that take part in election monitoring since the early 2000-s, namely CIJ and API.
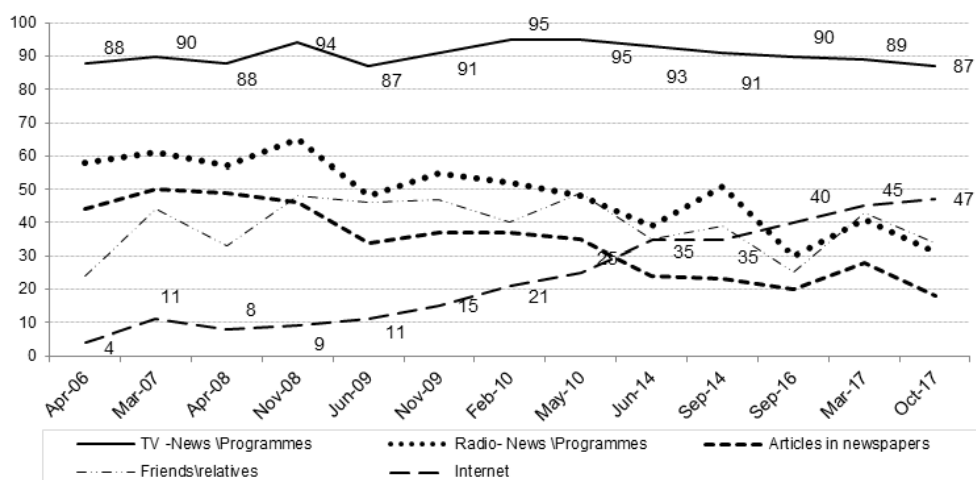
Source: Public Opinion Survey (IRI, Baltic Surveys and The Gallup Organization 2017)
Question: 'Which of these media outlets do you use for gaining political information?'

Figure 5.3: Moldova: Media Outlets Used to Gain Political Information

The Independent Journalism Center (IJC) is one of the first non-governmental, non-commercial, and apolitical media organizsations in Moldova. It was founded in 1994 as a project of the Open World House, and by 1998 it became an independent NGO. IJC contributes to the development of free mass media in the Republic of Moldova through creating 'training programs for journalists, media education, advocacy campaigns, research, and creation of the non-profit journalistic products'[8]. This NGO is also involved in advocacy activities for the improvement of the national legal framework that regulates mass media in Moldova. It has been active in the field of the promotion of professional ethics and solidarity among journalists, improvement of their working conditions as well as the legal framework that governs Moldovan mass media. The IJC tra-

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[8]Information from the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) website `http://media-azi.md/en/about-us` (access 28 April 2017)

ditionally organizes annual two national thematic events: Press Freedom Days (in May) and the Press Gala/ Journalists Awards Gala (in December). It also manages four media related portals: (1) Media Azi which (media news publications, information about IJC activities, reports, and studies); (2) Mediacritica, that promotes media literacy and critical thinking; (3) Moldova Azi, (a resource that provides access to all video materials produced by the IJC Campaign and Production Department; and (4) the website of the School of Advanced Journalism.

The Association of Independent Press (API) is a non-governmental organisation established in 1997 to support non-political mass media outlets. The Association was founded by the representatives of the local independent newspapers. The idea to set API belongs to the American journalist Judi Yablonky, who, during a trip to Moldova, suggested to the directors of independent media outlets to unite under the auspices of a non-governmental organisation in order to help each other and defend their rights. Today API is being recognized as one of the most important organisations in Moldova that provides assistance to independent media, serves as a resource centre and organizes training for journalists. Between electoral monitoring campaigns API conducts various media campaigns in different public interest sectors, advocacy activities for mass media development, defends freedom of expression and access to information, promotes journalistic self-regulation, monitors media performance during electoral campaigns, etc. API has observed elections at least since 2005 controlling coverage of political campaigns in the media. On the eve of the April 2009 parliamentary elections API has monitored sixteen public and private newspapers (national and local), news agencies and news portals. Similar project has been conducted before 2011 local elections when API not only monitored campaigns, but also organized electoral debates, conducted workshops for the journalists,

conducted campaigns to inform citizens about elections, etc. API has been an active participant of Coalitia 2009 and the member of its decision-making body. Projects of election monitoring have been often conducted with another media-monitoring organisation, IJC and published in joint reports.

Importantly, media monitoring during electoral campaigns is organised by API and IJC in a close cooperation that helps them to pull resources together and divide tasks according to the skills and knowledge that each organisation can contribute. In general, the organisation representatives stressed that co-operation during elections or outside of the election campaigns does not mean amalgamation of two monitoring organisations and they pursue separate projects as well.

Another organisation that contributes to election monitoring efforts is **Center 'Partnership for Development' (CPD)**. This NGO conducts election monitoring from the gender perspective since 2007 local elections and in total has observed six campaigns. The main methodology of the CPD concerns estimation of the campaigns and party lists and measuring their quality in relationship with the gender of the candidates (e.g. relationship between donations and gender and position in the party list and gender). The head of CPD shares rather positive thoughts on the development of gender equality in the electoral process in Moldova in the past decade. In recent years political parties started adopting the 'language of gender equality', although some of them just 'pay lip service without introducing real changes'. One of the most important achievements is the introduction of gender quotas for political parties who are required to have at least 40% of female or male candidates in their party lists. As of 2017 CPD focused on improvements of this legal norm, advocating for higher levels of financial support to those parties who have more female deputies elected on the local or national level. The 2016 presidential elections were not monitored by

the CPD because 'the gender perspective is less obvious to pinpoint to': leading male candidate was competing against female candidate who represented opposition. However, other activists stressed the gender-related stereotypes used in the media coverage of the presidential campaign that might have influenced the electoral outcome. In turn, CPD conducts more generalized studies from the gender perspective such as analysis of the meetings with the electorate (earlier elections) or opinion polls (more recent campaigns). At the same time, CPD does not investigate any particular party or a candidate not to be blamed for political biases. Results of CPD election monitoring often appear as parts of the Coalitia-2009 joined statements and reports, but are rarely presented as separate reports.

The next section considers the development of political context under which these NGOs exist and monitors the quality of elections in Moldova. This part contributes to the discussion of the political opportunity structures available for the organisations that are being investigated.

5.2 Political Context and Elections in Moldova (2009 - 2016)

5.2.1 April 2009 Elections and Political Crisis in Moldova

In April 2009 the citizens of the Republic of Moldova went to the polling stations to cast their vote at the regular parliamentary elections. According to the then-valid Constitution, the new parliament was supposed to elect a president. The main competition occurred between four parties that expected to pass the 6% threshold: the incumbent 'Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova'

(PCRM) and the liberal bloc comprised of the 'Our Moldova Alliance' (AMN), Liberal Party (PL), and the Liberal-Democratic Party (PLDM). Throughout the political campaign, PCRM stressed that under their rule Moldova was a stable country choosing their main slogan 'I vote for stability'.

In turn, the liberal bloc parties emphasized their orientation for change and development. The focus of PL was anti-PCRM rhetoric with the 31-years-old mayor of Chisinau being the main face of the campaign representing youth and freshness. PLDM was established in 2007 and promoted itself as a new and not corrupt political force. The party was led by experienced politician and former minister Vlad Flat, who led the Privatization Department and despite the pre-electoral anti-PCRM slogans previously voted in favour of PCRM presidential candidate Voronin. 'Or Moldova' Alliance (AMN) attracted pro-Western minded electorate promoting Euro-integration of Moldova. Despite sharing the liberal banner and anti-communist rhetoric, liberal parties often harshly criticized each other. For example, Chirtoaca doubted Filat's anti-communist aspirations and reminded about his support of Voronin's presidency in 2005 and PL representatives also refused to form an opposition coalition with PLDM (Senyuva 2010). In general, observers concluded that the April 2009 elections were neither free nor fair; final reports describe a number of serious violations including voters and political activists intimidation, violence and administrative pressure. Electoral forensics analysis confirmed that ruling party (PCRM) has benefited from increase in turnout $(r(1921) = .203p < .000)$, while Liberal Party candidates were disadvantaged by the increase in turnout $(r(1921) = -.257, p < .000)$, similarly PLDM was disadvantaged $(r(1921) = -.121, p < .000)$.

Simultaneously with pressure on the political activists, there were attempts to oppress election monitoring organisations, particularly members of Coalitia 2009 and some of these attempts seemed to be successful. In 2009 LADOM

observed elections for the last time and after that the mission stopped any election monitoring activities. Representatives of other organisations mentioned that LADOM might have been a victim of the pressure from the powerful state actors who made this NGO to change its final report. Despite the agreed estimation of elections as 'incorrect and partly free'[9], LADOM voiced a much more positive estimation of the election campaign and election results. This was a direct violation of several Coalitia's regulations which assumes that any member should 'abstain from making public any information, assessments or conclusions on behalf of the entire Coalition' and 'inform the Council / the Secretariat about their own action plans relevant to the Coalition's mission'[10]. After 2009 LADOM stepped down from all monitoring activity and was not involved with Coalitia-2009 anymore. As of 2016 there could not be found any traces of this organisation or its former organisation members familiar with the situation.

Results of April 2009 elections are summarised in the table 5.2 turnout appeared to be seven percentage points less than in 2005, but above the 50% threshold established by the Electoral Code. Majority of votes went to the incumbent Communist party which received 60 of 101 seats in the Parliament i.e. one seat less than necessary to elect a new president. The liberal parties shared the remaining 41 seats between each other with PLDM and PL receiving 15 seats each and 11 seats went to AMN. All three liberal parties refused to accept the elections results claiming multiple violations and manipulations utilised by the incumbent party. The official announcement of the election results was followed by the series of protests in the capital that gathered more than 30 000 protestors on the main square of Chisinau calling for protest through social media like Twitter

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[9]Coalitia-2009 website Press Communication 01.05.2009 'Elections Incorrect and Partly Free', available at `http://alegeliber.md/en/alegeriincorecte-34.html` (last access 10 October 2017)

[10]Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections 'Coalitia-2009), 'Regulations', available at `http://alegeliber.md/en/about/regulament` (last accessed in April 2017)

and other networks (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu 2009). The state authorities reacted to the protests arresting the more than 150 protestors, attempting to oppress civil society actors and claiming that protests were organised from abroad.

Although majority of the domestic monitoring groups who belonged to the Coalitia-2009 condemned the April 2009 elections as 'incorrect and partly free'[11], LADOM stepped out with a more positive estimation. This was direct violation of several Coalitia-2009 regulations which assumes that any member should 'abstain from making public any information, assessments or conclusions on behalf of the entire Coalition' and 'inform the Council / the Secretariat about their own action plans relevant to the Coalition's mission'[12]. Most of the interviewees suggested that LADOM was forced by the government to give more positive estimation of the electoral result. This breach of the Coalitia-2009 regulations and tainted reputation forced LADOM to stop further monitoring activities after the July 2009 elections.

Despite the mass unrest caused by the perceived election fraud, the immediate estimations of electoral process by the international community were surprisingly positive: 'The elections are assessed for their compliance with the OSCE and Council of Europe commitments for democratic elections, as well as with Moldovan legislation'[13]. These assessments went against the conclusions of the participants of the Coalitia-2009. This positive attitude might be explained by the' communist bias of the international election monitoring mission's leaders

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[11]Coalitia-2009 website Press Communication 01.05.2009 'Elections Incorrect and Partly Free' Available at http://alegeliber.md/en/alegeriincorecte-34.html (access 10 October 2017)

[12]Civic Coalition For Free And Fair Elections. Regulations Available at http://alegeliber.md/en/about/regulament

[13]International Election Observation Mission Parliamentary Election, Republic Of Moldova – 5 April 2009 Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, Chisinau, 6 April 2009 available at https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/moldova/36823?download=true

and their intentions 'to avoid alienating Voronin as continuing good relations with the West could only limit the communist anti-democratic drift' (Tudoroiu 2011, 332). Such estimations of electoral integrity in Moldova based on political calculations rather than facts of fraud invested a lot of distrust to the conclusions of the international monitoring missions and added credibility to the domestic monitors.

The political crisis started in April continued even after the protests were suppressed. The 41 MPs from the 'Liberal bloc' boycotted voting for the president in May 2009 blocking elections to the presidency that consequently led to early parliamentary elections in July 2009. Before the next early elections, some rules were changed as a sign of compromise between the ruling PCRM party and the opposition. For example 59 members of parliament from the Communist party approved the decrease of the threshold to enter the parliament from 6% to 5% and validation of elections threshold from 50% of votes to 1/3. The opposition parties refused to participate in voting as their demand of a 4% entry barrier was not met[14]

. The 2009 elections have also confirmed strong divisions present in Moldovan society along national and linguistic lines often used by political parties during the election campaign: share of Moldovan population in each region is positively correlated with the AMN vote share ($r = 0.68, p = 0.000$) while regions with high amount of non-Moldovan ethnic minorities were more likely to support PCRM ($r = 0.56, p = 0.000$). According to the interviews, these divisions continued to be exploited by the politicians during the forthcoming electoral campaigns.

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[14]Point.md 'Moldovan Parliament Decreased the Turnout Threshold for the Parliamentary Elections and Entry Threshold for the Political Parties' 15th of June 2009 available at https://point.md/ru/novosti/politika/parlament-moldovi-snizil-porog-yavki-na-parlamentskih-viborah-i-\ -izbirateljnij-barjer-dlya-partij (in Russian, access 15 October 2017)

Party	April 2009			July 2009			
	Votes	Vote %	Seats	Votes	Vote %	Seats	Change
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM)	705619	49.5	60 (+ 4)	705247	47.7	48	-2
Liberal Party (PL)	193343	13.1	15	224454	12.1	15	0
Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM)	218744	12.4	15	256412	15.22	18	+3
'Moldova Noastra 'Alliance (AMN)	147912	9.8	11	115188	7.8	7	-4
Social-Democratic Party (PSD)	56193	3.7	-	29260	1.9	-	-
Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM)	54803	3. 0	-	197240	12.5	13	+13
Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD)	46509	3.0	-	29797	1.9	-	-
Centrist Union	43652	2.8	-	-	-	-	-
European Action	14962	1.0	-	-	-	-	-
Other parties	9891	0.6	-	6437	-	-	-
Independent candidates	16321	1.1	-	-	-	-	-
Vote Cast	1522502	-	-	1574213	-	-	-
Invalid votes	19095	-	-	10178	-	-	-
Turnout		60.22			60.47		

Activists reported that exploitation of these divisions is often a big obstacle for conducting truly democratic electoral campaigns and improvement of elections quality, although per se it is not a strategy of electoral manipulation.

5.2.2   July 2009 Elections and and Path to the Next Early Elections

In July 2009 parliamentary elections were conducted in a very tense political environment under a close supervision of the domestic observers and international community. Despite this attention, the pressure on the civil society actors has increased considerably compared to the previous campaign. LADOM and Promo-LEX reported a number of cases of opposition members and independent

observers being intimidated and harassed by various actors involved in the electoral campaign. Clearly, the pre-electoral violations such as pressure on voters and public employees are mostly related to the incumbent party that had access to the resources to exercise such activities. Simultaneously, political parties from the oppositional 'Liberal' block have been targeted with violence and harassment and campaign events disruption. For example, LADOM report described that 'on March 4, in Ungheni two representatives of the Liberal Party (PL) were taken into custody by police on the grounds that, while campaigning in Floresti, these two individuals had allegedly beaten two policemen. The PL representatives said they were subsequently beaten by the police < ... > The PL representatives have been freed after two hours but did not file any complaints out of fear' (Ladom Interim Report April 2009, 4).

Table 5.2: Mentions of political parties committing violations

	April 2009	July 2009
PCRM	29	40
PL	4	1
PLDM	9	3
AMN	8	0

The most vivid example of pressure on the electoral observers was an incident with the ENEMO monitoring mission that took place just two days before the elections. On 27th of July 2009, the Chisinau municipal police arrived at the hotel where 53 accredited ENEMO international observers were lodged to check their documents. Two members of the mission were arrested and 'taken by private cars to an unknown location'. Coordinator of the mission, Serghei Tcacenco, was interrogated for over 3 hours by the police without a lawyer and was not

given any explanations for the reasons for his detention. He was left abandoned on a street in Chisinau at 02:00 on the 28th of July 2009 and instructed by the police to leave Moldova within 24 hours. Other members of the ENEMO monitoring mission were detained in the hotel and demanded to leave Moldova as well (Promo-LEX Report 2009, 8). Comparison between reported pre-electoral violations in April and July 2009 did not show much difference between strategies of the incumbent party to stay in power (table 5.3), although pressure on the independent monitoring organisations increased. Given other types of violations, tense atmosphere and uneven electoral field, Coalitia 2009 members concluded that in July 2009 parliamentary elections failed to meet standards of democratic election.

As a result of the early parliamentary elections in July 2009 five parties passed the established 5% threshold. The PCRM number of seats decreased by two compared with the previous elections and 'liberal block' received 53 establishing the ruling coalition 'The Alliance for the European Integration' (AEI), electing the PL leader Mihai Ghimpu as the speaker of the Parliament who also simultaneously acted as an interim president. These results meant that eight years rule of PCRM came to an end as the party was denied the majority in the Parliament. Nonetheless, the AEI felt short of eight votes to elect a new president. On the 10th of November 2009 the candidacy of Marian Lupu (Democratic Party) received 53 votes of the 'Alliance' members and was not supported by PCRM members.

Table 5.3: Pre-election violations mentioned in LADOM Final Reports

	5th April 2009	29th July 2009
Electoral campaign	- disruption of campaign activities; - harassment of representatives of contestants; - preferential treatment of some contestants; - discrediting electoral candidates; - biased media coverage of electoral activities; - pressure by prosecutors on contestants; - offensive language towards political opponents; - camouflaged campaigning; - electoral materials in unauthorised locations;	- media bias -Involvement of children in the campaign - Posting billboards in unauthorised place or billboards destruction - Differentiated treatment for electoral contestants -Intimidation of contestants (tolerated by police except when PCRM is targeted)
Undue influence on voters	- coercing students into participating in campaign; - campaigning in schools; - voters coerced to attend meetings with some contestants; - pressure small businesses, through politically motivated visits of control agencies	- Intimidation of voters - Electoral gifts (trips, meals for elderly, free concerts)
Pressure on civil society	- denying access to electoral activities; - intimidation of observers; - conflict between PCRM and newspaper published by API	- Police and the local authorities intimidated LADOM observers
Misuse of public resources	- High-ranking national officials use public resources for electoral purposes; - misuse of administrative resources - Using office cars for electoral campaign purposes	- Central and local authorities use administrative resources - Using office cars for electoral campaign purposes

To overcome the political crisis AEI attempted to conduct a national referendum to reintroduce the direct elections of the president that were cancelled in early 2001. Nonetheless, due to the poor information campaign, the turnout did not exceed 33% threshold and the referendum failed. As some activists recalled: '...there was a lot of confusion, people did not know about the referendum, especially in villages or they did not understand what it is about: either it is an election or a referendum, they thought that they are already electing a president' (C.Chebes, Promo-LEX). The acting president Mihai Ghimpu (Liberal Party) had to dissolve parliament and the next early parliamentary elections were scheduled for November 2010.

Despite polarization and internal tension in the ruling coalition, the AEI managed to introduce two important changes in electoral rules that could electorally benefit smaller parties and increase the diversity in the Parliament. Firstly, they have lowered electoral thresholds (from 5% to 4% for political parties, from 3% to 2% for the independent candidates) and electoral blocks were permitted again. Secondly, the proportional d'Hondt formula for the distribution of seats in the parliament has been substituted with the equal 'Robin Hood' principle (Botan 2010). New method limited the incumbent's party ability to receive significantly more seats in the Parliament and benefited smaller parties (Cantir 2011). Although these changes had positive effects on political representation they had no underlying democratic aspirations, rather than a desire to limit the Communist party's ability to capture power again (Cantir 2011).

Observers have stressed other positive changes in the legal framework took place after AEI came to power. For example, the law 119 (18 of June, 2010) introduced of criminal liability for multiple voting and developed of clear procedure for voting abroad. Furthermore, CEC established more than 70 precincts abroad (considerably more than during previous elections). Another law simplified the

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voting procedure for students and allowed them to vote in localities where their educational institutions are situated instead of the places where they have an official registration. Previous studies have suggested that the older and more conservative electorate is more likely to vote for the Communist Party (Brett and Knott 2015), while the younger electorate was expected to vote for pro-European political forces. Regional level data have confirmed that statement partly: indeed in 2009-2010 higher shares of the population over 50 years old are associated with better performance of the PCRM; but the younger generation was not mobilised to vote for any specific party from AEI alliance (see table5.4). Nonetheless, changes in electoral laws were introduced to bring potential electoral benefit to the AEI and not caused by their democratic aspirations or pressure from the domestic civil society. NGO representatives described 2009 as a period when civil society was still isolated from the political context and experienced a lot of pressure from state actors or media outlets who were closely affiliated with the PCRM.

elections	age	political party					
		PCRM	PL	PLDM	AMN	PD	PSRM
April 2009	Share of 20-49	-0.48 (0.003)	-0.37 (0.030)	-0.14 (0.415)	0.138 (0.435)	-	-
	Share of ≥50	0.649 (0.000)	0.172 (0.322)	0.076 (0.660)	-0.313 (0.71)	-	-
July 2009	Share of 20-49	-0.275 (0.115)	0.490 (0.003)	0.205 (0.244)	0.082 (0.645)	-0.295 (0.1)	-
	Share of ≥50	0.547 (0.001)	-0.581 (0.000)	-0.513 (0.002)	-0.359 (0.036)	0.396 (0.020)	-
November 2010	Share of 20-49	-0.143 (0.413)	0.449 (0.006)	0.174 (0.315)	-0.158 (0.364)	-0.525 (0.001)	-
	Share of ≥50	0.494 (0.002)	-0.526 (0.001)	-0.528 (0.001)	0.307 (0.071)	0.439 (0.008)	-
November 2014	Share of 20-49	0.003 (0.983)	0.720 (0.000)	0.501 (0.002)		0.082 (0.638)	-0.445 (0.007)
	Share of ≥50	-0.026 (0.881)	-0.638 (0.000)	-0.563 (0.000)		-0.262 (0.128)	0.535 (0.001)

PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS , P-VALUES IN BRACKETS

Figure 5.4: Correlation between age groups and vote shares of political parties

5.2.3   Elections in 2010: Fragile Stability

On 28th of November 2010 the second early parliamentary elections were held in Moldova. On the eve of 2010 elections, political context continued to be extremely polarised in Moldova. The election campaign focused on the issues of European integration of Moldova and relationships with Russia (Cantir 2011). Political actors agreed on pro-European path of Moldova, but had differences about relationships with Moscow. The aggressive campaign and mutual accusations overshadowed other issues such as poor economic performance and large scale immigration of Moldovans abroad (Cantir 2011). The Coalitia 2009 members continued observing elections in 2010 under the auspices of the same union. The November 2010 elections was the first campaign observed by Promo-LEX on the national scale. Despite persisting tensions and consequences of the political crisis, the 2010 elections were given much more positive estimations by the civil society actors, particularly in terms of media coverage of the electoral process. This was the first election campaign in Moldovan history with almost non-stop media coverage. At the same time, Promo-LEX stressed that Transnistria residents 'did not benefit from equal conditions regarding their electoral information and education' (Final Report 2010, p 19).

One of the directors of the media monitoring organisations, Petru Makovey from API described 2009-2011 as a 'golden age' of mass media in the Republic of Moldova. After 2011 the media outlets felt increased pressure and media ownership was gradually consolidated in the hands of powerful oligarchs. On the other hand, the more opened political context has provided opportunities for the dialogue between the civil society and new ruling coalition that the organisations have used to enlarge elections-related agenda:

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*After 2010 Parliamentary elections, the new majority in the Parlia-
ment, showed more openness to amend the electoral legislation, the
working groups were established. They started the working group on
the reforms of the system of political parties and electoral campaign
financing. This is called an 'uphill battle': you obtain some amend-
ments and then you look at what else is missing. It was important,
do the most basic aspects and then, after you introduced the basic
aspects, you take into account other ones like representation and
rights of people with disabilities.*

(A.Brihidin, EEF)

Although elections in 2010 have not been followed by another round of
early parliamentary elections, the political situation in Moldova remained to be
far from stability. Democratic Party was a decisive political force that negotiated
coalition formation with the Liberal bloc and with the Communist party eventually
joining the center-right PLDM-PL-PDM coalition (Cantir 2011). In turn, the
PDM representative, Marian Lupu served as an interim president from 2010 till
2012 while PLDM leader Vlad Filat served as a prime minister. Despite these
arrangements, four years between elections were not stable in Moldova. The
slight economic improvement was not a result of state policies, but was based
on remittances from abroad and successful agricultural production due to the
favourable climatic conditions (BTI 2016). Ethnic fragmentation described by
activists still persisted in the voting patterns in Moldova: PLDM performed better
in the regions where more ethnic Moldovans reside ($r = 0.681, p > 0.000$) while
higher share of votes for the PCRM is associated with the bigger share of the
non-Moldovan ethnic groups ($r = 0.638, p > 0.000$). These divisions were often
used by politicians to gain votes and oppress silence.

5.2.4 Elections 2014: End of the Golden Age?

The 2014 parliamentary elections were the first national elections since the 2009-2010 political crisis. This campaign brought a new actor on the political scene of Moldova: the Socialist Party. It emerged from the split in the Communist party and its sudden success was attributed to the voters' disillusionment with PCRM and the pro-European alliance. Although the 'Liberal Bloc' retained the majority, it continued losing support due to its inability to improve the economic situation, while social climate was polarised and divided over demographic and ethnic lines. Some researchers stress that these divisions should not be oversimplified as cleavages between young, pro-European ethnic Moldovan/Romanian segments of the society versus conservative, pro-Russian ethnic Russian part: identities overlap and shift depending on the political context (Brett and Knott 2015). However, parties have used these differences for political gains and attract citizens with more pro-European views to the 'Liberal camp' or pro-Russian views to the Socialist and Communist parties (Timuş 2015). Although the 'Liberal coalition' managed to form the government, its stability and aspirations to conduct truly democratic reforms is highly questionable.

Several very important modifications to the Electoral Code were introduced before the November 2014 elections. First of all, it was no longer allowed to vote using Soviet passports (model 1974) moreover, students were allowed to vote based on their location of study, not permanent residence registration. These two changes possibly could decrease the number of conservative voters and increase the share of pro-Western minded voters (see table 5.4). Next, the threshold for the political parties and electoral blocs to enter the parliament has been increased again raising the questions about real intentions of the AEI to increase pluralism and representation in the Parliament. Monitoring NGOs point

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at the enduring issues related to the administrative pressure, voters and public employees' intimidation, and use of state resources for campaigning (Promo-LEX 2010 Final Report). Administrative pressure continued to be the main type of electoral manipulation in Moldova since 2009. Although it is hard to compare the quantity of such cases, all activists agree that administrative pressure is decisive for electoral outcomes. Similarly use of public resources and spaces by certain electoral competitors, particularly incumbent parties, was prominent in 2010 and 2014. Previously Promo-LEX has indicated that no information about elections was available in Transnistria. In 2014 the problem was not the lack of information, but the quality of media coverage. For instance, Promo-LEX noted that 'Transnistrian TV channel Pervyi Respublikanskii broadcasted materials in favour of PSRM' (Final Report 2014, p.16).

Compared to earlier reports, in 2010 and 2014 observers did not mention involvement of the law enforcement bodies in the electoral process and indicated a smaller share of direct intimidation of voters. Issues with voters' registration were the most visible in case of electorate from Transnistria and were reported by Promo-LEX who has focused its monitoring mission on this region. At the same time, the number of polling stations where voters from Transnistria could vote was increased from 10 to 21 in 2010 and 26 in 2014. These changes can be partly attributed to the efforts of Promo-LEX and its particular focus on this region. Interviewees shared that no systematic harassment of the electoral observers was noticed in 2014, even in the region bordered with Transnistria, although several cases of LTOs intimidation and limitation of access to the electoral events happened. Nonetheless, NGO representatives agreed that the climate for election monitoring has considerably improved by 2014 and observers could extend their cooperation with different state agencies.

Table 5.4: Moldova: Parliamentary Elections 2010 and 2014

Party	2010				2014			
	Votes	Vote (%)	Seats	+/−	Votes	Vote (%)	Seats	+/−
Communist Party of Moldova (PCRM)	677 069	39.34	42	-6	279 372	17.48	21	-21
Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM)	506 253	29.42	32	14	322 188	20.18	23	-9
Democratic Party (PDM)	218 620	12.7	15	2	252 489	15.8	19	4
Liberal Party (PL)	171 336	9.96	12	-3	154 507	9.67	13	1
'Our Moldova' Alliance (AMN)	35 289	2.05	0	-7	-	-	-	-
Movement for European Action (MAE)	21 049	1.22	0	0	-	-	-	-
Humanist Party of Moldova (PUM)	15 494	0.9	0	0	-	-	-	-
Socialist Party of Moldova (PSRM)	-	-	-	-	327 910	20.51	25	25
Communist Reform Party	-	-	-	-	78 719	4.92	0	0
'Moldova's Choice – Customs Union' Electoral Bloc	-	-	-	-	55 089	3.45	0	0
National Liberal Party (PNL)	10 938	0.64	0	0	6859	0.43	0	0
Christian-Democratic Party (PPCD)	9 083	0.53	0		11 782	0.74	0	0
United Moldova	8238	0.48	0	0	-	-	-	-
For Nation and Country	4894	0.28	0	0	1697	0.11	0	0
Moldovan Patriots	1580	0.09	0	0	1498	0.09	0	0
Ecologist Green Party	1380	0.08	0	0	1366	0.09	0	0
Other parties	10 987	0.63	0	0	86 385	5.4	0	0
Independent candidates	18 832	1.09	0	0	18 651	1.17	0	0
Invalid	11 907	0.69	-	-	50 948	3.09	-	-
Turnout	1 720 993	65	-	-	1 649 508	56	-	-

5.2.5 Presidential Elections: New Elections, Old Tricks?

In March 2016 the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova declared unconstitutional changes that introduced indirect elections of the president back in 2000 (Law No 1115-XIV). Since its independence Moldova has changed its regime several times from parliamentary in 1990-1991 to semi-presidential (from 1991 to 2000) and parliamentary (2000-2016). Despite that, the president of Moldova was known to be far more powerful under the parliamentary regime after 2000 than under presidential before those changes in the Constitution. Roper concludes that the lack of popular election has not resulted in limitations of the presidential power in Moldova. He stresses that Voronin as a leader of the party with the constitutional majority 'exerted considerable influence on the composition of the new government as well as in several policy areas' (Roper 2008, 123). At the same time, the reinstatement of the direct elections of the president did not grant any new powers of the president and Moldova remained a parliamentary republic. Changes in constitution and return of direct presidential elections caught all Moldovan society and election observers by surprise. The election campaign was very short and lasted just one month, but was marred by various violations and strong polarization of society.

It is worth noting that two years since the last parliamentary elections were particularly difficult for Moldova. Shortly after 2014 Parliamentary elections authorities revealed that $1 billion had been drained off the county's banking system. This announcement resulted in massive protests and popular unrest that continued for several months. The criminal investigation of this fraud has been associated with the struggle for power between two elite groups: Vladimir Plahotniuc (Democratic Party) and Vlad Filat (Liberla-Democratic Party). Both of them were 'key figures in the process of the appropriation of the state apparatus'

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(Calus 2016). Eventually, in October 2015 the prosecutor general has deprived Filat of parliamentary immunity and he was subsequently arrested by the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, charged with being involved in the US$1 billion scandal and sent to jail. Całus (2016) stresses that "Plahotniuc's influence began to expand rapidly after Filat was arrested in October 2015. He managed to subordinate to himself the greater part of the political scene in just three months".

The first direct presidential elections held in Moldova after sixteen years were closely monitored by the election monitoring NGOs who controlled all aspects of the process and share their conclusions with the public and foreign donors. In total, Promo-LEX produced seven interim reports and one final report; the API and IJC represented their findings in seven interim monitoring reports and one final. In spite of this attention, there were multiple violations reported during both rounds, particularly before election day and related to the media coverage of the campaign. In general, observers stressed the increased amount of cases that can be classified as undue pressure on voters in different forms, although the number of voter buying attempts have decreased compared to previous national level elections in 2014.
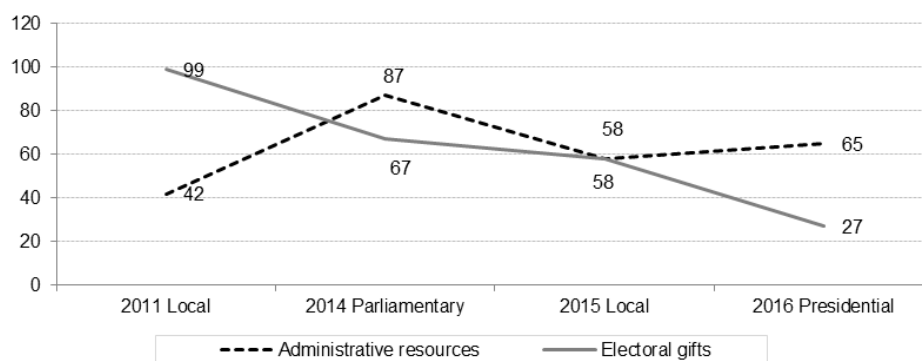
Promo-LEX Final Report: Observation Mission for the Presidential Election in the RM on 30 October 2016 chart 4, p. 37)

Figure 5.5: Dynamics of the practices of using administrative resources and offering electoral presents (2011–2016)

The unlevel playing field and manipulation with public opinion could have affected the outcome of the presidential elections, observers suggested. According to a monitoring report by Promo-LEX, violations that could be attributed to one of the contestants are mostly conducted by the candidate from the ruling party, although it was impossible to identify on behalf of which candidate more than half of cases have been committed (see table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Violations during Presidential Elections 2016 (Round II)

Type of incident	Number of cases for each candidate involved		
	Dodon (PPPSRM)	Sandu (PPPAS)	Unknown
The organised transportation of voters	8 PS (47 units)	0	31 PS (113 units)
Campaigning or negative PR within the perimeter of a PS	15	4	1
The presence of electoral posters within 100 meters of the PS	7	5	3
Rumors, attempts or situations of voters being rewarded in the area of the PS	5	1	4
Total	35	10	39

According to the observers, the winning candidate also failed to report twenty times higher sums compared to opposition candidate (LEU 3,485,656 versus to LEU 175084 not reported by Sandu).
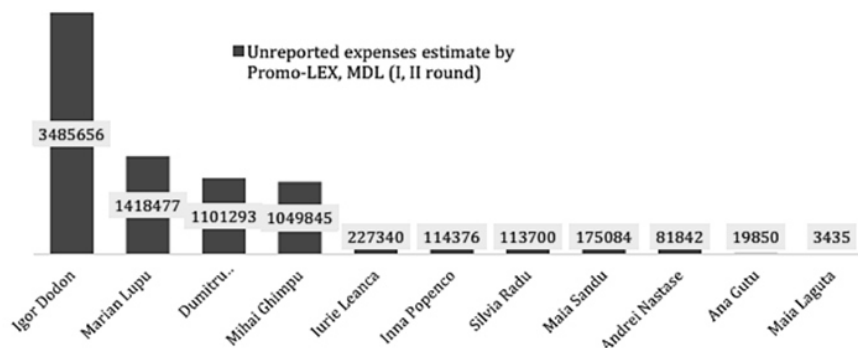
Figure 5.6: Under-reported Expenses:2016 Presidential Elections

Involvement of the Orthodox Church representatives became another important aspect that characterized 2016 presidential elections. In 2009 LADOM observers have highlighted involvement of church in the electoral campaign, but Orthodox Church as a factor of political influence has not been discussed again until the 2016 presidential elections when religious leaders have played prominent role in electoral contest:

> This is not a new [phenomenon]... But it has strongly manifested itself during this election. Although it might seem a little bit weird because during the PCRM time, this candidate was against the Church and now he suddenly became a stronghold of Christianity in the Republic of Moldova. This case proves again that the church in Moldova is not an institution of faith, but a propaganda instrument.
>
> (Petru Makovey, API)

Another issue stressed by the observers is passivity of the controlling officials who did not apply any sanctions to those parties and candidates who violated legal norms: 'Promo-LEX found that the electoral authority was passive in the

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2016 presidential election campaign although, as an independent oversight and control body when it comes to matters of political parties' and election campaign funding, and as a prevention body, CEC has the mandate to impose or demand for penalties to be imposed...' (Final Report 2016, p.57). Similar trend was observed in the work of the Broadcasting Coordination Council that selectively approached different TV channels with the sanctions when they violated rules. Sometimes sanctions were applied after the election campaign was over; therefore they could not incentivise these channels to improve the coverage of electoral campaigns (summarised from the interview with N. Gogu, IJC). In general, observers have attributed crucial importance of the media coverage for the electoral outcome of the Presidential elections:

> *In fact, the 2016 Presidential elections were falsified because people were duped through mass media. If our media were informing and not manipulating the public opinion, the result of this election was different!*

> *(P. Makovey, API)*

To summarize the review of the misconduct during the presidential elections in Moldova, the director of the IJC Nadine Gogu describes mass media as always being manipulated by the political parties in Moldova. She stresses that parties in opposition always complain that they do not have enough access to media, while when they come to power – they always try to make media channels to work for them:

> *When the PCRM was in power, they had a certain media monopoly; TV worked for them and criticized others. Then several years, after 2009 and in 2010 until 2012 everything was alright. First years [after*

Table 5.6: Results of the Presidential Elections 2016

Candidate	2016 (Round 1)		2016 (Round 2)	
	Votes	Vote Share	Votes	Vote Share
Igor Dodon (PSRM)	680,550	47.98%	834,081	52.11%
Maia Sandu ('Action and Solidarity' Party)	549,152	38.71%	766,593	47.89%
Dumitru Ciubasenco ('Our Party')	85,466	6.03%		
Iurie Leanca (European People's Party of Moldova)	44,065	3.11%		
Mihai Ghimpu (Liberal Party)	25,490	1.80%		
Valeriu Ghiletchi (independent candidate)	15,354	1.08%		
Maia Laguta (independent candidate)	10,712	0.76%		
Silvia Radu (independent candidate)	5,276	0.37%		
Ana Gutu ('Right' Party)	2,453	0.17%		

the 2009 power change] there were several parties, who have not redistributed their influence. Now we have two cores: the Democratic Party, they have fore channels with national broadcasting and some regional channels and radio. And there is a Socialist Party, and it already has 3 channels with good ratings

This general pattern of power consolidation in the hands of powerful oligarchs has brought a downward trend in the quality of elections. The media coverage, administrative pressure and mobilisation of public resources and employees were broadly used during the 2016 presidential election campaign.

5.2.6 Evolution of Election Monitoring Context in Moldova 2009-2016

Starting from the political crisis in 2009, openness of the political context in Moldova went through an 'inverted U-curve' evolution. NGO representatives

unanimously characterised PCRM domination still visible in 2009 as 'autocratic' and 'suffocating' for civil society actors. Some illustrative examples of pressure on civil society and relatively poor election quality support this statement. With the pro-Western coalition coming to power in 2010, civil society felt more opportunities for meaningful participation and dialog with the state authorities. At the same time, election monitoring organisations noticed improvements in the quality of elections and higher levels of democratic competition. These improvements were not caused by democratic aspirations of politicians, but because of the government fragmentation and inability to impose authoritarian rule. At the same time, the opening of political context gave more space to the civil society to act and promote change. For example, activists mentioned that relations and communication with state actors have improved considerably during this period, civil society gained certain levels of access and trust from the political actors and some laws advocated by NGOs were accepted:

> *This is called an uphill battle: you obtain some amendments and then you look at what else is missing. It was important, do the most basic aspects and then, after you introduced the basic aspects, you take into account other ones like representation and rights of people with disabilities. I am not saying that in Moldova all issues have been addressed, in 2014, 2015 and 2016 electoral monitoring reports pointed at many issues, but they were quite different if we compare with 2005 and 2007 and 2009.*

> *(A. Brihidin, EEF)*

In 2014 more signs of the power consolidation in hands of oligarchs could be traced and political opportunities for participation of the civil society actors started to shrink. As acknowledged by the NGO leaders, the dialog did not stop,

Table 5.7: Changes in Electoral Regulations 2009-2014

Threshold	April 2009	July 2009	November 2010	November 2014
Political parties	6%	5%	4%	6%
Independent candidates	3%	3%	2%	2%
Electoral blocks	not allowed	not allowed	2parties 7% $\geq 3 - 9\%$	2 parties − 9% $\geq 3 - 11\%$
Turnout to validate elections	1/2	1/3	1/3	1/3

but all changes were slowed down and many legal improvements suggested by the civil society actors were not implemented. At the same time, some improvements in electoral laws were not caused by the pressure from the civil society actors or regime democratisation. Table 5.7 summarises how thresholds for political parties to gain seats in the parliament have changed since 2009. When pro-Western coalition came to power the barriers were decreased to let more political competitors enter the parliament and take seats from the Communist Party; later the ruling democratic coalition increased these thresholds in order not to let PCRM get into the parliament again.

Civil society has also reported increasing pressure from some non-democratic civil society actors. For example, during 2009 parliamentary elections LADOM observers have reported the Orthodox Church involvement in campaigning, although in 2010 and 2014 Orthodox Church as a factor of political influence in Moldova has not been very visible. In 2016 Orthodox Church has manifested itself again as an important factor of influence on the electoral outcome during the presidential elections when religious leaders have played prominent roles supporting the Socialist's Party candidate. As stressed by several activists, from the ideological point of view this support makes no sense: PSRM is closely related to the weakened Communist party and on paper proclaims traditional anti-church stands. Nonetheless, these differences did not prevent some religious leaders to

support the candidacy of Igor Dodon openly. Activists stress that cooperation with the Church is difficult if not impossible due to its conservative stand and resistance towards pro-Western and democratic values.

Electoral monitoring missions are deeply affected by the limitation related to high levels of state capture and penetration of private business interests in all political institutions, high levels of poverty and corruption as well as national division along the ethno-linguistic lines. Furthermore, high unemployment rates force younger and active citizens to move abroad in search for better life draining civil society from support and potential participants. These conditions leave civil society insulated both from political elites and the general population.

In general, NGOs in Moldova, including election monitoring organisations have to rely more on cooperation and support from each other and support from the powerful foreign actors, rather than local citizens. Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Barometer measures growing distrust towards NGOs in Moldova (graph 5.7). Although this opinion poll does not distinguish different NGOs and might not portray attitudes towards the observers correctly, it depicts the general trend of societal distrust. In turn, election observers in the interviews claim that trust of Moldovan citizens towards their organisations has grown considerably in the past years, therefore more citizens apply to work as Promo-LEX observers and sometimes even competition for positions arises in some areas. With these contextual factors in mind, the second half of the chapter discusses resources and transactional activism strategies of the election monitoring organisations in Moldova.
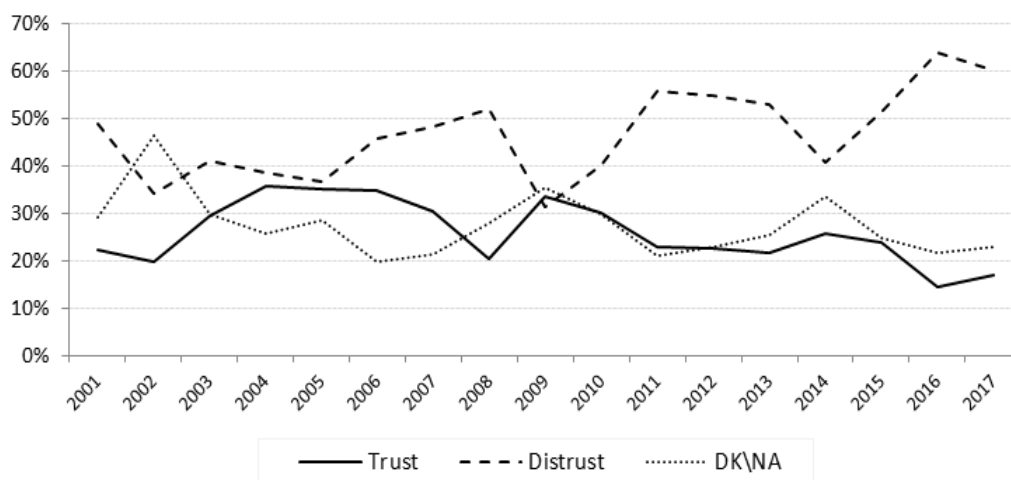
Republic of Moldova Public Opinion Barometer

Figure 5.7: Trust in NGOs in Moldova 2001-2017

5.3 Resources of the Election Monitoring Organisations in Moldova: Resources and Strategies

Moldovan electoral monitoring organisations follow the general pattern of the civil society development in the Eastern European region: firstly, they maintain their existence with the help of foreign donations; secondly, they are structured as rigid hierarchical organisations that function as experts and watchdogs. Such NGOs were often blamed for the lack of connection with the broader population, their bureaucratic nature and dependence on foreign sponsors. Although election monitoring organisations partly acknowledge this criticism, they attempt to develop strategies and activities that mitigate these issues and bring them closer to the local population, while emphasising that external funding is crucial to keep independence from the local political actors. Data on external funding of the

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Moldovan monitoring organisations is generalised to the whole non-state sector without specification according to the NGO types or sectors. The general trend shows that programmes aimed at the development of civil society and democratic participation have dropped considerably after the 2009 elections and peaked in 2014. Similarly to Georgia after 2003, after the victory of opposition, external funders might have directed support to the state actors, instead of funding civil society. In turn, by 2014 the non-democratic aspirations of the AEI became clear and civil society received more funding to support monitoring activities.

Nonetheless, funding of NGOs is rather moderate: European Partnership Reports inform that less than 5% of total EU assistance to Moldova is received by various civil society actors. Another illustration of the financial aid from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) shows that financial resources flow to the Moldovan civil society peaked in 2010 and dropped almost three times by 2014 election. This corresponds to the perceptions of the leaders of the election monitoring organisations who unanimously agreed that between 2010 and 2016 funding available for the election monitoring and democracy development projects has generally decreased. In turn, the 2016 electoral victory of the pro-Russian candidate and gradual decrease in democratic performance caught the attention of the EU and US, hence financial flows were increased (see figure 5.8 and figure 5.9).

In general, interviewees agree that after the 2009-2010 political turmoil calmed down and political space became more opened the resources available to Moldovan NGOs have decreased considerably because civil society caused less interest of the foreign donors. Simultaneously, interest in the participation in the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections diminished too and smaller local organisations returned to their local tasks or even stopped their work.
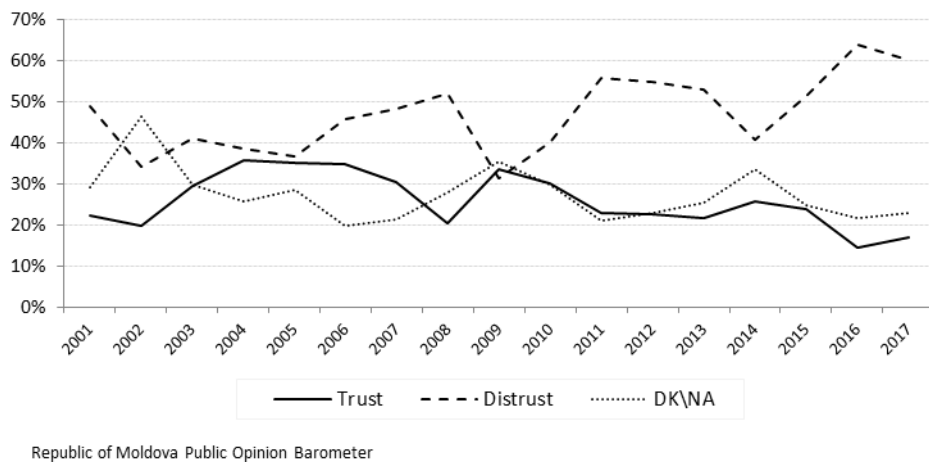
Figure 5.8: Democratic Participation and Civil Society Support Programmes
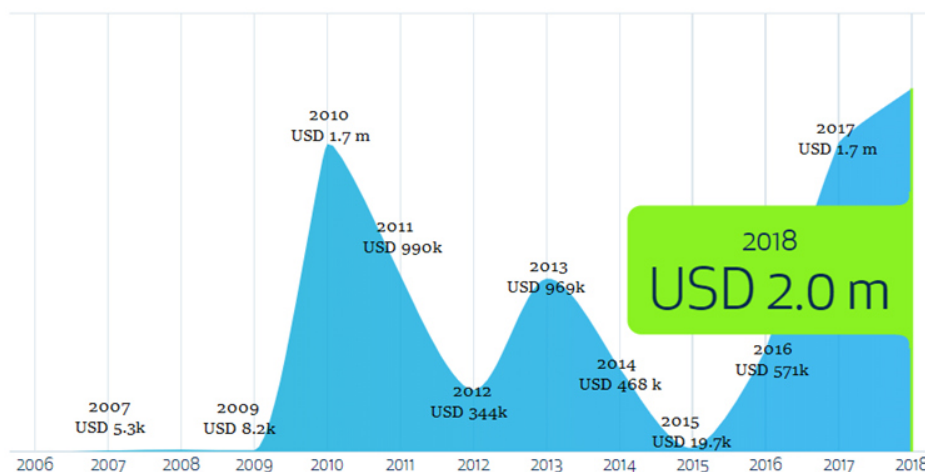
Figure 5.9: Sida Assistance to Moldovan NGOs

Financial reports submitted by the Promo-LEX showed a gradual growth in its grant income since 2012 (before 2012 Promo-LEX had only reported its expenses). This growth seems to correspond to the attention towards election monitoring campaigns starting from 2014 parliamentary elections, followed by 2015 local elections and peaked during the 2016 presidential elections. Drastic

increase in 2018 can be caused by diversification of projects conducted by Promo-LEX and preparation for the 2019 elections.
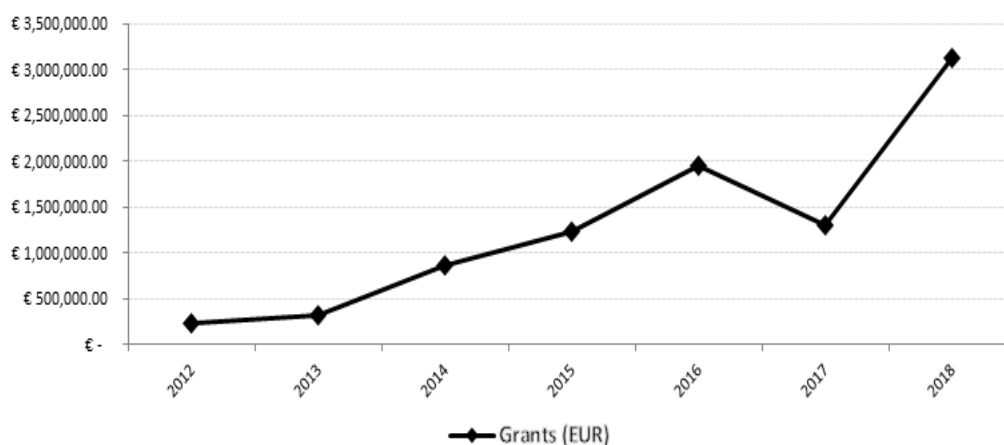
Source: Promo-LEX Activity Reports)

Figure 5.10: Promo-LEX Grant Income 2012-2018

In Moldova cooperation works not only between traditional Western European and American donors, but new regional organisations start offering their grants and expertise (see figure 5.11 below). These organisations bring not only financial resources but also experience, relevant skills and good knowledge of the region. As it has been mentioned above, Moldovan organisations also learn and share their experience with their counterparts from the post-Soviet region.

In general, donor dependency was never framed as an problem in the interviews with election monitoring activists in Moldova. NGO representatives stressed that payment is an important motivation for young people to take part in monitoring missions *'firstly due to the poverty in the country. Usually students monitor elections and additional income never hurts them' (C. Turuta, Promo-LEX)*. In turn, the Coalitia-2009 secretary suggests that *'if donors stop giving money for monitoring in the upcoming years, I do not know how we will arrange our missions. I suppose, we can find 300-500 volunteers out of 2000 that we*

need to cover all precincts, but it is possible in big cities, not in villages'.

The 2% Law introduced in 2017 might become a solution for such strong donor dependency in Moldova. It allowed Moldovan citizens to redirect 2% of their income tax to non-governmental organisations of their choice (including churches). As interviews with activists were recorded in April 2017 it was still too early to estimate the effects of this new source of funding. Promo-LEX leaders have mentioned this new law as a positive change unique to the post-Soviet region. They endorsed this new rule not only as a source of income but as a sign that citizens know and appreciate their work. Most importantly, this domestic source of income can help election monitoring organisations to decrease levels of donor dependency remaining non-partisan and independent from the local political interests.

5.4   Strategies of the Election Monitoring Organisations in Moldova

This section discusses strategies of transactional activism in Moldova, their development and NGOs' reasoning behind specific strategic choices. Importantly, all Coalitia-2009 organisations generally employ similar strategies during election period, while between elections their projects and mode of work might be different. The section mainly focuses on the strategies and methodology of the election monitoring association Promo-LEX while CDD, IJC and API strategies are often very similar to Promo-LEX but are applied in their respective fields.
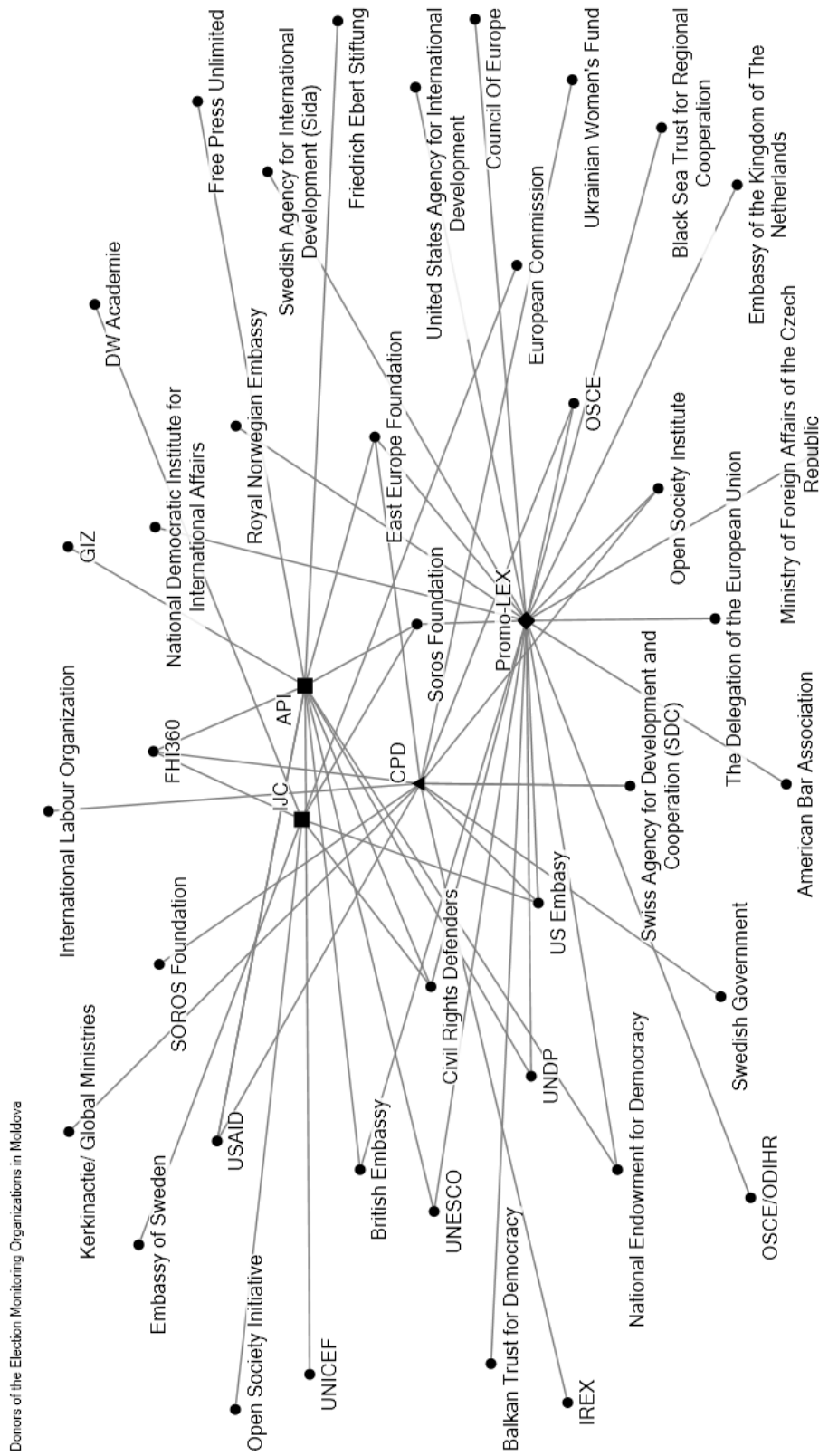
Figure 5.11: Donors Network of the Election Monitoring Organisations in Moldova

5.4.1 Moldova: Internal Development of the Monitoring Organisations

Moldovan pro-democratic monitoring organisations invest a lot of resources in building reputation of unbiased and independent actors. Organisations are aware of criticism about foreign funding and doubts in their independence. Observers stress that the agenda promoted by the foreign donors is directly related to the citizens' interests (e.g. free and fair elections or gender equality). Most activists focus attention on the importance of funding for the monitoring missions and independence from domestic political actors. Some activists suggest that citizens are aware of the work conducted by the organisations and these NGOs have trust among the population. This trust is expressed in several ways: firstly, political parties refer to Promo-LEX as an arbiter and use observers' findings to complain about behaviour of their rivals. Electoral contestants can use information mentioned in reports to initiate a full-scale investigation of misconduct, but political parties still prefer to use it for bargaining behind the closed doors. Secondly, those citizens who do not want to participate in political parties often apply to work as observers because Promo-LEX has a requirement to be non-partisan and not involved with any political associations. In general, methods of internal development focus on the creation and support of spotless reputation that would attract citizens and foreign donors and legitimise results of monitoring mission. Reputation remains the symbolic resource available to the election monitoring NGOs in Moldova.

1. Hierarchical Structure

Monitoring organisations in Moldova belong to the most respected national NGOs with long-term experience and reputation of impartial actors. Although

these organisations often call themselves 'associations', they develop hierarchical structure with the central office, several departments responsible for projects and a subordinate network of coordinators, long-term and short-term observers (figure 5.12). During monitoring campaigns this hierarchical structure helps to accumulate comparable information from all regions and create general picture of electoral process. In Promo-LEX, there is a system of reports that travel up from the LTOs in districts to the regional coordinators and next to the core team who performs analysis. Only official organisation representatives are allowed to speak on behalf of the organisation while rank-in-file observers cannot disclose any information about elections.

Table 5.8: Moldova: Internal Methods of Monitoring NGOs Development

Method	Example from Moldova NGOs
Hierarchical structure of NGOs	Top-down structure and system of reports
Professionalisation of the staff, high standards for observers	Training for LTOs and STOs, development of professional skills
Impartial and balanced reporting	Reports highlight positive and negative developments in electoral process
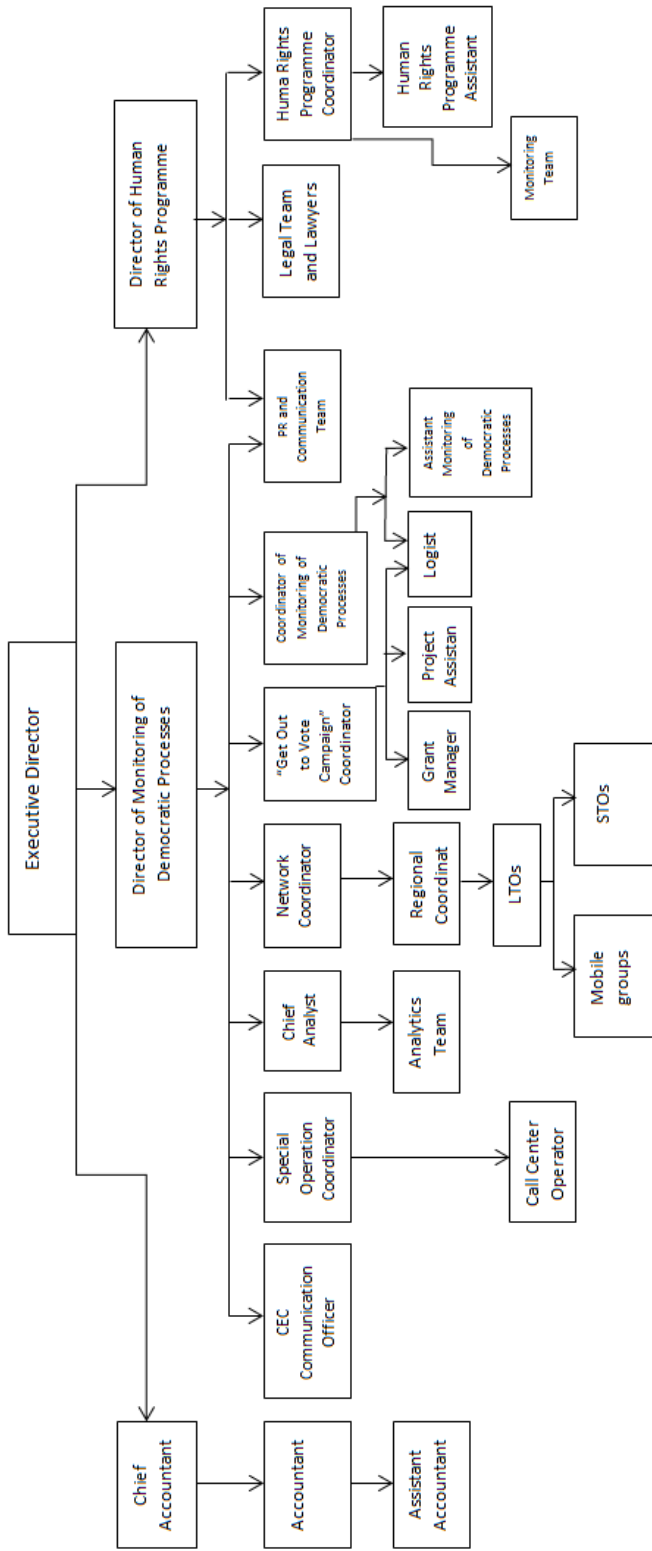
Figure 5.12: Promo-LEX organisation Structure

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2. Professional Staff and High Standards for the Observers

Another feature closely related to the previous point is that organisations involve only professionals in their projects. The hiring procedure includes interviews and background check, particularly for long-term observers and members of the core team. Those observers hired by the Promo-LEX are bound by the contract and are obliged to follow the high standards that are determined by the organisation. During the election campaign all members of Coalitia-2009 open additional to the core team positions of the long-term, medium-term and short-term observers. The IJC and API directors confirmed that these organisations do not rely on volunteers during the election monitoring projects because special qualifications are required to take part in them (e.g. journalistic education, critical thinking, etc): *'We consider election monitoring to be a very important task, therefore we do not involve observers in this activity because they do not have necessary experience of critical analysis, even if it is an average operator' (Petru Makovey, API).*

The leaders of organisations often stress professionalism of their employees and their long-time experience. The full list of requirements stipulated in the Code of Conduct also includes political impartiality and non-involvement in political process, guarantee of precision in observation and professionalism[15], etc. Despite these expectations, it is a difficult task to find people that match all the expectations. Firstly, because majority of citizens participate in political parties (even against their own will):

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[15]Election Observation Mission during the Presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova on the 30th of October 2016. Guide for the Observers, p.15 (in Russian)

It is even worse now. And it matters which party. In 2010 we had just one big party, PCRM. Right now we have this division, like everywhere, even in democratic countries: one party gets one ministry, another gets some other ministry. If you want to have a good job in construction, and the ministry of construction is given to a specific party, then they would come and tell you: 'you have to become a member of this party'.

Secondly political parties pay the observers much higher salaries for much lesser efforts, so they lure observers prepared by Promo-LEX. Finally, a large percentage of the population works or searches for a job abroad, therefore the already trained and prepared observers might not be in the country during elections. One of the Promo-LEX coordinators, Cristina Chebes who is responsible for hiring and training observers concludes:

We have more than 1900 polling stations all over the Republic of Moldova, but we need to have a reserve of observers, so we recruit with 20% reserve of STOs. In 2016 I needed maybe 2100 observers, but we recruited and trained almost 2900. We needed so many because of migration, people go to work, people change their minds, it is difficult when we have local elections, they mostly take place in summer, and a lot of people leave for this time for holidays or just some short-term work.

Although previous literature criticised NGOs for being detached from society, discussions with activists have indicated that this criticism is valid only to a certain degree. Presenting themselves as independent actors not involved with any political party, monitoring NGOs attract people who want to participate in

politics, but consider political parties as selfish, corrupt, and closely tied with the oligarchs. Moreover, the non-investigative, non-partisan NGOs above the political fight are associated not with the political opposition to reforms and policies, but struggle against non-democratic oligarchic rule. As of October 2017, the IRI opinion polls reported that 91% of citizens considered that the country was governed in the interest of some groups, not the majority of people[16] and 30% of respondents shared an opinion that corruption is the most present in the Parliament[17]. The high trust of the society and some political actors that activists stated in their interviews, are based on the reputation of the organisations and balanced reporting of electoral results.

Most organisations have used the help of volunteers at the very beginning of their work, but when their missions developed and received enough funding; they preferred to employ professional staff. One of the Prom-LEX core team members conducts interviews and Promo-LEX mission is conducted by two categories of employees: permanent core staff and temporary employees. Permanent employees are paid staff and in the absence of elections they can be involved in other projects. Promo-LEX aims to keep its professional staff and network developed in the regions. Moreover the activists stress that it is very difficult to find observers that correspond to standards established by the organisation. Simultaneously, political parties often compete for observers with the monitoring

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[16]International Republican Institute's (IRI) Center for Insights in Survey Research, 8 November 2017 Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova September-October 2017 'Do you consider the country to be governed in the interest of the majority of people or the interest of some groups?' available at `www.iri.org/resource/` `moldova-poll-public-satisfaction-plummets-concerns-over-economy-and-corruption-persis` (access 20 September 2019)

[17]International Republican Institute's (IRI) Center for Insights in Survey Research, 8 November 2017 Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova September-October 2017 "Where, in your opinion, is corruption most present in Moldova?" available at `www.iri.org/resource/` `moldova-poll-public-satisfaction-plummets-concerns-over-economy-and-corruption-persist` (access 20 September 2019)

organisations and even 'steal' trained short-term observers from Promo-LEX offering them higher payment. Activists often stress that payment received by the STOs is very modest ($20 to $30 for almost 3 days of work) and parties are able to pay more generously per diem for one day of monitoring. This also explains why organisations have to find more observers than there are polling stations in the country.

3. Balanced Reporting

The main result of the election observation mission is usually presented at the final report issued shortly after election day and presented to a wider public at the press-conference. Every final (and the most widely read) report finishes with the summary of concerns and recommendations for the policy makers and different state agencies. As sometimes NGOs are being criticised for treating a final report as an ultimate goal of the projects conducted by organisations, observers from Moldova have stressed that often reports mean just a beginning of their work that they continue doing using other activities (advocacy and cooperation or educational events).

From interviews and reports themselves it is clear that Promo-LEX is trying to present a balanced picture through not only providing information about negative sides, but also highlighting positive changes. At the same time, it indicates the certain degree of responsiveness of the state institutions to the criticism of the civil sector. For example, the Promo-LEX stresses the development of the projects related to voters' education and overall better performance of the electoral management bodies. In 2010 it points at the better treatment of civil society actors compared to the previous years. The possible reason for this change might be a big scandal with pressure on ENEMO observers occurred before July 2009 elections.

Another example is the topic of voting in the separatist region of Transnistria. Although in 2010 Promo-LEX has established a nation-wide mission to observe elections in the whole country it traditionally pays particular attention to the organisation of elections for the residents of Transnistria. Despite the persisting difficulties, Promo-LEX notes positive changes related to the voting of the Transnistrian citizens e.g. increased the number of precincts where residents could vote (from 11 in 2009 to 21 in 2010 and 26 polling stations in 2014). After the 2014 elections, Promo-LEX has stopped giving a unidimensional estimation of the electoral process and situating elections on the continuum between 'free and fair' and 'not free and fair'. As stressed by the Coalitia 2009 secretary *'this estimation is constraining'*. He stresses that the organisation *'decided to make a coherent argument about what happened. We did not want our estimation to stick in the memory, but stress certain situations that occurred during elections'*.

Officially, Promo-LEX does not set the goal to collect evidence that supports the reported information because *'Promo-LEX is not an investigative body'* *(P.Postica, Promo-LEX)*. Some LTOs explained that only information based on evidence is presented in the reports, particularly if this information concerns electoral violations. Evidence can be presented in the form of a picture of video or any information from secondary sources collected during the field work. Publicising issues and disclosing information about misconduct is the main strategy that all observers use. In this case unsubstantiated claims may spoil the reputation and present an organisation as partisan and conclusions in reports unreliable.

Table 5.9: Promo-LEX Reporting Strategy Example

	April 2009 Final Report	July 2009 Final Report	November 2010 Final Report	November 2014 Final Report
positive	Not reported	Not reported	The civil society played an active role in the electoral campaign by means of monitoring the electoral campaign and raising the awareness of the voters about the importance of voting. (p.19)	The campaign was monitored by at least two groups of non-governmental organisations – the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and the Civic Coalition "Civic Control – November 30, 2014 Elections".
negative	The independent observers have been obstructed at some polling stations" (p.19)	Selective accreditation of international observation missions and the systematic harassment by the authorities of accredited international observers does not contribute to increasing the transparency of the electoral process in Moldova. (p.8)	On election day, observers in 13 polling stations have been denied access to the requested information regarding the electoral process. Cases of intimidating observers by representatives of electoral competitors and PEB committee members have been reported.(p.22)	During the election campaign, at least 16 cases of observer intimidation were recorded. (p.19)

External Strategies of Election Monitoring Organisations in Moldova

Due to the less receptive political context transactional activism in Moldova relies on cooperation between monitoring organisations and strict division of spheres of interest. Observers in Moldova can only monitor the process, but legally have no right to submit complaints or participate in legal cases concerning violations. Despite change in the government in 2010 and pro-European turn in politics, civil society remained insulated from the political actors. Limited channels of access are used for the educational and advocacy activities.

Table 5.10: External Strategies of the Election Monitoring Organisations in Moldova

Method	Example from Moldova NGOs
Coalition building	Domestic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections – 2009; International: membership in ENEMO, EPDE participation in events by other IGOs
Labour division between domestic NGOs	On the lowest level of projects and specific monitoring tasks.
Cooperation with the state actors	Consulting, educational activities, events
Advocacy	Party financing and gender quotas laws
Abstaining from street politics/bottom-up mobilisation	Coalitia-2009 abstained from participation in protests in 2009 and from support of any political actor
Legitimacy through the international laws	Application of the international election monitoring standards to the domestic monitoring missions
Promoting change of values and culture	Voters educational programmes, introduction of media literacy programmes through schools and higher educational establishments
'Preventive reporting'	Publicizing results of elections based on PVT before the official announcement.

1. Coalition building among Domestic Monitoring Organisations

In Moldova election observation is conducted under the auspices of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections 'Coalitia 2009'. Launched in Chisinau in November 2008 as a voluntary union of civic organisations, Coalitia 2009 was the third union of NGOs formed for the purpose of electoral monitoring. Previously similar initiatives were launched in 2005 for monitoring of the upcoming parliamentary elections and 2007 local elections. Coalitia 2009 was formed of major national and local NGOs, movements, clubs and grass-root initiatives. Initially its main purpose was to control elections in April 2009, but it remains active until present without changing its title. Coalitia 2009 is a hierarchical organisation with the Board that makes decisions on behalf of the organisation. The main organisations involved in the Coalitia 2009 from its inception were the largest and the most reputable national NGOs such as, the League for Human Rights Defence 'LADOM', the Association for Participatory Democracy (ADEPT), Centrul CONTACT, Promo-LEX, Legal Advice Center (APCJM), Centrul Independent de Jurnalism (CIJ), Asociația Presei Independente (API), Asociația Presei Electronice din Moldova (APEL), Centrul Național de Studii și Informare pentru Problemele Femeii "Parteneriat pentru Dezvoltare" (CPD) and Consiliul Național al Tineretului din Moldova (CNTM). Number of smaller organisations were not involved in monitoring, but joined the Coalition-2009 to create the stronger impact of the message sent by the members. According to the interviews and Coalitia's reports, in 2005 the total number of monitoring organisatios that comprised Coalition for Free and Fair elections was as large as 200, and Coalition 2007 included almost all the same organisations. While in 2009 there were roughly 70 actors involved, by 2016 there were less than half members left. One of the main explanations for decrease in membership is the improvement of election quality in Moldova and rise of pro-Western government,

that made some organisations conclude that the Coalitia 2009 has fulfilled its aim. At the same time, some participants confirmed that cooperation within the organisation became less organised after the threat from the major 'common enemy' disappeared (see Appendix C, figures C65 - C67).

Importantly none of these coalitions has been initiated by any of Moldovan civil society actors, but was called upon by the Eastern European Foundation[18] that offers support and funding to organisations/NGO coalitions or specific projects. Since 1993, the EEF has invested more than USD 4 million in the development of civil society actors, private enterprise, and public policy in Moldova[19]. As described by EEF, the Coalition's activities are 'strictly non-partisan and include projects on the observation of the election campaign, monitoring of the elections' coverage by media, civic and electoral education, provision of legal assistance to journalists, legal advice to voters, exit-poll'[20]. The Secretary of the Coalitia 2009 described it as an example of 'success story' in organisation of such a union. Similar initiatives were called upon in Ukraine, but failed to organize a stable NGO coalition. Moldovan successful experience of coalition building can be explained by the relatively small space for activity and limited resources available to the NGOs created good conditions for the cooperation among the organisations. As stressed by the Secretary of the Coalitia 2009, its first aim was to provide a discussion platform for its members to decide how to use financial resources that are available for the NGOs in Moldova: *In more than 90% of cases funding comes from foreign countries while in Moldova nobody gives money to NGOs that observe elections or defend human rights* (interview with the Coalitia 2009 secretary). The second aim of this union was to coordinate the position

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[18]Available at the EEF website: `http://www.eef.md/index.php?l=e`(Access 03 July 2018)

[19]Coalitia-2009 Evaluation, June-July 2009 `http://comunicate.md/upload/1683_1682_SoW-Evaluation-C2009_projects_approaches.pdf` (Access 03 July 2018)

[20]ibid, p.1

of civil society activists about the quality of elections and represent one opinion of all actors. This was expected to strengthen the impact of the message sent by the civil society to the domestic political actors and international players interested in Moldovan elections.

> *Of course, it was not intended to be a permanent body. It was intended to be a platform that joins efforts to solve the problem and then disappear. You don't need a platform just to have a platform. The platform is relevant as long as there is a problem.*

> *(A. Brihidin, EEF)*

Since 2005 coalitions have been formed as hierarchical organisations with the Council as a governing body, secretariat for the technical assistance, and diverse groups of smaller participants. The nine largest NGOs with national coverage usually form the Council of the Coalitia i.e. the decision-making board. This procedure of the governing body formation and the whole decision-making process is often criticised as not being entirely transparent. At the same time, those organisations constituting the Council are known for being the most visible monitoring organisations working on the national level and, according to the Secretary of the Coalitia they carry all the union's activities.

Nonetheless, discussion about formalisation and institutionalisation of the Coalitia-2009 remain only vague plans in this period of time. At the same time, participation in these Coalitions for Free and Fair elections keeps declining. According to the interviews and reports by the Coalition itself, in 2005 the total number of NGOs that comprised Coalition for Free and Fair elections was as large as 200, and Coalition 2007 included almost all the same organisations, while in 2009 there were roughly 70 actors involved, while by 2016 there were less than

half members left. NGO leaders stress that this format of cooperation is crucial for the civil society in Moldova and in 2017 discussed attempts to revive and improve the functioning of the Coalition. Partly revival of Coalitia 2009 was related to autocratic trends visible in Moldova after 2014.

2. Labour Division among Monitoring Organisations

Civil society space is rather limited in Moldova and NGOs have to divide their tasks to avoid overlaps. Initially, one of the main tasks of Coalitia 2009 was to help monitoring organisations to negotiate division of funding and ensure as little overlap as possible. At the same time, organisations show high levels of cooperation and in some spheres labour division is not obvious. Promo-LEX is the only organisation that performs comprehensive election monitoring in Moldova where civil society space is limited and no co-existence of similar NGOs would be possible. Similarly, CDD is the only organisation that covers gender issues in the electoral process. Nonetheless outside of the electoral monitoring, Promo-LEX conducts projects related to fighting domestic violence and human trafficking that are very close to gender-related issues. Even more vivid example exists in the field of media monitoring: there are two organisations that monitor media performance, API and IJC, and their self-description and expertise are very similar. NGO representatives explained that during election campaigns their monitoring projects are conducted together because this helps to combine scarce resources, cover a large number of issues and present findings with a stronger voice:

> *Our organisations are strategic partners, when it comes to big projects,*
> *we conduct them together and this only adds quality to our monitor-*
> *ing. Moreover, one organisation can be silenced, with two it might*
> *be more difficult...so, it adds weight to our organisation and the*

Coalition as a whole.

In such a partnership one organisation has a leading role when it applies for funding and submits a final report, while another organisation only outsources some part of the project. The IJC Director explains that the leading role in monitoring projects depends on external funding: *Sometimes we have a leading role, sometimes API, depends who finds donors to support the project... If we have some grant, we cover some parts, like TV and radio and they cover online media.* In turn, Promo-LEX also engages with observation of the regional media outlets looking into specific aspects of media usage by political parties.

Labour division in Moldova is less developed compared to similar NGOs in post-Soviet countries. The network of election monitoring NGOs is so tight and well-connected that division of tasks goes on the level of each monitoring project while in broader fields there are visible overlaps.

3. Abstaining from the Street Politics

In the interviews NGO representatives stressed that Coalitia-2009 took part in the electoral protests in 2009 and did not get involved in the anti-corruption protests in 2015. That obviously does not mean that anyone affiliated with these organisations ignored the rallies, but rather illustrates that Coalitia-2009 members frame themselves as actors above any kind of political struggle and never get associated with events that might cast any doubt on their objectivity and neutrality. The Coalitia-2009 secretary Nicolay Panfil mentioned in the interview that *"...on the day when stones were thrown into the Parliament, Coalitia-2009 representatives met at 9 am and to discuss our final statement. When at 10-11 am our colleagues called us and told what was happening, we realised that nobody will attend our press conference because media was busy with other things..."*.

Furthermore, he recalled that his colleagues from Coalitia-2009 organisations

advised against participation in these protests and he does not know if anybody participated in these rallies. Coincidentally or intentionally protestors named themselves as 'Coalition for Elections' and this raised some questions among the NGO representatives, whether this was done to make Coalitia-2009 NGOs scapegoats and direct government's anger at them. Authorities immediately demanded clarifications on the Coalitia-2009 involvement in protests:

> *After that we have received a letter from the Ministry of Justice to explain what part Coalitia-2009 took in the organisation of these protests and mass unrest. They attempted to link us with that 'Coalition' and all those destroyed buildings. Almost simultaneously they started pressing organisations through the fiscal agencies.*

Participation in such events can only harm the reputation of Coalitia 2009 members, furthermore, NGO leaders claim that they rely on different tactics to influence the quality of elections and do their best to avoid contention and appear biased. They stressed their professionalism and doubted that protests can solve issues with election quality or lead to democratisation.

4. Cooperation with the State Agencies

Coalitia 2009 members have experienced increased state pressure in the form of additional inspections and interventions in the activities of the donor organisations. In 2009, simultaneously with protests, several state agencies controlled by PCRM organized 'audit raids' on the NGOs demanding information on funding and activities and accusing donors and local NGOs in political activity in Moldova. When being asked about Coalitia-2009 relationships with the state, members of organisations describe the time of PCRM domination (until 2009) as a period of oppression of the civil society actors and very limited space for any activity for the non-state actors. The pressure from PCRM controlled inspectors could be

only resisted by the coalition of NGOs. Therefore, organisations usually release joint statements only and try to attract as much domestic and foreign attention as possible. As a result of the government's hostility towards civil society in 2009 the civic coalition became tighter; it has relied on the domestic cooperation and constant dialog with the foreign donor organisations as well as public statements to inform Moldovan citizens.

After monitoring elections organisations might develop follow-up projects that require cooperation with various state agencies. They work together with the CEC representatives, conduct seminars for various actors, and clarify new developments in the legal system. The scope of these actions can be quite broad: for example, Promo-LEX conducted meetings with the representatives of political parties, CEC, seminars for the police offices. Promo-LEX even introduced a special post of the representative to CEC to ensure permanent cooperation with the electoral management body. Pavel Postica, th director of the 'Monitoring of Democratic Processes'programme acknowledges that this was a symbolic action to indicate the importance of this cooperation. Furthermore, there is also unofficial cooperation between the Central Electoral Commission and Promo-LEX based on the 'goodwill' and partnership:

> For example, we have to publish our report before a press-conference at 10 o'clock in the morning. . . but we have a draft report several hours before the press conference, so we send it by e-mail to the CEC, so they could react if journalists approach them with some questions. This is cooperation and of course, we do not get any remarks or corrections in return, we just help them to prepare.

Although in recent years election monitoring organisations had more opportunities to cooperate with different state agencies, such work is often based on Coali-

tia 2009 efforts. Cooperation between civil society and state actors is realised in several directions: firstly, educational activities for different state agencies. For example, training for police organised in May 2017 to instruct them about electoral procedures. NGOs also organise different events to facilitate dialogue between civil society and state agencies such as debates and conferences. Finally, monitoring organisations are actively engaged in advocacy campaigns to facilitate improvement of laws and regulations related to elections.

5. Advocacy Campaigns

Although advocacy campaigns were not the main focus of the discussion during the interviews, activists have frequently mentioned them as one of the methods widely used to influence government decisions, policies and evolution of electoral legislation. Cooperation with state actors developed after pro-Western coalition came in power helped organisations to gain access and increase their law-making efforts. For example, Promo-LEX representatives participated in the discussion of the amendments in the party financing law in 2012-2013. Their idea was to introduce several levels of responsibility for underreporting of the expenses for political campaigns. During 2014 elections one of the parties was excluded from the competition for not reporting its expenses for the campaign.

Gender equality related laws are another example of lobbying efforts by the Coalitia-2009 members. The gender quota of 40% for the party lists was introduced in Moldova in 2015: 'if a political party does not comply, the CEC will not register the list' (Alexei Buzu, interview). Partly this was the result of the lobbying efforts of the civil society. At the same time, initiatives related to the financial incentives of more gender balanced representation were not accepted by the Parliament:

Our proposal was to give more money to small parties who have more

women elected, both on the local and national levels. But they did
not accept it. And now we are advocating for these changes, to give
more money to those parties who have more young people (up to
30) and more women elected.

(A. Buzu, CPD)

6. Promoting Change of Values

NGO representatives stress that they put a lot of efforts in promotion of so-
cietal change through the changes in values and attitudes of citizens, particularly
young ones. For example, the media monitoring organisations were advocating
for the introduction of 'media literacy' courses in the curriculum of schools and
universities:

We started from educating journalists and recently we have expanded
our project to work with students and school children. Together with
the Ministry of Education we work on the programme of 'Media Ed-
ucation, Media Literacy'. We plan to introduce it in the primary
school, then to the middle school and high school later. Everything
is ready, but we wait for the response [of the Ministry]. They keep
saying that they are opened for cooperation, but when we start work-
ing some obstacles start appearing.

(N. Gogu, IJC)

IJC and API also create some educational materials to provide citizens with
the information about different types of media content, how the quality news
programmes should be structured, etc. They create some video tutorials and
share information in the press. Both organisations support online platforms to

combat fake news and dissemination of distorted information (e.g. mediacrit-ica.md or stopfals.md) Another example is the 'Get Out to Vote Campaign' by Promo-LEX aimed at informing the Moldovan citizens about elections and electoral rights that is realised only once per 4 years. In 2016 the GOTV campaign was realized through videos and TV debates in partnership with several channels with the national coverage. According to the information from the activists, these debates drew particular attention during the second round of elections and were watched by at least 230,000 people on TV and 700,000 in total including online. In the framework of this GOTV campaign Promo-LEX gave small grants to the local organisations to organize local campaigns and disseminate flyers and meet the electorate in remote localities. Although it is hard to measure the impact of such programmes, NGO leaders agree that voter education and cultivation of democratic values is a very important task undertaken by the civil society.

7. 'Preventive Reporting'

Similarly to the Georgian watchdogs, Promo-LEX conducts parallel vote tabulation on the election day drawing conclusions based on the representative national sample of precincts. PVT was used for the first time during the first national monitoring campaign in 2010. The 299 sample of precincts allowed to calculate electoral results of 2010 Parliamentary elections before they were announced by CEC and make a reliable forecast of the overall electoral results (see for example, figure5.13). After this successful experience PVT became traditional preventive reporting tool used by Promo-LEX: *'On the next after election day we always issue results based on PVT and Quick Count'*, confirmed one of the Promo-LEX cor team members.

Importantly, information collected by observers and results of their calculation are trusted by other actors. Promo-LEX director recalled that in 2014

one political candidate requested recount of votes, but the Constitutional Court rejected these demands because the election outcome was confirmed by the PVT results.

Such 'preventive reporting' techniques allow observers to publicise the preliminary outcome of the campaign because results from a smaller sample are calculated faster than across the country. If officially announced results are very different from those announced by the observers, this might cast doubt on the fairness of tabulation and legitimacy of outcome.
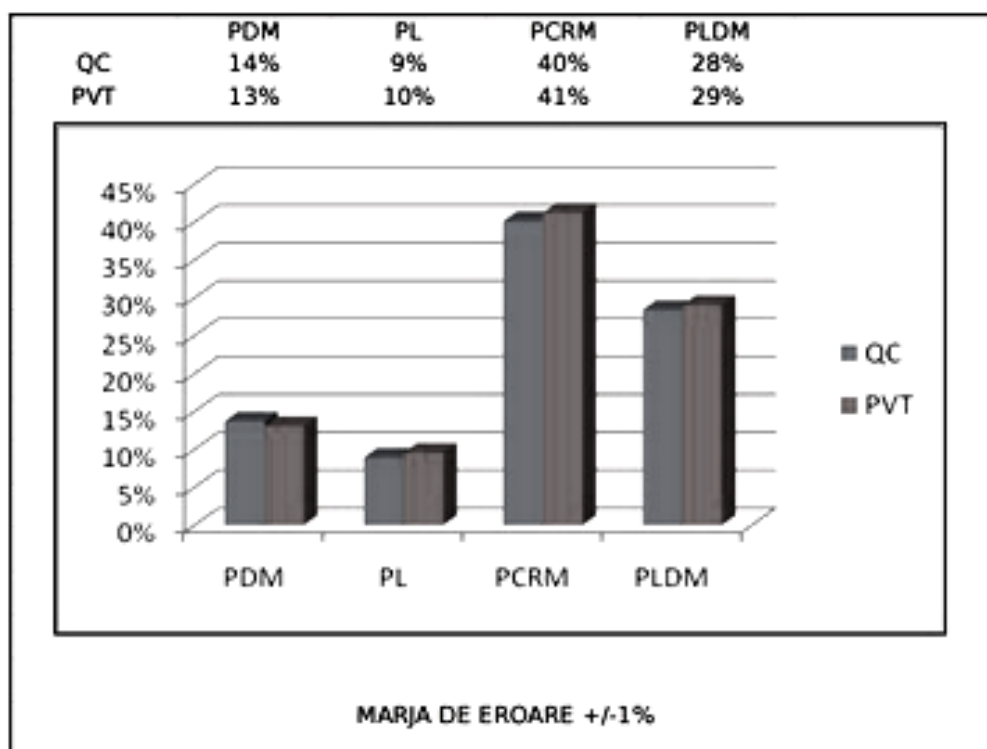
Figure 5.13: Promo-LEX PVT Results: 2010 Parliamentary Elections

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5.5   Election Monitoring in Moldova: Conclusion

Election monitoring missions appeared in Moldova in the 1990s and developed in a strong opposition with the ruling political elites. Particularly pressure on civil society became visible during the Communist Party rule between 2001 and 2009. Strategies of civil society actors and development of transactional activism has been strongly influenced by these contextual factors. Although NGO representatives notice improvement of electoral integrity after PCRM was voted out of power, in general openness of state actors towards civil society could be described as a 'inverted U pattern': during the PCRM domination elections were manipulated and civil society was oppressed, the 2009 political crisis opened opportunities for the civil actors to push for the improvement of election integrity, because opposition was interested in presenting themselves as 'democratically oriented'. Period between 2010 and 2014 was labelled as a 'Golden Age' of civil society in Moldova when state actors were the most open and receptive towards civil society. The 2014 parliamentary elections indicated that pro-European coalition is willing to skew the playing field and benefit from its position as much as PCRM did before. The 2016 presidential elections resulted in complete disillusionment about the willingness of the political elites to adhere to the improvement of electoral quality and democratisation of Moldova. Reports compiled by activists stress that as soon as in power, every political actor, regardless of the pro-EU or pro-Russian agenda, attempts to manipulate elections and skew the playing field in its own favour.

Furthermore, Moldova is often characterised as a 'captured state' in which state institutions are used by oligarchs for personal profits rather than for serving citizens. As suggested by some activists, the selfish and opportunistic elites exploit ideological slogans in the instrumental way to receive support from the

Western states or from Russia. The pro-European slogans allow them to request more money from the EU while openly pro-Russian president from the Socialist Party makes Russia happy allowing 'to show some pro-Russian foreign president on Russian TV' (P. Makovey, API). Such 'Pharisaic' approach to politics and policy making leaves Moldovan society fragmented and slows down the pace of reforms. Civil society activists often stress the low quality of Moldovan elites as an important factor in lack of improvement in electoral performance and democratic change: Moldovan elites are more interested in self-enrichment rather than improvement of the conditions for the citizens. Moreover, the country's core decision-makers have been associated with the previous undemocratic regime being part of the former Soviet *nomenklatura* (Crowther and Matonyte 2007, 296).

Except for a short period between 2010 and 2014, civil society remained mostly excluded from the political process and policy making in Moldova. Therefore, cooperation between domestic civil society actors remains one of the main strategies for the election monitoring organisations. Strategic repertoire associated with transactional activism in Moldova relied on cooperation between civil society actors for a long time, particularly in the field of election monitoring. Coalition for Free and Fair Elections was established as the main tool to pressure the ruling party and improve the quality of elections in 2005 and 2007. The 2009-2010 political crises brought new opportunities for the Moldovan civil society who increased its participation in the political process due to the unexpected changes in governing coalition. Frequent elections made domestic election monitors one of the most important and visible forces of the Moldovan civil society. Political crisis also increased attention of the international actors like the EU and, in turn, increased budgets of the monitoring missions. Stabilisation of the political situation and victory of the pro-EU political parties in 2010 and 2014

was viewed as a victory of democratic forces, including civil society, and a step towards democratisation of Moldova. USAID CSO sustainability report praised mobilisation of local NGOs in 2009 and their enhanced participation and co-operation with the new government. In this period members of Coalitia 2009 established dialogue with the new ruling parties and enlarged the electoral monitoring agenda including issues like equal gender representation, realisation of the rights of disabled people to vote and reform of political parties and electoral campaign financing laws.

At the same time, interviewees stressed poor performance of the Coalitia 2009 in the past few years and need for reform. Cooperation between NGOs remains the main strategy to push for certain reforms; it has declined considerably when the 'common enemy' has disappeared and hopes for new democratic political powers emerged. Certainly, political elites are central to the process of democratisation in any post-Soviet country and in case of Moldova elites are not interested in implementation of democratic changes. In turn, gradual consolidation of elites and closure of political space after 2014 parliamentary elections ruled the civil society activists out of the political game. Interviewees often stressed that after the 2016 presidential elections the need to revive Coalitia 2009 and make it more functional became obvious and monitoring organisations started working on making this format more democratic and attracting new participants.

Although interviews with the observers have confirmed limitations of the political context, lack of sufficient resources and non-participatory culture of the Moldovan society, they also suggested that the picture is not as gloomy as it is usually painted in the civil society studies literature. Firstly, election monitoring organisations are fully aware of these limitations and attempt to work in this restrictive context. Despite very limited political space and resources, local activists have developed strategies that help them to achieve goals related

to the improvement of election quality. These strategies are based not only on cooperation with various civil society actors, but also professionalised approach, strict discipline and legitimacy based on the perfect reputation and international standards. This allows organisations to be an independent side in the political competition performing the 'watchdog' duties and stressing their status 'above the political fight'.

Development of reputation is one of the key strategies that helps cooperation with domestic and international actors. Monitoring organisations present themselves as independent actors who work to provide citizens and foreign donors with unbiased information about the electoral process. They often stress that citizens cannot gain such information from any political actor, hence they need a reliable source of information on the quality of elections. In turn, citizens often prefer to work with local watchdogs as a way to avoid participation in political parties which are perceived as corrupt. This helps civil society actors not only survive in the context of the captured state, but also became an active part of political discussion and slowed down autocratic tendencies through links with the Western states, educational projects and information provision on electoral integrity in Moldova.

Election monitoring organisations also serve as a source of trustworthy information about the political process for various international actors, particularly the EU and US. To a certain extent Moldovan authorities even use monitoring organisations as a cover to represent themselves as democratic pro-European political actors opened for the dialogue with civil society. The working groups and consultations serve this purpose of creating visibility of the dialogue with the civil society. In turn, for Moldova it is very important to be perceived as a democratising state because Western partners link financial aid to the compliance with international commitments that include development of civil society

and free and fair elections (Mcdonagh 2008).

Obviously, it is hard to pinpoint the exact role of election monitoring efforts for the improvement of election quality in Moldova. Interviewees suggested that since 2010 the most blatant fraud and violence against observers was not used by the incumbents any more, but this did not mean that elections became free and fair. Simultaneously with the consolidation of power in hands of the Democratic Party, electoral manipulations became more sophisticated and hidden (e.g. use of the controlling bodies to skew the political field). Further, media manipulation, administrative pressure and use of state resources for electoral campaigns are widely applied. This evolution indicates that political actors abstain from committing blatant fraud that can be publicised and condemned by the voters and foreign actors. Such 'outcome' pushes election monitoring organisations to expand their missions, cover a bigger number of issues and go beyond monitoring of short election campaigns. Nonetheless, the civil society actors themselves stress the positive dynamics and insist that their work with the representatives of state bodies often results in positive changes of the legal framework related to elections. At the same time they criticise the lack of or delayed implementation of these reforms as well as biased approach towards punishment of political actors for electoral violations.

Beyond electoral monitoring, these organisations focus on advocacy of legal changes and introduction of international democratic norms into the domestic legal system. As interviewees stressed, changes proposed by election monitoring organisations are only accepted if they can benefit the political coalition in power (e.g. opening of more polling stations abroad or giving more opportunities to young people to vote have benefited the 'Liberal' coalition). Other changes proposed by the civil society actors can be accepted, but often suffer from poor implementation. Recent authoritarian backsliding decreased the potential impact

of the electoral monitoring organisations on the policy-making, although they cannot be excluded from the process completely.

To summarise, transactional activism in Moldova developed under the pressure from the state actors and relies on cooperation between NGOs to pressure non-democratic rules with the united and strong voice of truth. Although between 2009 and 2016 elections were not perfectly free and fair, it would be wrong to say that the presence of the professional observers has no impact on the political integrity in Moldova. The professionalized approach and legitimacy based on the international standards allows Coalitia 2009 NGOs to be a third party in the political competition that is not interested in supporting any particular force. Their credibility of Coalitia 2009 is based on impartiality and financial independence from the internal actors. At the same time, they serve as a source of trustworthy information about the electoral performance and context in which elections are conducted for internal and external actors. Reports by Promo-LEX are often cited in the research articles and policy papers; together with other NGOs they participate in law making and advocating for changes at the highest level. Once cooperation mechanisms between civil society and state are being established, it is hard to silence them again and it will require stronger consolidation of the power. Moreover, every rollback in dialogue between civil society and authorities faces loud protests that also attract unwanted international attention from the international actors who have certain leverage on the Moldovan politicians.

To conclude, the strategies described above are employed by the pro-democratic organisations that have developed in Moldova with the extensive assistance of the foreign donors who provide organisations with the financial aid and help to develop important skills e.g. cooperation and coalition building. Probably more important field in which Coalitia 2009 are active is development and lobbying of

legislation and promotion of societal change through educational activities. This is a traditional type of work performed by the professional monitoring organisations in the post-Soviet states because of the passivity of the general population, low involvement in civil society and low trust to the NGOs. In general, activists stress the positive dynamics in the opportunities for cooperation between civil society actors and state bodies as well as changes in values. Nonetheless, they also confirm that all reforms, including those suggested by NGOs, face problems with the implementation in Moldova. Only those reforms that might benefit ruling parties during elections are implemented regardless of the opinion of the civil society (e.g. the increased threshold to enter the parliament).

6 Election Monitoring in Ukraine (2006-2014)

The chapter provides in-depth exploration of transactional activism in Ukraine focusing on the strategies of election monitoring organisations. The main aim of this chapter is to reconstruct development of election monitoring NGOs and their strategies explaining how they are shaped by the political context and available resources. The chapter focuses on the period between 2006 and 2014 following gradual autocratic backsliding and development of civil society under these conditions. This presents activists' own understanding of this period and their views of civil society in the political process and, particularly, for the improvement of election quality. Opening section of the chapter briefly discusses historical development of post-Soviet Ukraine focusing on civil society. Next it introduces Ukrainian monitoring NGOs with a short description of monitoring missions' development. Following sections describe political context and resources as the main determinants of organisations' strategies. Next, the chapter summarises internal development and external strategies of monitoring watchdogs. Concluding part discusses determinants of transactional activism in Ukraine and the role that monitoring organisations play in this country.

6.1 Historical and Socio-economic Development of post-transition Ukraine

Together with Georgia and Moldova, Ukraine is located on the intersection of geopolitical interests and is constantly torn between Western Europe and Russia. In 1991 Ukraine emerged as an independent state although for several hundred years it has been an integral part of tsarist Russian Empire and later of the Soviet Empire and often considered Russia's 'sphere of geopolitical interest'. This big geopolitical game between Russia and the West and controversies caused by the interplay of different interests deeply affect the Ukrainian society, electoral performance and structure of political opportunities available to civil society in the country.

Possible the most important domestic factor determining electoral behaviour and election outcomes is deep political and cultural division between Western and Eastern Ukraine often stressed in scholarly works (D'Anieri, Kravchuk, and Kuzio 1999; Besters-Dilger 2009; Hesli, et al. 1998; Kuzio 2015; Motyl 1993) and frequently mentioned by the activists during the interviews. The Western provinces (oblasts) of modern Ukraine (Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Zakarpattya) belonged to Austria-Hungary until 1918 and were annexed by the Soviet Union only in 1939-1945. Thus, researchers note considerable cultural and socio-economic differences from the Eastern part of Ukraine, and their similarity to the Central European neighbours. Importantly, the Western Ukraine's experience with totalitarian system and Soviet oppression was shorter and that played an important role in later emergence of pro-democratic sentiments and more active civil society in this region (Motyl 1993; Stewart 2009). Despite these historical divisions, the Crimea separatist crisis that took place in 1994 was resolved

peacefully, nonetheless, in the frozen form it remained until 2014 and was used by Russia's rising imperialist demands. The question of territorial integrity and regional tensions overshadowed political development of post-Soviet Ukraine: for example, White and McAllister (2009) point at the 'enduring salience of regional division' in the attitudes towards the Orange Revolution among the Western and Eastern Ukrainians. Authors concluded that a large portion of the population perceived the Orange Revolution as damaging to their living standards.

Previous studies indicate that Ukraine went through considerable economic hardships during the first two decades of independence due to the interdependence and biased production allocation during the communist period (i.e. domination of heavy industry), slow reform process, unequal wealth distribution and high levels of corruption (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2003b). Kuzio (2015, 51-52) stresses that poor economic performance reduced support of independence and democratisation, particularly in the Eastern Ukraine and reinforced demands for reintegration with Russia. Economic development in Ukraine is also highly regionalized with large enterprises concentrated in the East, while small and medium businesses who form Ukraine's middle class, dominate in the Western regions ('oblasts'). The Western oriented middle class, who serves as a fertile basis for the civil society development and public mobilisation, have tried to enter Ukrainian politics on multiple occasions (Kuzio, 2015, 88).

To summarise, the post-Soviet political landscape in Ukraine was dominated by two major cleavages related to the national identity and economic performance. Political controversies combined with the slow reform process have hardly facilitated stable development of the civil society sphere in Ukraine. Although the Orange Revolution was a victory of civil society and Western-oriented elite who promised democracy, prosperity and rule of law to the country, the pro-European candidate, Viktor Yushchenko received only 52% of votes during 2004

presidential elections, mostly from the Western part of the country. Clearly, his result did not reflect the will of all Ukrainians who, particularly in the Eastern part voted against the Orange coalition (Simon 2009). Some scholars claim that the Orange Revolution was, in fact, a democratic process i.e. a bloodless transfer of power from unpopular incumbent to opposition through elections (Copsey 2012). Clearly, civil society groups, particularly election monitoring organisations, took a central role in disseminating information about electoral fraud and sparked the Orange Revolution (Tucker 2007). Nonetheless, despite this short-living success, development of civil society was hardly a smooth and uninterrupted process.

6.1.1   Civil Society Development in 2006-2014

Although the strength of the civil society is hard to measure, researchers often look at the numerical expression of participation rates, such as number of NGOs and number of employees as a main feature of the third sector. According to the official statistics offered by Ukrainian State Statistical Service in 2017 more than half of all Ukrainian citizens belonged to some civic association in 2017[1]. Before annexation of Crimean peninsula up to 77% participated in some civic organisations, this number has dropped almost 20% showing how important that region was for the civil society in Ukraine. At the same time, the number of NGOs' employees and volunteers show tremendous regional variation (see table D2 in the Appendix D). Moreover, dynamics of membership are not stable and difficult to compare: while in most of the regions number of civic organisations' number of decrease in membership, some *oblasts* show the opposite trend.

Surprisingly, official statistics does not point at any clear-cut regional pat-

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[1]These numbers exclude shares of the population who work in NGOs registered in Crimea and Sevastopol. Partly sharp drop of average membership rates after 2014 are explained by Crimea's drop out from official Ukrainian statistics due to the Russian occupation

terns of civil society development: trends are rather mixed in the Eastern and Western province. For example, Transcarpathia and L'viv show relatively high levels of participation and neighbouring Rivne and Ivano-Frankivs'k; similarly Zaporizhzhya shows high levels of involvement in NGOs and Luhans'k relatively low. Hence, it is possible to suggest that different historical experiences of the population in the East and West of Ukraine do not explain the whole picture of civil society development. Different levels of civil society participation can also depend on strong regional organisations, presence of leaders and favourable political and legal conditions that facilitate development of NGOs. As it has been highlighted in the first chapter, the number of organisations and share of population involved in NGOs might be a good start to describe civil society development, but not always is the best measurement of the civil society activities and strength (Foa and Ekiert 2017).

The broader national picture of the relationship between civil society and Ukrainian government remained relatively stable since the 1990s. V-Dem ranking suggests that levels of repression remained relatively stable and have decreased only for a short period of time after the Orange Revolution (figure 6.1). Levels of civil society control fluctuated between moderate and substantial since 1990s. At the same time, levels of consultation between NGOs and government remained moderate until 2014: expert rankings suggest that government did not involve civil society in policy making, although it was not completely insulated from the third sector.
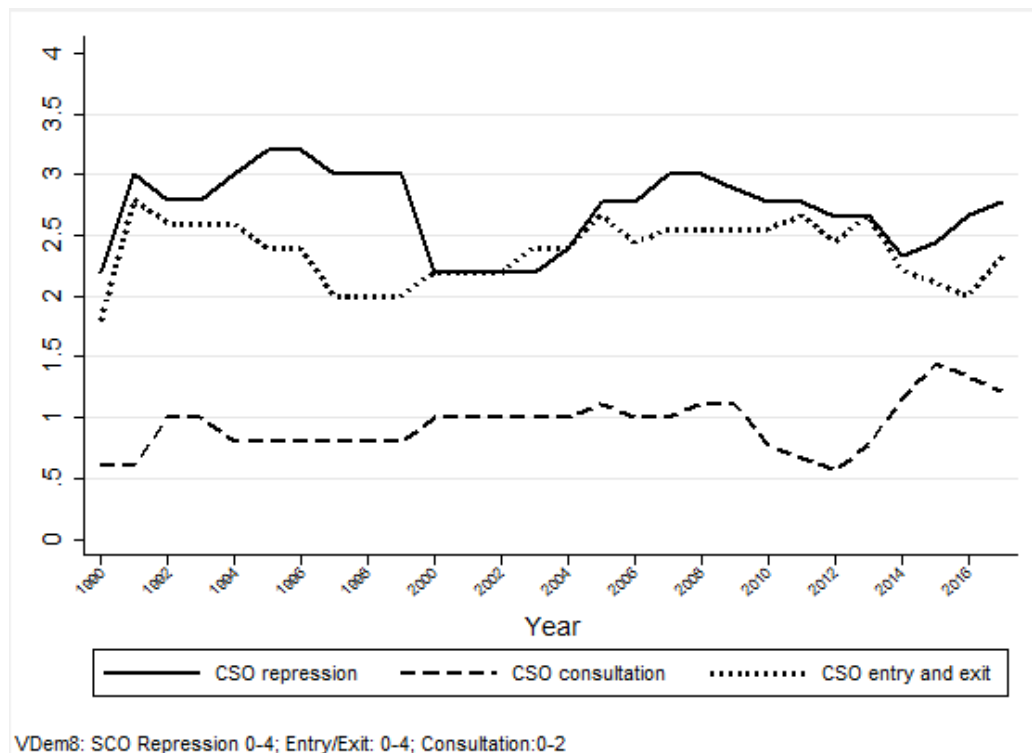
Figure 6.1: V-Dem 8: CSO Entry/Exit, Repression and CSO Participatory Environment in Ukraine

Similarly, the Civil Society Sustainability Index for Ukraine remains relatively stable since the 1990s although different aspects have progressed with different pace. USAID labels civil society in Ukraine among the most sustainable third sectors in the Eastern Europe and Eurasian region. Although financial sustainability remains low, USAID highlights gradual improvements in legal environment, organisational capacity and service provision of the Ukrainian CSOs (see figure 6.2). At the same time, CSO Sustainability Index paints a relatively optimistic picture of the Ukrainian CSOs being actively engaged in advocacy campaigns since 2004. This estimation confirms that CSOs attempts to influence state bodies gradually increased since more than two decades. Similarly, interviewees from Ukraine have mentioned that advocacy campaigns are one of the main fo-

cuses of their activity since the early stages of the NGOs development. At the same time, governmental consultations and engagement with the civil society remained moderate, it is possible to suggest that influence of these campaigns is not as strong as some activists suggested.
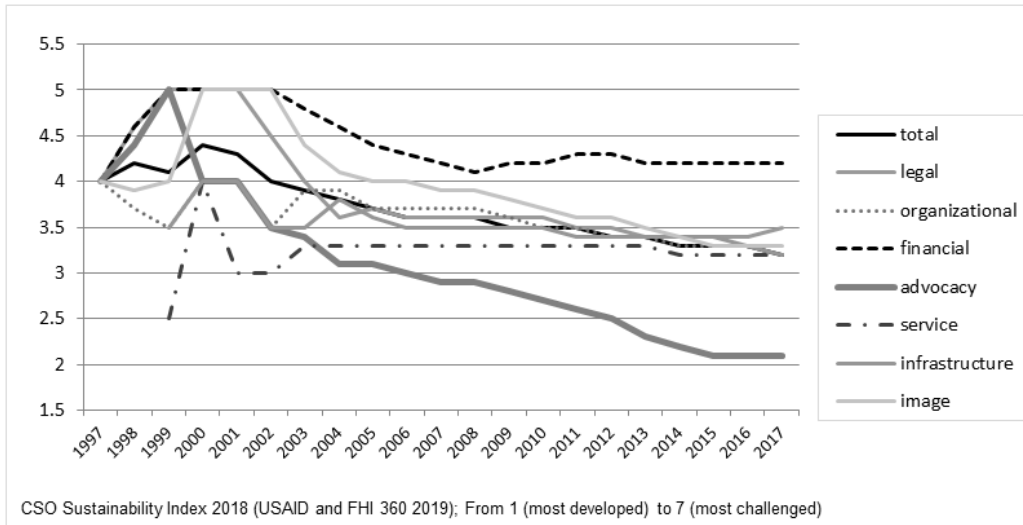
Figure 6.2: CSO Sustainability Index: Ukraine 1990-2017

6.1.2 Election Monitoring Organisations in Ukraine

Election monitoring in Ukraine is performed by several organisations that belong to different niches and emphasise various aspects of the electoral cycle in their activity. Classical watchdog monitoring organisations coexist with the social movement organisations and think tanks that monitor electoral processes from different angles. Out of three country cases, Ukraine can be characterised with the most dynamic civil society with evident 'generational change' among electoral monitoring organisations. The Committee of Ukrainian Voters (here and after CVU) has been the first organisation that appeared in Ukraine as early as 1994 to observe the parliamentary elections. In 2004 another organisation, OPORA

was created by civic activists who met during the 2004 protests and continued working together after the protest wave came to naught. In 2011-2012 new elections-related initiatives have appeared such as CHESNO and CiFRA Group. These groups differ from CVU and OPORA in number of aspects like structure, organisational features and approach towards civic activism. This chapter attempts to grasp these differences and discusses both types of organisations: traditional types of electoral monitoring missions prominent for several decades elsewhere in the post-Soviet space; and new organisations that stress different approaches and strategies in their work. Given the large territory of the country and its diversity, these organisations have different approach towards monitoring and rather sometimes complement each other; at the same time, certain competition for resources can be traced through the interviews and public information.

Election monitoring organisations became an integral part of the civil society landscape in the early 1990-s. The oldest organisation is the Committee of Ukrainian Voters (*Komitet Vybortsev Ukrainy*, CVU) that has been established by the Ukrainian Student Society with the main aim to monitor electoral process. The self-description states that CVU aims at 'activation of citizens to participation in government and realization of their constitutional rights'. The first electoral campaign monitored by CVU was the 1994 parliamentary elections. As early as in 1996 CVU began to diversify its attempts to control not only to the elections itself, but also to the performance of elected officials. At the same time, NGO started running educational campaigns that clarified certain legal changes and reforms introduced in post-Soviet Ukraine.

Historically, the CVU's development peaked in late 1990-s and early 2000s when organisation has not faced competition from other monitoring organisations and at the same time has vast resources at its disposal. According to the CVU director, the largest number of observers were mobilised to monitor 1998

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parliamentary elections (roughly 80% of precincts were covered)[2]. At that time it could support a broad and dense regional structure with several levels of hierarchy: headquarters In Kyiv, regional offices and up to 150 district offices[3]. During the subsequent electoral cycles the number of election day observers mobilised by the CVU has decreased substantially to 5000 observers in 2006 and 4000 in 2007. Later information on the election day monitoring was not shared by the organisation representatives and is not indicated in its reports. In turn, the director of CVU explained that focus shifted from election day to the electoral campaign period and long-term observers played more important role during 2010 and 2012 campaigns.

Elections	Election Date	Monitoring Period	LTO	STO
Parliamentary	26.03.2006	November 2005 – March 2006	27 (November) 225 (March)	5000
Parliamentary	30.09.2007	2 August – 30 September 2007	150	4000
Presidential (I)	17. 01.2010	n/a	n/a	n/a
Presidential (II)	7. 02. 2010	n/a	n/a	n/a
Parliamentary	28 October 2012	n/a	n/a	n/a

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[2]The maximum amount of STOs that could be confirmed through the CVU reports was 24 000 deployed to observe March 31, 2002 Parliamentary elections. Report available at `https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/1400_uk_elect_040902_5.pdf` (Access 12 August 2017)

[3]About the Committee of Ukrainian Voter 2008-2014: "As for 2008 there were CVU had 125 offices of different levels in all regions of Ukraine" (In Ukrainian, available at `http://www.cvu.org.ua/doc.php?lang=ukr&mid=aboutcvu`, last access 13 August2017)

As explained by the director of the CVU, the origination has a mixed structure. National level monitoring campaigns are organised by the headquarters who arrange data collection in a hierarchical manner, while data analysis is conducted by the team in headquarters based on the information that is reported from regional offices to Kyiv. In 'normal' times, between elections, all regional offices are free to choose their own priorities and conduct activities relevant for specific region:

> *I would not say that the structure is hierarchical; all regional organisations choose priorities of their activities for themselves. We have some regional organisations that deal with the reforms of local authorities, some focus their work on village councils, self-governance and decentralisation reform. Some organisations focus more on media, publish their own newspapers and magazines < ... > All these activities are realised under the CVU framework.*

> *(Oleksiy Koshel, CVU director)*

The Kyiv oblast coordinator describes the organisation structure as a branched hierarchical structure with one regional office that is located in the regional centre (Bila Tserkva) and ten local representatives in villages. In turn, the regional office reports to the national headquarters in Kyiv. At the same time, for the national campaigns, electoral monitoring strategy and methodology is defined by the national headquarters and is the same for all regional offices which ensures comparability of monitoring results. Hence, during elections, CVU uses structures similar to other electoral monitoring organisations in the post-Soviet region, while between elections, regional chapters develop their own projects in response to the local demand.

Regional offices are free to decide which projects they want to focus on beyond election monitoring. Such projects can cover assessment of regional legislative bodies, lobbying of local self-governance reform or local media performance and even creation of local media outlets. One of the most active CVU office located in Odesa has its own online media platform 'IzbirKom'[4] that covers important regional and national political news. This diversity is related to the fact that most of the work performed by volunteers: 'we cannot make them do any particular project'.

Although electoral monitoring has always been a priority for CVU, it is engaged in a number of different projects related to the electoral process only indirectly. The CVU director explained that since the organisation grew and developed, some activists became experts in specific fields and started their own projects under the auspices of the organisation. Moreover, the structure allowed regional CVU offices to be very flexible in their activities and prioritise projects that were relevant on the local level only.

OPORA is another nation-wide electoral monitoring organisation that has appeared in Ukraine after the 2004 Orange revolution. Number of OPORA activists have participated in the *Pora!* youth movement. Similar to CVU, it was created by young activists and students on the wave of civil society mobilisation. According to one of the OPORA lawyers many activists met during these momentous events and decided to establish independent monitoring organisations[5]. The OPORA-Lviv was established in 2003 as a local Pora! branch and merged

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[4]Media platform 'IzbirKom' `https://izbirkom.org.ua` (access 01.06.2019)

[5]This information has been also confirmed in the interview with the PORA activist Oleg Kirienko to the online newspaper 'Ukrainska Pravda'. He explained that revolutionary activists established Civic network "OPORA" to monitor the integrity of the electoral process and will publish information about candidates in from the party lists who had chances to get seats in the parliament. After the elections they planned to continue monitoring ' the actions of the authorities, work to establish an effective dialogue between society, government and business, and try to convey to the authorities the problems of ordinary citizens' (Solod'ko 2006)

with the national monitoring network OPORA in 2005. The first national-wide monitoring campaign was conducted during 2007 parliamentary elections and since then OPORA has observed all national and majority of local electoral contests. In the final report 2012 it defined its election monitoring efforts as activity aimed at 'unbiased assessment of the process of preparation and conduction of elections, as well as at prevention of electoral violations through total public control' (OPORA 2012). During the pre-electoral period OPORA monitors all levels of electoral administration (precincts, district electoral commissions and CEC); activists conduct comprehensive check of voter lists, monitor levels of political competition in regions and publicise violations of electoral laws. On the election day OPORA observers are present at selected districts to provide results for the PVT and control performance. The organisation conducts post-election monitoring following the legal processes related to electoral violations. In addition to elections it covers other topics such as monitoring of education system education and performance of local authorities.

Table 6.1: OPORA Monitoring Missions 2007-2012

Elections	Election Date	Monitoring Period	LTO	STO
Parliamentary	30.09. 2007	6 months (April 2007 - September 2007)	54	1500
Presidential	17. 01. 2010 7. 02. 2010	3 months (November 2009 – February 2010)	74	1003
Parliamentary	28.10. 2012	7 months (January 2012 – October 2012)	225	3500

OPORA is based on a dense regional structure of offices and district representatives that sometimes overlap with regional offices of CVU (e.g. in Odesa). Regional representatives are permanently employed with OPORA and engage in other projects between electoral campaigns. The national network and district structures are rather flexible and their operation depends on the electoral campaign:

We have regional coordinators and we have people responsible for monitoring campaigns in districts. Their number depends on how we divide regions before each election campaign. The system is more or less the same, but sometimes we expand [our network]. For example, during the presidential election campaigns in different districts are the same and we need less long-term observers, while during local elections many electoral campaigns take place simultaneously and we need more observers.

(Yuriy Khorunzhy, OPORA Communication Coordinator)

In turn, some projects that are not related to election monitoring are coordinated from the regional offices. For example, since 2008 the Lviv office manages observation of the external independent evaluation in Ukraine (high school graduation exam that also counts as a university entrance exam). Another project that is managed from the L'viv Office is the Publicity Index local self-government bodies based on 200 indicators. Some local offices have separate activity reports and present projects that have been funded independently by foreign donors. Consequently, OPORA has much less hierarchical organisation compared to other election monitoring NGOs in this region; it leaves much flexibility to the local activists for developing their own projects based on the local agenda.

Civil movement **CHESNO** (ЧЕСНО means 'Fairly' or 'Honestly' in Ukrainian) has been initiated in October 2011 by activists and members of Ukrainian NGOs together with the "New Citizen" Partnership a year before the 2012 parliamentary elections. The Movement chose garlic as its emblem to symbolize the 'fight against "evil spirits" in politics'[6]. According to the official information, 150 organisations from all regions joined their efforts to improve the quality of next Rada of the VII convocation. In doing so, they launched the first campaign 'Filter Rada!' (Фільтруй Раду!). During this project activists have analysed performance of candidates following six criteria such as non-involvement in corruption and violation of human rights, income transparency and participation in Parliamentary activities. Despite efforts of the CHESNO movement there were elected 331 MPs who violated the specified criteria. Therefore, the movement continued its activities developing the new project 'Filter the Authorities!' (Фільтруй Владу!) to control Rada's performance and 'CHESNO about the Government' (ЧЕСНО про УРЯД) to analyse ministers' performance.

Before 2015 local elections CHESNO launched the analysis of candidates running for a post in local legislatures. According to some activists, local level is very important due to the number of factors: firstly, due to the process of decentralisation launched in 2014[7]; secondly, unlike the national level, the local legislators and politicians are scrutinized much less and therefore less controlled by the public. One of the CHESNO's analysts, Pavlo Mironov stressed that local level politics are much less competitive, legislative initiatives suggested by political parties holding majorities in local legislatures are almost always approved. In turn, such unanimity does more harm than good to local policies 'because there

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[6] "What is CHESNO" official website, available at `https://www.chesno.org/background` (accessed 09 May 2017)

[7] State Website on Decentralization Reform, available at https://decentralization.gov.ua/en/about (accessed 24 June 2019)

is always room for improvement' (interview with P. Mironov, CHESNO).

The movement's methodology is based on the analysis of the opened sources of information that comes from various registries and online data sources. In addition to open access data activists sometimes rely on information that is shared privately through their sources, but this information is used only to verify conclusions of the research based on public sources (from the interviews with activists).

The main purpose of the organisations is to inform and activate Ukrainian citizens and influence legislatures preventing the corrupt politicians from being elected. Although the movement representatives hesitate to establish a direct causal relationship between their work and probability of one or another politician to be elected, they still stress that after their information campaign one third of former members of the local legislatures did not get re-elected. Ukrainian civil society activists argue that one of their important achievements was the introduction of the obligation of members of the Parliament to publish annually their income declarations in open access.

CiFRA Group was founded in 2009 by the Fullbright Exchange Programme alumnae Nazar Boyko and his colleagues from the University of Ivan Frank in Lviv. The idea behind CiFRA developed as a project during the exchange programme, hence it took after American-style monitoring and analytical groups: it was developed as a think tank and its main purpose was to produce empirical analysis based on 'new quantitative approaches'. As stated on the website, CiFRA is 'an NGO whose primary goal is to strengthen democratic institutions in Ukraine through systematic study, development and adaptation of effective governance mechanisms'. It has developed three main directions of its activities: firstly, quantitative analysis of electoral statistics and data retrieved from

Electoral Commission archives; secondly, organisation of opened lectures and educational visits of foreign professors; and thirdly, electoral monitoring missions, mostly conducted abroad.

CiFRA's early projects were related to the analysis of the gender balance of the precinct electoral commissions in Lviv and required a lot of data collection efforts and research skills from the employees. Similarly to other organisations, CiFRA group relies on the work of highly educated and skilled staff, researchers and scientists. CiFRA participants are mostly non-paid volunteers who sometimes invest their own money in the projects. The group was founded by a team of data analysis enthusiasts and was not aimed at 'grants acquisition or earning money' (from the interview with the founder). Outside of the electoral monitoring campaigns CiFRA employs no more than 5 staff members. Although this NGO does not provide activists with the permanent employment and stable income, it offers flexibility and is opened to new projects to be developed in the framework of the group:

> Nobody planned it to be the main work place, all our staff members - programmers, designers and analysts have their own projects or work somewhere else. But working for CiFRA they get something different, they get moral satisfaction because participating in our projects they can travel, communicate with different interesting people, and publish results of their work.

> (CiFRA Group Director, Nazar Boyko)

Analysis projects predominantly rely on data that the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine allows to access. Hence, CiFRA Group had worked to establish trusted working relationships with the Commission members. According to the

activists, the main strategy to gain trust was adoption of the transparent and open style of work. CiFRA activists always communicate results of their work making them public through their website or sharing them during conferences and meetings. One of the signs that this trust has been developed is access to the Commission's archive materials; another sign is CiFRA's participation in CEC activities, consultations, conferences and informal meeting.

The second type of projects started by CiFRA in 2015 is organisation of lectures opened by the foreign professors. For example, in May 2017 they arranged a lecture by the NYU professor Joshua Tucker who presented a recently published book 'Communism's Shadow: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes' co-authored with professor Grigore Pop-Eleches. Participants observation confirmed that the meeting arranged in several venues in Kyiv attracted a rather mixed audience including employees of the local universities, young activists and people with a general interest in politics and history. Similarly to the previous lectures, this event was supported by the American Embassy in Kyiv and several small grants that covered trip and accommodation costs. Importantly, events are organized in a way that lectors can meet and talk with the audience, convey their message in the most direct way.

The third type of CiFRA projects is related to electoral monitoring developed in 2014 and can be broadly labelled as 'electoral tourism'. At the beginning of the monitoring project, CiFRA activists themselves travelled abroad to monitor elections and learn from the foreign experience. After the results of their monitoring activities attracted the attention of other interested citizens, the project got expanded. CiFRA's services include registration of the observers' team with the electoral management body abroad and information and basic legal preparation for the monitoring (e.g. short introductions and summaries of electoral laws in the country of destination). In turn, all expenses and logistics are organized by

the observers themselves. The trip is tailored for the interests of all observers, this is how Nazar Boyko described it:

> When people started joining us, we changed the format of our trips a little bit and we started asking them, which aspect of the electoral process is the most interesting for them. If they are interested in electoral administration, we customize the trip accordingly, if someone is interested in the work of political parties' headquarters, we arrange meetings with the representatives of political parties $<$ ... $>$ Sometimes, we have a group of 5-6 people visiting the Central Electoral Commission, two of them talk to the CEC representatives, two with the electoral administration and one or two to the local electronic voting team. We are doing our best to ensure that a person gets the most out of such trips.

CiFRA activists are interested in knowledge that their observers bring from abroad or from other Ukrainian localities. They are instructed not just follow the script written for them in advance and tick-mark the electoral day events in the prescribed questionnaire. Instead they should be involved in the process, attempt to communicate with as many participants of elections as possible, sense and feel what is going on. Hence, observers bring from abroad the most valuable thing: knowledge that they can share with those who are interested and those who can influence electoral processes in Ukraine. For such information dissemination CiFRA uses various channels such as meetings and presentations at the universities, publishes in mass media and social networks. Discussion with the CiFRA activists and observation of their events showed that NGO attributes the highest importance to informing and educating Ukrainian citizens on topics related to the democratic institutions, elections and electoral administration. CiFRA's director

put it in the following way:

> *When elections take place, every citizen faces the state in the form of the local precinct. That is why we are convinced that people have to understand the electoral precinct creation and functioning and have a general knowledge of processes that occur there. And if these processes can potentially undermine voters' trust in elections, they should be aware of that. < . . . > People should understand that democracy is not just a beautiful word, but it is also procedures, mechanisms, institutions and responsibility.*

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To summarise, election monitoring organisations in Ukraine represent a broad and diverse spectrum of different groups, social movements and NGOs. Election monitoring organisations became an important part of the political landscape in Ukraine as early as in 1990-s, new groups appeared after the 2004 Orange Revolution and on the eve of Euromaidan in 2014. Unlike in Georgia and Moldova, Ukrainian political space allows emergence of various actors with very different focus and even contradictory approaches. At the same time, topics for monitoring by these organisations seem to be very close and even overlapping what, in turn, might increase competition between them and decrease levels of co-operation. Interviewees often confirm that such overlap exists and their projects might look quite similar, although approaches to data collection are very different and even opposite. At the same time, they partly criticise their approaches taken by their colleagues or stress differences in their results and impact. The next section discusses the decade between two Revolutions and political context in which election monitoring groups operated in that time.

6.2   Political Context of Election Monitoring in Ukraine (2006-2014)

Although supporters of Orange Revolutions were united against Kuchma's autocratic tendencies, corruption and lowering standards of living, the post-revolutionary coalition among opposition parties was not stable, once the goal had been achieved. Simon (2009, 16) stresses that partly reforms and Orange Revolution promises were not fulfilled because the change in power 'was not accompanied by a major change among the political and economic elite' that explains the particular resilience of the old system and lack of the anti-corruption measures. Less than a year after its emergence, the Orange Coalition disintegrated 'opening the way for Yanukovych and the Party of Regions to return to the centre of Ukrainian politics' while Yushchenko retreated from the 'orange values' and developed closer relationships with the oligarchs (Kuzio 2015, 80). Both incumbents and opposition appeared to be equally responsible for the political deadlock and instability that has overshadowed 2006 parliamentary elections and resulted in new elections that took place in 2007.

6.2.1   Parliamentary Elections in 2006 and 2007

Since the dissolution of Soviet Union, the system of elections of Ukrainian Parliament (Ukr. Verkhovna Rada) has been changed multiple times. In March 2004 the mixed voting system was substituted with the party list system which proved to benefit large parties and for the democratic political forces (Kuzio 2015, 84). In addition the threshold for gaining seats in the Rada was set to 3% of the national vote and only parties established more than one year ago could participate

in the electoral contest.

In total, forty five political parties and blocks participated in **2006 Parliamentary elections**, but only five of them were serious contenders (see table 6.2). The most aggravated competition took place among the Party of Regions (Viktor Yanukovych), the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT), the Our Ukraine Bloc (Viktor Yushchenko), the Socialist Party, SPU (Olexander Moroz) and the Communist Party, CPU (Petro Symonenko). Political campaign lasted over three months and allowed all candidates to compete freely (OSCE/ODIHR 2006). Although opposition leaders were not intimidated and could present their political programmes in various media outlets, media coverage was somewhat biased on some TV channels and newspapers (Hesli 2007). The reputable international observers confirmed that 2006 elections were conducted in line with the international standards and noted considerable improvement compared to the previous campaigns (OSCE/ODIHR 2006). Domestic monitoring mission arranged by the Committee of Ukrainian Voters agreed with this estimation although presented evidence on the number of violations spotted on the election day. Final report listed numerous violations during counting of the ballots that led to the cancellation of results in several District Electoral Committees. At the same time, activists confirmed that the political environment remained open; cases of pressure on observers, journalists and political activists were rare (CVU 2006).

Similarly to previous campaigns, the 2006 parliamentary elections were extremely regionalised. The Party of Regions' enjoyed support of the industrialists and regional leaders from the Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, while BYuT and Our Ukraine performed better in the West of Ukraine. Regional voting patterns for the 2006 parliamentary elections are available in the Appendix D (figures D3 - D6). Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin (2009) conducted profound statistical analysis of election results taking into account regional and demographic

voting patterns. Labeling 2006 parliamentary elections as a 'paragon of virtue' (2009 197), authors concluded that even analysis of regional strongholds for each political party could not cause any suspicions.

As a result of voting that took place on the 26th of March 2006, Party of Regions received the largest amount of seats winning more than 32% of votes, Tymoshenko's Bloc received the second best result (22%) and Yuchshenko's Our Ukraine came only third with less than 14%. These results pointed at complete disillusionment with the Orange Revolution among Ukrainians. No political party won enough seats to form a government, negotiations on coalition formation showed to be extremely difficult and no coalition was formed by the inaugural session of the new Verkhovna Rada on the 25th of May (Hesli 2007). The Orange Coalition consisted of three pro-Western 'Orange' parties, namely Our Ukraine, BYuT and Socialist Party (SPU) formed a coalition only by the end of June 2006[8]. Nonetheless, further negotiations were unsuccessful, the 'Orange Coalition' failed to appoint the prime minister and distribute other ministerial posts. As a result, the Socialist Party defected and entered the coalition with the Party of Regions and Communist Party who occupied a majority in the Parliament holding 240 seats together. The Socialist Party leader was offered a Rada speaker's position and Yanukovych was nominated to become a prime minister.

As Herron (2008, 551) describes, being in government, Yanukovych was 'testing the limits of the prime minister's power' through codifying constitutional changes that have been established through in December 2004 and attempting to stop Ukraine's move towards NATO membership as well as trying to strengthen prime minister's authority. Hence, the relationships between president Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yanukovch gradually deteriorated and led

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[8]BBC News Wednesday, 21 June 2006 10:16 'Ukraine allies 'agree coalition'', available at `http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5101380.stm` (accessed 29 July 2018)

to a new crisis. In April 2007 president called for early parliamentary elections that after some disputes and debates were scheduled for the 30 of September 2007.

In total, twenty political parties and blocks made it to the ballot during **the 2007 Parliamentary Elections**. International observers who monitored political campaign observed less violations compared to the 2004 elections, but stressed insufficient mobilisation of observers to control all 34 000 precincts in Ukraine (NDI 2007). Similarly to the previous elections, the Party of Regions appealed to the Eastern oblasts of the country and focused on stability, equality of Russian and Ukrainian languages and criticised inability of the Orange Coalition's to govern. In turn, BYuT and Our Ukraine – People's Self Defence Block advocated pro-Western orientation, populist economic and social measures and anti-corruption policies (Herron 2008).

Taras Kuzio (2015, 84) points at strong and visible division among voters' preferences: on the one hand, more Western oriented voters used elections to punish politicians for their failures and disputes; on the other hand, Eastern Ukraine voted for the 'stability over democracy'. He stressed that despite these divisions, democratic political forces still managed to win at least a small margin. In turn, BYuT performed much better compared to the previous elections and received the largest share of votes in 16 regions and captured more than 50% in five Western oblasts (see Appendix D, fig D10). Our Ukraine – People's Self Defence Block has lost votes and received less than half of BYuT votes. While SPU could not overcome the 3% threshold, Block of Volodymyr Lytvyn entered the political scene winning 4% of votes and 20 seats.

Similarly to the 2006 campaign, the 2007 parliamentary elections were claimed to be free and fair. As explained by the observers, the main reason

for the disappearance of electoral fraud from the election day was the political will of new democratic forces. Similarly scholars associate the improvement of election quality with the higher levels of competition and institutional reforms after 2004 elections, not with the control from civil society actors (Kovalov 2014). Although in 2006 and 2007 CVU reported multiple cases of administrative pressure and violations during election day, observers did not mention much violence or intimidation of observers. Indeed, pre-electoral manipulations were present on behalf of all main competitors. In turn, electoral returns analysed by Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin (2009) indicated that some artificial augmentation of votes could take place in several regions. In-depth investigation of regional voting patterns revealed some suspicious behaviour in L'viv Oblast as well as in Yanukovych strongholds of Luhansk and Donetsk. Despite these findings, authors conclude that 2007 parliamentary elections were not subjected to massive electoral fraud that could seriously influence the outcome.

Winning a small majority BYuT and Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defence formed a new 'Orange Coalition' while the Party of Regions went into opposition. This coalition reinstated Tymoshenko as a prime minister although appointment of other ministerial posts proved to be difficult. Kuzio (2015) described years after 2007 parliamentary elections as particularly unstable and dominated by divisions and disputes in government that eventually paved further victory of Yanukovitch. Despite the political instability and month-long deadlocks, a number of scholars considered the post-Orange Revolution period as a gradual development of democratic political system in Ukraine. For example, Simon (2009, 22) claims that these changes of executive power from government to opposition and back is an exercise 'that can contribute to the democratic awareness'.

Political uncertainty of post-Maidan Ukraine prevented civil society from efficient cooperation with political elites in this period. Stewart (2009) has com-

pared development of Ukrainian civil society before and after the Orange Revolution and pointed at very little improvement in its ability to influence political decisions and policy-making (also see V-Dem and USAID rankings in the previous section). Moreover, authors stress that inability of the Ukrainian political elite to form a stable government and functioning parliament after the Orange Revolution has impeded the opportunities for civil society to engage with political actors and have any effect on the political change (Stewart 2009, 181). Among positive developments she has noticed intensified dialogue between authorities and monitoring organisations and relative improvement of the attitudes towards NGOs among Ukrainian citizens.

Neither in 2006 nor in 2007 election observers faced any impediments from the local and national authorities. Similarly, in the report compiled by the leading regional and national election monitoring organisations a year after the 2006 parliamentary elections, civil society actors conclude that their influence on decision-making and political processes is very weak and rather limited to the 'formation of the relevant public opinion and attempts to change the attitude of the public to the negative social phenomena in the society' (Kogut 2007, 29). Interviews conducted with activists involved in election monitoring in that period have also stressed the gradual decrease of the civil society impact in the post-Orange Revolution period, particularly in the period of Yanukovych presidency that has been described as autocratic by the number of interviewees.

Table 6.2: Results of Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine (2006-2007)

Party*	Elections 2006			Elections 2007		
	Votes (%)	Seats	Change	Votes (%)	Seats	Change
Party of Regions	32.14	186	+126	34.37	175	-11
Y.Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT)	22.29	129	+107	30.99	156	+27
Our Ukraine Bloc	13.95	81	-31	14.20	72	-9
Socialist Party (SPU)	5.69	33	+10	2.68	0	-33
Communist Party (CPU)	3.66	21	-44	6.0	27	+6
Lytvyn Bloc	2.44	0	0	4.03	20	+20
Other parties	18.06			5.0		
Against all	1.77			2.73		
Turnout	67.55			62.03		

∗ Parties received $> 1\%$ of votes

6.2.2 Presidential Elections 2010

Presidential elections in Ukraine take place every five years under the system of simple majority, candidates can be either nominated by political parties or compete as independent. In total eighteen candidates were registered to compete in the first round of presidential elections. Yuliya Tymoshenko and Viktor Yanukovych were expected to pass through to the second round by some major opinion polls (Herron 2010). Viktor Yushchenko who was brought into power by the mass protests of the Orange Revolution has lost his support and was not expected to be a serious contender. For example, according to the opinion poll conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology in October 2009 only

2.7% of voters were ready to vote for Viktor Yushchenko[9]. The rhetorical focus of political campaigns remained similar to the parliamentary elections: while Yanukovych stressed his ability to rule and bring stability, Tymishenko's focused on fight against corruption as the main topic of her campaign (Herron 2010). Given that Ukraine has been hit by the 2008 economic crisis badly, promises of stability were more likely to attract voters. Moreover, Yanukovych's strongholds in the Eastern parts of Ukraine were more impacted by increased inflation and unemployment rates (Heron 2010, Kuzio 2015). This fact has been presented as a n outcome of the Orange coalition in power and skilfully used during Yanukovych's political campaign to attract more voters. In turn, voters' preferences continued to be highly regionalized: with Yanukovych mobilizing his voters in the East and Tymoshenko drawing her support from the Western oblasts. Results of the first round has confirmed results of the pre-electoral opinion polls as well as the regional voting patterns (see Appendix D, figure D11 - D18): Yanukovych came first in the contest receiving 35.3%, Tymoshenko received 25.1%, while the former president the leader of Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko, got only 5.4% of votes.

The second round campaign was overshadowed by the pre-electoral fraud allegations: Tymoshenko accused the Party of Regions of changing electoral rules just a few days before elections. The new rule changed the required quorum of electoral commissions to be a simple majority and was designed to prevent Tymoshenko's representatives in polling stations from disrupting vote counting (Herron 2010, 764). The election monitoring network OPORA stated that these last minute changes had no impact on the performance of the electoral com-

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[9]Kiev International Institute of Sociology, October 8, 2009 – October 20, 2009 //in Ukrainian: Омнібус КМІС 2009/10 (жовтень 2009): "Скажіть, будь ласка, якби у найближчу неділю відбувалися президентські вибори, чи взяли б Ви участь у голосуванні? А яким би був Ваш вибір?" available at `http://ukraine.survey-archive.com/` (access July 2019)

missions as they 'mobilised commissioners from both candidates to participate in elections' (OPORA 2010). Turnout increase during the second round might point at the successful voters' mobilization by both candidates. Yanukovych has one by a very small 3.5% margin through his domination in the Eastern oblasts where he received up till 90% of votes, while Tymoshenko traditionally performed better in the West. Despite her initial challenge of election results in court, Tymoshenko withdrew her complaint later. International observers (e.g. OSCE) and domestic nation-wide electoral monitoring network OPORA has confirmed that both rounds were conducted freely without any systematic violations.

Electoral forensics analysis pointed at several deviations in electoral statistics visible on the local level and particularly obvious during the first round (Lukinova, et al 2011). Scholars concluded that turnout distributions and density plots of the votes for main competitors deviate from the normal distribution, that might point at 'overly aggressive' mobilisation of voters (2011, 58). Furthermore, a closer look at electoral returns showed an increasing number of voters who did not support any candidate during 2010 presidential elections: the share of voters who marked 'against all' in their ballot increased from 1.93% to 3.7% in the second round. Kuzio (2015, 90) suggests that this is explained by a deep disappointment with the Orange Revolution candidates. He also claims that 'against all' votes could play a critical role in bringing Tymoshenko in power if they voted for her in the second round (Kuzio 2015, 90).

Despite these deep disillusionment and opposition towards Yanukovych, civil society did not take any serious actions until Euromaidan, although some sporadic protests have continued (e.g. protests against new tax code)[10]. In turn,

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[10]BBC Ukraine 23 November 2011, Anastasia Zanuda 'Tax Maidan: One Year Later" // in Ukrainian: BBC Україна 23 листопада 2011 "Податковий майдан: рік потому" Анастасія Зануда, available at `https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/business/2011/11/111122_tax_maidan_one_year_az.shtml` (access 18 July 2017)

neither reports, no interviews mention any significant cases of pressure on the civil society and monitoring organisations during this period. Herron (2009) concludes that Yanukovych's victory had long lasting implications for Ukrainian society such as turn away from the West and closer relationships with Russia. Ukrainian activists in interviews have stressed increased consolidation of power and autocratic tendencies as the main features of Yanukovych's rule which made cooperation between third sector and civil society less possible. According to some interviewees starting from 2010 channels for cooperation between state actors and civil society were almost closed and work of foreign donors was often obstructed.

Table 6.3: Results of Presidential Elections in Ukraine (2010)

Candidate	Round I Votes	Votes (%)	Round II Votes	Votes (%)
Viktor Yanukovych (Party of Regions)	8 686 642	35.32	12,481,266	48.95
Yulia Tymoshenko ('Batkivshchyna')	6 159 810	25.05	11,593,357	45.47
Serhiy Tihipko (Self-nominated)	3 211 198	13.05	-	-
Arseniy Yatsenyuk (Self-nominated)	1,711,737	6.96	-	-
Viktor Yushchenko (Self-nominated)	1,341,534	5.45	-	-
Petro Symonenko (Self-nominated)	872,877	3.54	-	-
Volodymyr Lytvyn (People's Party)	578,883	2.35	-	-
Oleh Tyahnybok ('Freedom')	352,282	1.43	-	-
Anatoliy Hrytsenko (Self-nominated)	296,412	1.20	-	-
Against all	542,819	2.20	1,113,055	4.36
Turnout	67%		69%	

∗ With $> 1\%$ of votes in the 1st Round

6.2.3 Parliamentary Elections 2012

Since 2010 powers of Verkhovna Rada have been severely limited and Ukraine has returned to the presidential-parliamentary form of governance. Scholars and civil society activists have also noted 'trends towards authoritarian presidential power and concentration of all state power in the hands of one political force, furthermore controlled by a few mighty financial-industrial groups' (Klymenko 2012, 3). Successful return of Yanukovych into power allowed him to roll back post-Orange revolution reforms and shift the power balance from legislative to the executive power (Herron 2014; Kovalov 2014; Kuzio 2015). The parliamentary electoral system has been substituted to the mixed-member system that was aimed at weakening opposition parties (Kovalov 2014). Electoral threshold in a national PR district was increased to 5% and the 'against all' option was not available anymore.

Some interviewees expressed their support of the 'against all' option to be cancelled because these votes were not wasted anymore (from the conversation with the member of the Local Council in Bila Tserkva), although most activists criticised this change as non-democratic. For example, the CVU regional coordinator Yuriy Byt explained that when district electoral commissions are 'captured' by one political party and do not register candidates from opposition, casting a ballot 'against all' can be the only viable option for voters to express their discontent (from the interview). He concluded that this change was undemocratic and did not allow voters to express their opinions in full. Finally, in 2012 electoral precincts were equipped with the web cameras to stream recording from all polling stations on the election day and, similarly to Russia, were aimed at increasing transparency of the electoral process (Herron 2013, 354). Another significant reform was introduced just a few months before the start of the electoral

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campaign and was not related to the electoral law. In June 2012 Verkhovna Rada adopted a controversial language law elevating the status of Russian language which is widely spoken in some Eastern and Southern regions. The law adoption has been timed to the start of the electoral campaign and was aimed to increase the Party of Regions support base as well as distract public attention from the worsening economic conditions[11].

OPORA conducted an extensive pre-electoral national monitoring campaign employing 226 long-term observers and 26 regional coordinators and expressed its concerns about the quality of the electoral campaign. In total, OPORA collected evidence on almost 500 cases of administrative pressure, more than 300 cases of votes buying and 300 cases of campaign obstruction, numerous cases of unscrupulous agitation, pressure from the security forces and pressure on media outlets (see summary on the picture D2, Appendix D. In general, the quality of the election campaign raised significant doubts about democratic standards of the process.

The main contenders for the seats in Verkhovna Rada were Party of Regions (Viktor Yanukovych), Party 'Batkivshchyna' ('Fatherland'), the re-branded party of Yuliya Tymoshenko that has merged with the Front of Change (Arseniy Yatsenyuk) and the other smaller parties. Other prominent contenders included new political party 'Udar' created by a famous boxer Vitaliy Klichko and right-wing Svoboda Party (Oleg Tyahnybok). The Party of Regions received the largest number of seats performing better in the majoritarian constituencies, although it did not manage to win 226 seats needed for the majority (see table 6.4). In turn, opposition parties of Batkivshchyna and Udar got second and third best results respectively performing better in the party list component; Svoboda received 37

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[11]BBC News, Kiev, David Stern, (5 July 2012) 'Ukrainians polarised over language law' available at `https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18725849` (accessed 29 November 2018)

seats and the rest was shared by the Communist party, and other smaller parties and independent candidates.

Electoral forensics analysis shows that support for the Party of Regions was strong in the Eastern part of the country: in Donetsk it received 64% of votes and 57% in Lugansk. Furthermore, the Party of Regions traditionally benefited from increase in turnout in Eastern part of the country, for example, correlation between turnout and the Party of Regions votes in Donetsk: $r(2418) = .41, p < .000$ and in Luhansk $r(1483) = .39, p < .000$. Simultaneously, Yanukovych benefited from voters mobilisation in some Western regions that previously supported political programmes of Tymoshenko and Yuschenko. For example, positive correlation between turnout and Party of Regions votes was observed in Ivano-Frankivsk ($r(1034) = .35, p < .000$) and in Ternopil ($r(1182) = .24, p < .000$). At the same time, 'Batkivshchyna' did not win much from the voters mobilisation neither in Ivano-Frankivsk ($r(1034) = .14, p < .000$), nor in Ternopil ($r(1182) = .13, p < .000$)). Interestingly, the new political player, Klichko's 'Udar' lost votes when turnout increased in both, Tymoshenko's strongholds (Ivano-Frankivsk, $r(1034) = -.32, p < .000$; Lviv: $r(2152) = -.21, p < .000$; Ternopil: $r(1034) = -.26, p < .000$) and in Eastern pro-Yanukovych regions (Lugansk: $r(1483) = -.37, p < .000$; Donetsk: $r(2418) = -.30, p < .000$). Putting together electoral forensics evidence and findings of the domestic monitoring network OPORA it is possible to suggest that voters were illegally mobilised to vote for the winning Party of Regions who applied various methods of mobilisation in different parts of the country. At the same time, OPORA mentions multiple violations committed by other contenders showing that no political party observed democratic standards closely.

These alarming signs from electoral statistics supported the conclusions made by OPORA about the quality of the electoral process: 'During the voting

day no mass and systemic violations that could have significantly affected the results of the will of Ukrainian citizens. However, quite frequent cases of illegal actions and abuses by various subjects of the electoral process, *do not give grounds to assess the voting process as a whole as fair and democratic*' (OPORA 2012) [stress added]. Similarly scholars and international observers raised considerable doubts about the quality of 2012 parliamentary elections listing issues with media coverage, issues with registration and formation of polling stations counting commissions (Boyko 2012; Kovalov 2014; NDI 2012). These conclusions fit the general trend of declining democratic performance and electoral integrity under the Yanukovych rule that has subsequently led to the Euromaidan in 2014.

Table 6.4: Results of 2012 Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine

Political Party	Votes (%)	Seats Proportional	Seats Majoritarian	Seats Total	Seats Change
Party of Regions	30.00	72	114	186	+11
Batkivshchyna ('Fatherland')	25.54	62	43	105	+5
Udar ('Hit')	13.96	34	6	40	+40
Svoboda ('Freedom')	10.44	25	12	37	+37
Communist Party	13.18	32	0	32	+5
Oleg Lyashka Radical Party	1.1	0	1	1	+1
'United Center' Party	—	—	3	3	+3
National Party	—	—	2	2	+2
Party 'Soyuz' ('Union')	—	—	1	1	+1
Other parties	5.3	—	—	—	—
Independent candidates	—	—	43	43	43
Total	100%	225	225	450	
Turnout			58%		

6.2.4 Political Context of Election Monitoring in Ukraine: Summary

Decade that has passed between two Revolutions, the 2004 Orange Revolution and 2014 Euromaidan has seen a gradual decrease in civil society impact on policy makers. The closure of political opportunities after the Orange Revolution has influenced the electoral monitoring organisations and their ability to play any role in the political process. Interviewees have often characterised 2010 and 2012 elections as difficult times for civil society, and particularly for election monitoring. In turn, in this period new civil initiatives emerged (e.g. CiFRA Group and CHESNO); they tried to find new approaches towards monitoring and improvement of the political situation in the country.

Reports from 2006 and 2007 Parliamentary elections indicate that observers did not experience much pressure, while the electoral process remained relatively transparent and fair (Myagkov at al 2009). Statistical analysis of 2010 elections conducted by Lukinova and her colleagues (2011) expressed some doubts in the fairness of the first round, but gave a clean bill of health to the second round of the presidential elections. In turn, a brief analysis of the 2012 parliamentary elections showed some suspicious signs of possible electoral misconduct occurred in the pre-electoral period. These conclusions are generally supported by reports of the election observers who unanimously described the quality of elections as 'degrading' in 2010 and 2012. In turn, they stressed that civil society lost its influence in this period of time and lived 'parallel' to the political actors.

At the same time, levels of public involvement with civil society in Ukraine remained traditionally low: opinion polls conducted by the The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) reported that only 5% of respondents

were actively involved in the activities of some civic organisations in 2011[12]. Hence, NGOs in that period were not able to rely on broad engagement of citizens and their support outside of rare cases of popular mobilisation. The routine work of election monitoring organisations in 2006-2014 was realised in the relatively oppressive political context and disengagement of broader population. Such political context facilitated development of transactional activism, particularly after the Orange Revolution: interviewees recall that some activists moved to the political parties and state agencies. Such career developments helped to establish closer contacts between civil society and state actors. After 2010 levels of cooperation and civil society activism 'froze' as political context became less instrumental for the civil society operation. Surprisingly, neither reports, nor interviews suggest any improvement in cooperation between civil society actors in this period.

In turn, levels of public trust in civil society in Ukraine remained traditionally low, although they show stable improvement since 2012 that might be a sign of distrust to politicians. In 2016 more than 37% of respondents answered that they trust or somewhat trust the NGOs i.e. in four years trust increased almost 10 percentage points. Unfortunately, no systematic study of public opinion regarding civil society has been performed before 2012; hence it is impossible to make any suggestions about the beginning of the period under investigation. Increases in trust towards civil society after 2014 can be also explained by the political crisis and decreases levels of trust towards Ukrainian politicians, while NGOs got a chance to show their activity and help average Ukrainians and gain their trust.

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[12]The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) // In Ukrainian: Фонд 'Демократичні ініціативи"ім. Ілька Кучеріва (2011) 'Чи зможе громадянське суспіль-ство вплинути на українську політику?' available at `https://dif.org.ua/article/chi-zmozhe-gromadyanske-suspilstvo-vplinuti-na-ukrainsku-politiku` (accessed 16 March 2019)

The 2014 political crisis has brought new opportunities for the Ukrainian civil society to participate in political process as it became more open due to the changes in ruling elites. CVU regional coordinator recalls that before 2014 cooperation with state authorities was very difficult, while after 2014 the CVU arranged special cooperation agreements with the law enforcement bodies. For example, direct contacts between NGOs and police became possible and local law enforcement bodies supported observers and helped in fraud prevention.
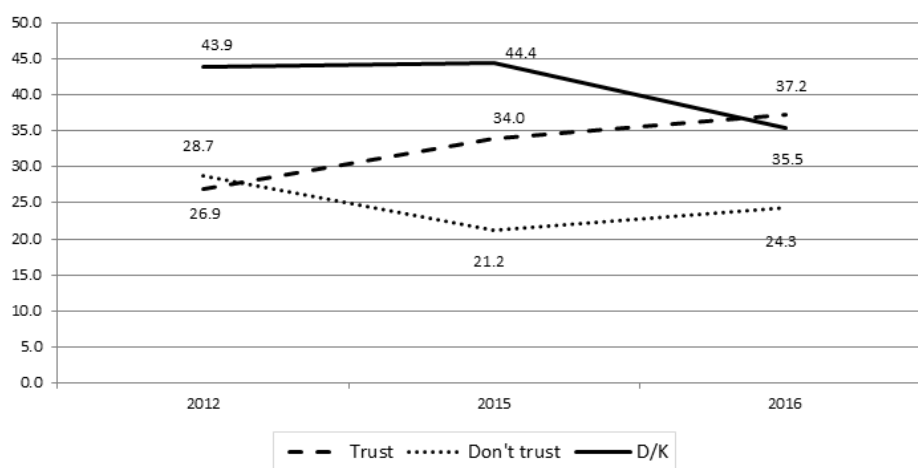
Source: National Research Databank (2017)

Figure 6.3: Trust towards Civil Society Organisations in Ukraine 2012-2016

Moreover, a number of activists became members of the parliament and continued advocating certain changes together with activists. Probably due to this generation shift and gradual learning process civil society has also changed its quality in the past fifteen years. One of the CHESNO representatives shares his observation that in the 1990s and 2000s civil society in Ukraine used to be more reactive than proactive, i.e. activists have only responded to the state actions. Before the 2004 and 2014 protests political context turned to be more repressive and the civil sector has eventually reacted with a strong wave of mobilisation. Compared to previous periods, after the 2014 Euromaidan protests, the approach

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of NGOs became more proactive due to the external factors(i.e. military conflict) and attempts to decrease freedoms by the newly elected president (interview with Yegor Polyakov, CHESNO). Moreover, after the 2014 revolution ruling elites were not consolidated enough to oppose or oppress the civil society actors. The military aggression in the Eastern part of Ukraine has mobilised numerous actors to defend the Ukrainian territories and created new opportunities for cooperation between state and civil society. In turn, the election monitoring issues were overshadowed by more serious events of the Crimean annexation and threat to the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Although electoral reform is became an important part of the reform agenda, election monitoring organisations developed new projects to respond emerging and more pressing issues.

6.3 Resources of the Electoral Monitoring Organisations in Ukraine

Major election monitoring organisations in Ukraine do not provide very detailed information on sources of their funding showing less transparency in these questions compared to their colleagues in Georgia and Moldova. Very often interviewees refused to discuss questions of funding or shared this information only in off-the record conversations. Some information on funding of projects related to election monitoring was available from the regional offices, but it remains unclear how representative such projects are of the whole national network. Websites of OPORA and CVU only briefly state names of their donors, while more recently established CiFRA and CHESNO have more information and even share recent financial audit reports. Some organisations provide general activity reports explaining their source of income (see example of CHESNO 2018 report fig.6.4).

Interviewees also stressed that financial transparency is one of the requirements from donors when they apply for funding. Available information indicates that Ukrainian monitoring organisations are funded by the same major donors present in the region, such as USAID, NDI, European Parliament, European Commission, foreign embassies and national development organisations (figure6.5).
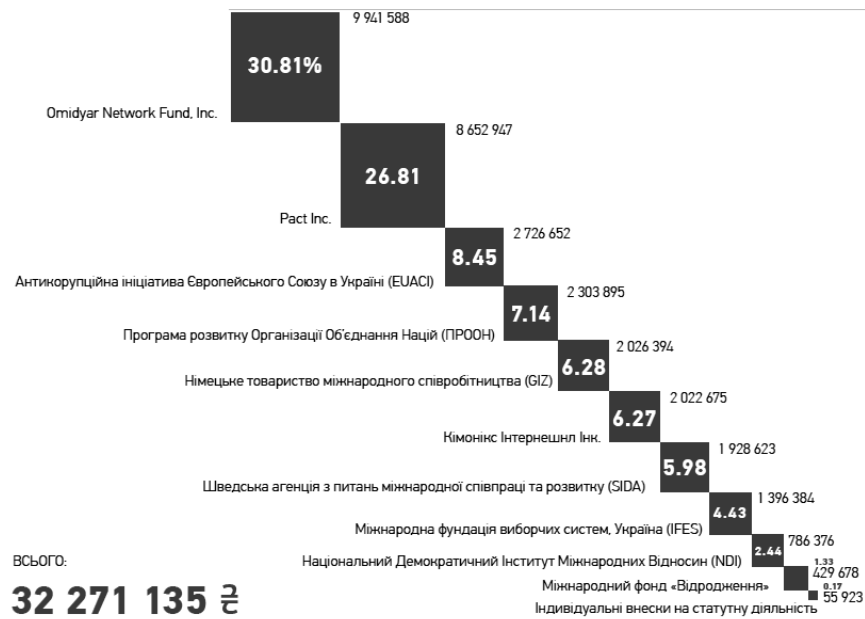
Figure 6.4: CHESNO Report 2018: Funding

Most organisations representatives agreed that foreign funding is vital for the organisation of each monitoring mission. Funding availability defines the scope and scale of every mission. During the off-the-record part of the interview, one of the OPORA regional coordinators notes: *'Obviously, every monitoring mission has its budget and the number of LTOs depends on the budget of each campaign. In my region the number of LTOs varies depending on the number of electoral districts, type of elections, logistics and budget'* (OPORA Regional Coordinator, anonymously).
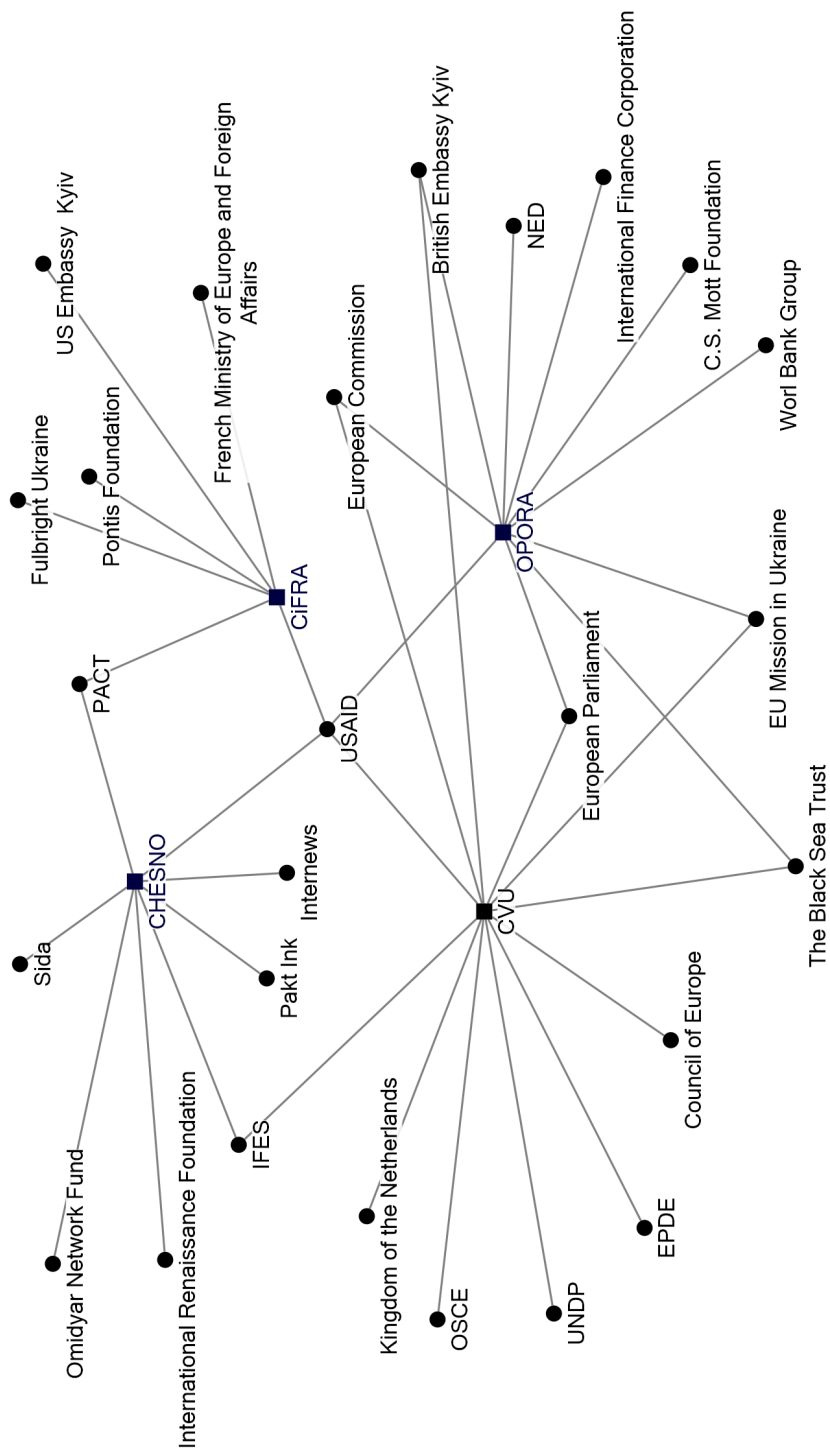
Figure 6.5: Donors of Election Monitoring Organisations in Ukraine

Activists have mentioned that interest towards Ukraine from foreign donors was low in the period between the 2004 Orange Revolution and Euromaidan in 2014; hence the funding available to organisations was limited too. Considerable increase occurred only after 2014 and remains relatively high as of the time of interviews. This point of view is supported by the dynamics of funding provided by Sida to all Ukrainian NGOs since 2003 (see figure 6.6 below). Although in post-Orange Ukraine the private sector became an increasingly important donor for some non-governmental organisations, large businesses are reluctant to fund NGOs with the watchdog functions due to the interdependence between politics and business (Stewart 2009, 187). Importantly, electoral monitoring activists did not mention any domestic sources of funding. The only exception was a CVU representative who has claimed that sometimes political parties pay for the services of short-term electoral monitoring (interview with the CVU regional director Yuriy Byt). With this single exception labelled as 'dissidents in CVU' other regional offices follow the general trend: they rely on the foreign funding as the main method to stay independent and avoid influence from domestic political elites who have close connections with business.
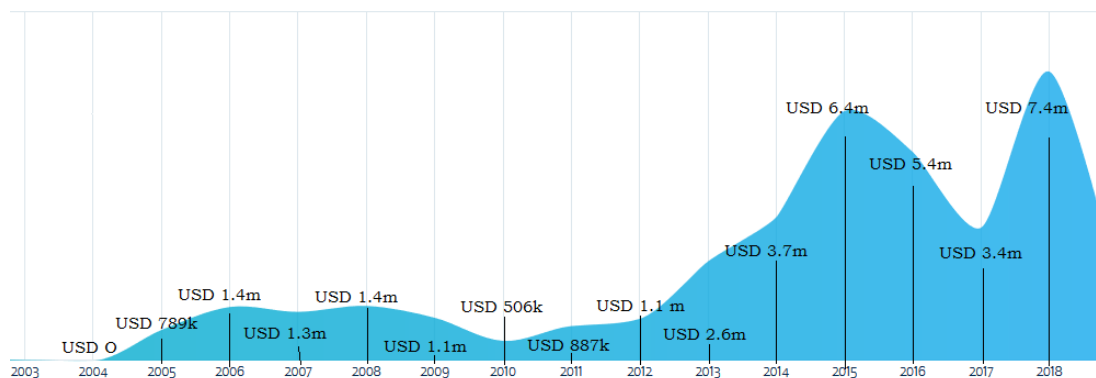
Figure 6.6: Sida Assistance to Ukrainian NGOs 2003-2018

A distinctive feature of CVU and OPORA is the network of regional offices that are free to apply for the funding and develop their local projects. The only condition in such work is fulfilment of requirements of the national-wide projects such as monitoring of the election process. For example, the Lviv Office of OPORA presented dynamics of funding between 2006 and 2010 indicating gradual growth of donations between 2006 and 2009 and sharp decrease in 2010 (picture6.7). In total, 57% of all funding was spent on the monitoring of social and political processes with 128795 Hryvnia spent on monitoring of local elections and 90630 Hryvnia on the national campaign (NDI grant).

Applying for foreign funding, NGOs in Ukraine use very different strategies. According to a CVU former employee, this organisation works with a diverse range of foreign partners and is flexible in applying with different projects, while OPORA has one main donor who supports (and, probably, defines) most of its activity. Interviewee has suggested that CVU strategy has benefits of flexibility and lesser dependence from one donor. OPORA has more certainty and stability in funding and hence, can do long-term strategic planning and invest in the organisation and staff development. Strategies of funding acquisition are constrained by donors' preferences and mode of work they chose in each recipient country. In general, organisations' work relies on short-term funding which can be rather limited. One of the CVU activists concluded that *'Ukrainian third sector is not a place where one comes to make money and can earn a fortune'* (Maria Kucherenko, CVU).

Alternative views were voiced by the IFES representative in Ukraine who confirmed that political NGOs have to compete for funding and characterised them as *some sort of business*. The interviewee suggested that in Ukraine, monitoring NGOs cannot be described as *'civic'* (*общественные организации*) as during the long period of their existence they turned into professional organisations, although they are not existing for profit: *I would call them non-state...non-*

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governmental organisations, but not civic. They employ experts, someone has to do this job. In Western countries such tasks are fulfilled by NGOs and Universities.

Основні програмні витрати у 2010 році

4 000 грн.

122 348 грн.

32%

57.3%

9.7%

37 023 грн.

219 425 грн.

- ■ Моніторинг суспільно-політичних процесів
- ■ Моніторинг забезпечення рівного доступу до вищої освіти
- ■ Сприяння євроінтеграційним процесам в Україні
- ■ Благочинність

Динаміка фінансових надходжень

800 000

600 000

400 000

200 000

0

715 382 грн.

369 449 грн.

382 796 грн.

187 593 грн.

66 350 грн.

2006   2007   2008   2009   2010

Figure 6.7: OPORA Lviv 2010 Report:Budget

One of exceptional, but rather indicative examples of the donor-recipient NGO relationship is reference of the foreign donors as *customers* who order services from the local watchdogs and pay for their skills and knowledge of the local political dynamics. Although such approach is rare in Ukraine, such labels might be illustrative of the attitudes towards their foreign partners:

> *Monitoring strategy is defined by a customer. If the customer is an international fund that gives money to CVU and tells to conduct PVT, we select a sample and do not cover all precincts. If our customer is a political party, they tell us where falsifications might be planned, we provide them with observers and they pay us.*

Most of Ukrainian NGOs are well connected abroad and work together with numerous foreign counterparts and observation missions. Such cooperation does not always mean application for grants. For example, CiFRA Group appears develops transparent and stable connections with different foreign actors because their monitoring missions are mostly aimed at the acquisition of foreign experience. CiFRA's director shared example of how this work is organised outside of funding application rounds:

> *Our mission is flexible, if some people participated in our monitoring mission in Latvia and go there again alone, we can help arrange a meeting with Latvian CEC director, because we have good connections. We just call him and he says: 'Yes, of course you can come!' because we support good, friendly relations with our partners.*

Groups like CiFRA represent a new trend in civil society development in Ukraine: participants consciously resent stable and hierarchical organisations and do their best to avoid donor-dependency. All activities are realized by volunteers

who apply for small grants to cover only basic costs (e.g. trip costs for the prominent speakers from abroad).

In general, NGO representatives agree that external funding is essential for the monitoring mission to take place. Kyiv Coordinator from OPORA stresses that they 'pay to the observers because then they do their best during monitoring campaigns'. In turn, a small minority of activists have expressed their doubts and scepticism (mostly off-the record) with foreign funding and suggested that similar to Moldova's 2% or Polish 1% tax can be used in Ukraine. One of the regional coordinators suggest that if Ukrainian citizens think that monitoring is important for the society, they will sponsor such activity dedicating some percentage of their income tax to certain NGOs. On the one hand this will support local civil society; on the other hand it will make citizens more responsible with their donations and taxes. Importantly, in Ukraine such point of view is not popular among NGOs and such laws were not lobbied as of the time of data collection.

6.4   Strategies of Electoral Monitoring Organisations in Ukraine

Election monitoring organisations in Ukraine are diverse and their activities rely on the broad set of strategies, methods and tools. Partly this variation can be explained through the regional differences and individual characteristics of local offices of OPORA and CVU. In turn, other organisations develop their own toolkit that fits their niche and expertise. This chapter summarises this broad and diverse picture strategies used by organisations to 'complement each other' or create different levels of pressure on politicians.

Table 6.5: Ukrainian Monitoring NGOs: Internal Methods

Method	Example from Ukraine
Regional network and hierarchical structure during elections	During elections data is collected through from the local offices to regional headquarters to the national headquarters in a hierarchical manner; between elections regional offices possess much autonomy
Professionalisation of the staff, high standards for observers	Training and education for the LTOs and STOs; observers are not admitted to the precincts without passing specialized training
Wide range of topics covered by the NGOs	NGOs conduct projects that are not related with the electoral issues directly. Topics are selected based on the expertise possessed by the NGOs' members, not by the 'topic' of organisations
Diverse reporting strategies	OPORA and CVU reports highlight positive developments, and report progress that has been made since last elections. Some organisations (e.g.CHESNO) stress negative sides of the political process leaving the positive sides for journalists.

6.4.1 Internal Methods of Monitoring Organisations Development in Ukraine

Transactional activism based on cooperation networks requires trustworthy relations between different actors; often trust and legitimacy are gained through building a spotless reputation of an impartial actor 'above the political fight'. Similarly to NGOs in other post-Soviet states, building a spotless reputation is the main strategy of election monitoring organisations to build networks of cooperation, acquire legitimacy and eventually influence behaviour of domestic political actors. Being impartial and independent from any domestic political force adds credibility in communication with foreign actors: they are always interested in receiving objective and unbiased information. In turn, *'when messages of the organisation match with messages of the administration on multiple occasions, it calls questions'* (IFES, Y.Shypilova).

Ukrainian interviewees have openly expressed their doubts about prospects of the organisations that have very obvious and close connections with some political parties, be that opposition or governing coalition. The IFES representative stressed that *'it is valued when an organisation has its principles and defends its position'*. Some interviewees suggested that *'when organisation beds with the government it stops being considered as independent...'* Giving several examples from local context, the OPORA Regional Coordinator concludes that *'donors might stop funding organisations if they doubt that their funding is aimed at independent monitoring. Some projects almost got closed because of these doubts'*.

OPORA representatives were particularly cautious and protective of its reputation even during interviews: on multiple occasions activists have stated that

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foreign funding is one of the main methods to keep distance from the local political elites. CVU employees have mentioned that organisation's attracts professional staff: some activists explained that they decided to work with organisations because of their spotless reputation and professional approach (Maria Kucherenko, former CVU).

In general, Ukrainian organisations develop their reputation with the similar methods as their colleagues from other post-Soviet states: they develop hierarchical structures to collect reliable data on electoral violations; they invest in professionalisation of their employees; they cover diverse range of topics and develop expertise in adjacent disciplines. In turn, compared to the election monitoring organisations in Georgia and Moldova, Ukrainian activists do not attempt to develop unbiased reporting strategies.

1. Structure of Organisation

Interviewees from OPORA, CVU and CHESNO have stressed the regional structure as the main organisational principle of the monitoring organisations. This can be explained by the large territory of Ukraine and diversity of its regions, rather than a deliberate strategic decision. At the same time, during elections all organisations collect information in a centralised and hierarchical manner ensuring uniform reporting and generalisable results.

The Kyiv oblast coordinator describes it as a branched hierarchical structure with one regional office that is located in the regional centre (Bila Tserkva) and ten local representatives in the surrounding villages. During elections, the regional office reports to the national headquarters in Kyiv. For the national campaigns, electoral monitoring strategy and methodology is defined by the national headquarters and is the same for all regional offices which ensures comparability of monitoring results. Hence, during elections, CVU relies on the hierarchical

similar to other electoral monitoring organisations in the post-Soviet region, while between elections or during local election campaigns, regional chapters develop their own projects in response to the local demand.

OPORA seems to rely on the hierarchical structure even on fewer occasions compared to CVU. Its activists stress the importance of regional structure and importance of regional involvement in decision-making and law making: *In this case they cannot say that they have to follow laws that someone made up in Kyiv'* (Yuriy Khorunzhiy, press service coordinator). Similarly, during the off-the-record conversation one of the OPORA leading analysts[13] mentioned that regional involvement adds legitimacy to the bills proposed by the organisation. The monitoring strategy is also defined by the central office and is based on the analysis of previous electoral campaigns. OPORA regional offices are free to decide which projects they want to focus on beyond election monitoring. Such projects can cover assessment of regional legislative bodies, advocacy campaign for local self-governance reform or local media performance and even creation of local media outlets. One of the most active CVU offices located in Odessa has its own online media platform 'IzbirKom' [14] that covers important regional and national political news. This diversity is related to the fact that most of the work in local projects performed by volunteers. As one of the regional coordinators summarised: *we cannot force them to conduct any particular project'*. Election monitoring organisations rely on regional projects that can be interesting and engaging for the local activists.

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[13]Several OPORA employees rejected interviews for the record, but spoke off the record about their work during the meetings in the office.

[14]Media platform 'IzbirKom' is available at www.izbirkom.org.ua (access 3 November 2019)

2.Professionalisation

Interviews have shown that election monitoring organisations predominantly rely on professional employees. To develop observers' skills CVU and OPORA conduct obligatory training to instruct about monitoring methodology for each campaign. OPORA members have particularly stressed the utmost importance of participation in training for long-term and short-term observers independently from the level of experience. Given the size of the country and network structure of the organisations, training is often organised by the local coordinators. Firstly, members of the core team in headquarters educate the regional office directors and LTOs; secondly, short-term observers are trained by the regional coordinators in their home regions.

OPORA has also developed an alternative and very creative approach to training activities. The organisation conducts so-called 'election camps' that combine education and monitoring purposes. Regional coordinators explained that these events involve successful and experienced observers from all of the country who travel to one particular region where local elections are about to take place. Few days this group participates in educational seminars not only preparing for the upcoming election day, but also learning about a broad range of election-related topics. Each 'election camp' culminates with one day of election monitoring when observers ensure almost universal coverage and train to monitor all electoral procedures:

> [Electoral camp] takes place when, for example, a special election
> of the city-governor occurs. And the whole Network comes there. . .
> about 200 people! And does a total 'brain concussion' in one city. I
> enjoyed it very much during special elections in Kryvyi Rih in 2015.
>
> (D. Arabadzhiev, OPORA Zaporozh'ye)

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CVU representatives also mention that the organisation invests additional resources in its permanent staff, and sends them abroad to improve their knowledge of the electoral process. Other educational activities include simulations of the election day to train observers and teach them how to find flaws in electoral procedures. In 2006 CVU conducted such off-site training in Crimea in cooperation with other regional organisations and prepared an analytical report summarising all difficulties that 'model precinct' faced during the 'model election day' (CVU 2006).

As a think tank, CiFRA Group employs only people with a high level of professional skills, such as IT, data analysis, web-design, etc. The main purpose of the group is educational activities and increase of competences of Ukrainian citizens in all aspects of the electoral process. Therefore, professionalization occurs also on the side of participants who travel with CiFRA to monitor elections abroad. As for CHESNO, some experts explained that a level of professionalism in this group is lower compared to other NGOs. In turn, this group has good event organisation skills and mobilisation potential that certainly requires professional knowledge in these fields.

At the same time, the reputation and professionalism of organisations attract potential high-skilled employees who care for their professional development and reputation. As one of the CVU employees formulated: *'I was looking for the employment I will not be ashamed of. I wanted to work with an organisation that was not compromised, for example, by some odious statements at the beginning of the war.* Similarly to Georgian and Moldovan NGOs, organisations like CVU and OPORA provide good career opportunities and a chance improve the resume of those who want to work in the third sector or continue their careers in politics.

3. Issues Coverage

All organisations focus on elections or political processes related to election. Main election monitoring organisations, CVU and OPORA, claim to cover various stages of the electoral process. At the same time, projects of OPORA, CVU and CHESNO overlap on numerous topics: while OPORA and CVU monitor electoral processes, all three organisations also monitor performance of the Parliament, political parties and separate politicians.

As the largest monitoring network, OPORA usually commences its monitoring mission with the start of the electoral campaign and formation of the election counting commissions (from the interview with D.Arabadzhiyev, OPORA). OPORA and CHESNO cover an extremely diverse range of topics including performance of ministers, educational reform and housing policies. Some activists criticise such diversity explaining that it does not allow organisations to focus on one field, become more professional and grow qualified cadres for politics. CVU is a more narrow-focused organisation and it has not changed its primary focus on elections as the main domain of activity, although regional offices establish different projects that do not have direct relations to elections.

All observers have stressed a shift from blatant on electoral day fraud to more subtle and paralegal manipulations: *'the election day itself is conducted fairly at least past five years'* (OPORA coordinator in Kyiv). Reacting to these changes, NGOs started focusing on pre-electoral phase and decertification of topics. The pre-electoral phase is covered by long-term observers who are present in the number of regions. Changes in the menu of electoral manipulations as well as decrease of available funding since 2006 caused substantial alterations in approach towards election monitoring, particularly, in case of CVU.

Table 6.6: Topics Covered by the Monitoring Organisations in Ukraine (2010-2017)

Organisation	Issue
CVU	Election monitoring
	Citizens education
	Community development
CHESNO	Monitoring of MPs activity
	Monitoring of government activity
	Monitoring of financing of electoral campaign (2014)
	Financial declarations monitoring
OPORA	Educational policy-development
	Housing and communal policy – development
	Electoral process monitoring and analysis

4. Reporting strategies

Reports of the OPORA and CVU monitoring campaigns are often divided into regions and are not generalised to the whole country. Each organisation gives a broad estimation of electoral process for each national campaign, but illustrations of misconduct are often represented on the regional level. Both election monitoring organisations mostly highlight negative aspects of electoral campaigns, flaws of the process and conclusions about possible improvements. At the same time, the regional variation in Ukraine is so high that observers' reports

usually focus on the regional aspects providing a broad picture and mentioning different patterns of election quality in regions. One of the widespread tactics is to put current elections in some comparative perspective with previous campaigns and stress improvement in election quality or changes in manipulation strategies.

In turn, CHESNO activists explained that their intentions are not to report a balanced picture, but point to negative aspects only. Some representatives have admitted that their publications might look unbalanced and biased against some political parties. The reason for that is data availability: their data collection strategy is based on information from the open sources and sometimes more information can not be found on all political parties or politicians: *'Although we try to find information on every legislator, sometimes they have well-covered pasts and it is impossible to find anything on them'*. Nonetheless, activists stress that lack of balanced information on all politicians is not a valid reason to cancel publications of all materials. That is why their reports look like a collection of 'negative information', while positive and good news are published in mass media that is often politically biased.

Such publication strategy is often criticised by politicians as 'ordered and paid' by their political rivals. The movement responds to this criticism with transparency: it publishes full information on its funding and donors sharing results of independent financial inspections. Out of four all investigated NGOs and groups in Ukraine CHESNO appears to be the most financially transparent reporting not only about political actors, but also presenting full information about themselves to address all criticism.

6.4.2 External Strategies of Ukrainian Monitoring Organisations

Strategies external to the organisation depend on the approach and goals of each organisation as well as personal experiences of the activists. Transacional activism in Ukraine is based on very diverse networks of cooperation and communication. At the same time, for majority of monitoring organisations focus on cooperation with the foreign 'partners', while on national level NGOs cooperation is not well developed. In turn, large organisations allow certain autonomy to their regional offices and encourage development of regional cooperation and projects independently from the national headquarters. Smaller organisations that appeared recently use strategies that are aimed at the citizens rather than political actors or foreign donors. These NGOs often employ special skills in data collection and analysis to share unbiased data on the performance of politicians and change their behaviour or prevent them from being re-elected. Such broad diversity of strategies points at vibrant and lively civil society and at a broad space available to the election monitoring organisations in Ukraine compared to other post-Soviet states. In turn, transactional activism has developed in Ukraine as main mode available to the professional organisations, while other types of activism are equally present in the country.

1. Engagement in political process

Election monitoring organisations in Ukraine report different levels of the engagement in the political process and dialog with the political parties and state officials. CVU representatives believe that 'addressing the political parties' leadership is one of the most efficient strategies to stop vote buying'.

Table 6.7: External Strategies Developed by Election Monitoring Organisation in Ukraine

Method	Example from Ukraine
Deep engagement in political process dialogue with political actors	Deeply rooted connections in the highest levels of political elite; activists become politicians and preserve connections with the NGOs; Political parties ask NGOs to provide election monitors
International coalition building and Expertise sharing	Foreign donors as the main partners; International 'professional' organisations (ENEMO, EPDE)
Cooperation with domestic NGOs	On the regional level, no national level election monitoring coalition.
Labour division between NGOs	Not clearly visible in Ukraine
Advocacy campaigns	Campaigns conducted by single NGOs and coalitions including change of electoral system from mixed to proportional representation (successful)
'Preventive reporting' and publicising of manipulations	Mass media and press-conferences; OPORA: Through PVT and 'Map of Violations'; CVU: Cooperation on the state officials
Service provision to citizens	Educational activities, rankings and information on politicians to help citizens make their choice.

During the interview CVU director Olekisy Koshel emphasised that 'only the party leaders, not civil society, law enforcement bodies or government can influence the performance of candidates'. CVU has always stressed that it is well connected with the politicians and state officials. The organisation's description that dates back to 2007 mentions a number of top politicians who served as the Supervisory Board including ministers and deputy ministers and political party leaders[15]. The CVU director mentioned that he left CVU to serve in the

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[15]CVU Contacts, Card (17 April 2006 09:54) //In Ukrainian: Контакти КВУ > Візитів-

Yuschenko government as an expert. As of 2017 'CVU has its own small fraction in the parliament that consists of former CVU members'. In his words, the organisation is 'well connected with the government' that allows CVU to push certain changes easier. Similarly other representatives of organisations recall that such career developments are possible, but are *'never used for personal gain'* (Maria Kucherenko). Some reports mention information that has been retrieved from the political parties' headquarters. For example, OPORA 2007 Election Day report mentions that the Party of Regions has shared some information on the detention of the OSCE observer that occurred in the Transcarpathian region. Several political parties attacked OPORA and other monitoring organisations claiming that they represent 'foreign interests' in Ukraine. In the personal conversations, activists claimed that such attacks are relatively rare.

In turn, OPORA representatives have criticised the CEC approach towards cooperation with the non-governmental organisations. While CEC is open to one-to-one cooperation with election monitoring organisations, no permanent platform for cooperation has been created yet. One of OPORA experts explains that CEC only follows the legally prescribed procedures and is not used to development of some initiatives and creation of working groups. The CEC representative explained that the legally possible type of cooperation allows CEC members only take part in events organised by the election monitoring NGOs, deliver speeches, participate in the educational programmes such as 'Election Camps' (interview with A.Magera). Similarly to other organisations, CiFRA group maintains friendly relationships with different state actors, first and foremost with Ukrainian Central Electoral Commission who supplies data for the analysis conducted by activists. In turn, CiFRA's experts are invited to participate in meetings and hearings or-

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ка (17 Квітня 2006 09:54), available through the old website archived version (last access 18 September 2019) https://web.archive.org/web/20060820001754/http://www.cvu.org.ua/doc.php?lang=ukr&mid=visit

ganized by the CEC and share their expertise on the topic. To summarise, the outcome of such cooperation is not always clear: some NGOs claim that they have the 'political fraction in the Parliament' and show direct cooperation with the politicians; other NGOs distance themselves from politicians to maintain their reputation. Finally, no permanent body or a task force exists in Ukraine to facilitate dialogue between NGOs and government on the topics of election quality. Hence, if any cooperation exists, it is conducted on an informal level, rather than through the officially established channels.

2. International Coalition Building and Expertise Sharing

Ukrainian election monitoring watchdogs stressed their cooperation with foreign NGOs and governments often framing them as 'partners' rather than 'donors'. In general, international cooperation occurs with two types of organisations: (1) foreign donors that sponsor election monitoring missions; and (2) networks of peer organisations from the post-communist region.

Although financial assistance from foreign states and IGOs has been discussed above, this section illustrates the importance of such cooperation. Report of CVU from 2006 mentioned international cooperation as one of the main activities of the organisation: 'CVU worked closely with the international missions such as ENEMO and OSCE and provided consultations for them' (CVU 2006a). International organisations represented in Ukraine mostly provide financial support in exchange for the skills and expertise of the local activists: IFES representative mentioned several projects conducted with OPORA that implied not only donations, but projects developed and realised together by the representatives of both organisations. Both organisations, CVU and OPORA, participate in two regional 'professional' election monitoring networks: EPDE and ENEMO that focus on different approaches to election monitoring and provide some learning

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and experience sharing opportunities for NGOs. Experience received abroad can be also applied in the negotiations with the domestic policy makers:

> *For example, we went to Armenia with EPDE and we came to a very important conclusion that in 4-5 months it is possible to conduct a very successful electoral reform, implement fingerprint scanners and passport checking. When Ukrainian politicians say something opposite we have a solid argument [to support our claim] during electoral reform.*

> *CVU, O.Koshel*

For the CiFRA Group a broad network of international contacts with diverse actors plays a crucial role in organising international 'electoral tourism' missions. Success of these trips depends on informal contacts and cooperation abroad. CiFRA's director explains that their professional approach causes interest from foreign donors and that CiFRA hase impact on the international level through good connections with INGOs and embassy representatives. At the same time, they actively work with the organisations that travel to Ukraine:

> *Some people come to Ukraine specifically to meet us. They come from Embassies; we have influence in these circles. We often consult foreign missions, explain them aspects on which they should focus their attention. Obviously, in some countries we have personal contacts, we are very grateful that they support communication with us even after they leave Ukraine, sometimes we even visit each other.*

Domestic political actors are often reluctant to cooperate with election observers and cooperation among NGOs is not implemented very well due to the certain

level of competition. In turn, international donors pay much attention to the Ukrainian civil society and are much more represented in the country compared to Georgia and Moldova.On the one hand, success of monitoring and advocacy campaigns often depend on the simultaneous pressure from the foreign states on the Ukrainian government. In turn, domestic observers become one of the credible sources of information for the foreign donors on the state of election quality and democratic process in the country. For example, NDI Statement on the pre-election situation in Ukraine mentions OPORA's LTOs as a source of information on political campaign during 2012 parliamentary elections[16]. Importance of such cooperation is also confirmed from the side of some foreign partners. The EU Parliament representative characterised Ukrainian civic organisations as 'very active, willing to talk to us all the time'. Strong emphasis on the international cooperation is one of the main features of transactional networks formed in Ukraine.

3. Cooperation with Domestic NGOs

Monitoring NGOs in Ukraine rather compete with each other, than cooperate. Some information about cooperation between NGOs on the topic of election quality could be traced to the earlier years: For example, in 2005 CVU joined the 'Clean Elections' initiative together with other major national civic organisations. The main purpose of the coalition was to monitor pre-electoral period and political campaigns and ensure conduction of free and fair elections[17]. CVU director mentions broad experience of coalition building with numerous actors in Ukraine. For example, the sociological centre that decided to conduct exit polls during

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[16]Statement of the National Democratic Institute Pre-Election Delegation to Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine, September 17, 2012 available at `https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2-%20NDI%20Pre-Election%20Delegation%20Statement.pdf` (accessed 8 July 2018)

[17]zik.ua 19 вересня, 2005, 12:28 'Громадські організації проголосили ініціативу "Чисті вибори" (access 4 December 2017) `www.zik.ua/news/2005/09/19/gromadski_organizatsii_ukrainy_progolosyly_initsiatyvu_laquochysti_19410`

elections asked CVU to join to 'strengthen their name'. CVU representatives have stressed that the organisation has long-term experience in coalition building with different forces, including some domestic NGOs, although other organisations do not mention CVU as a partner. In turn, in 2007 OPORA was part of the regional monitoring campaign together with CVU and other regional organisations (report by Kogut 2007). OPORA representatives stressed that in most cases there is 'healthy competition' among monitoring NGOs, but sometimes unscrupulous rivalry occurs. At the same time, on the regional level organisations might work very closely and even integrate each other offices:

> *I do not know of any case when CVU integrated someone from OPORA, but I know many cases when OPORA recruited successful CVU representatives and integrated them very well. Examples are CVU offices in Donetsk and in Odesa. CVU Odesa represents OPORA in the region.*
>
> *OPORA, D. Arabadzhiev*

He concludes that stronger organisations are more likely to integrate weaker ones, but this is not a sign of general fruitful cooperation among NGOS. Most organisations stress that lack of cooperation is explained through different methodologies and different focus of monitoring missions: 'There are two positions: OPORA and CVU because we have different opinions on many issues. We have different approaches to the estimation of information [that we collect]'. Furthermore, CVU director explains that there is no need for a coalition because 'there is no need to increase trust in our information among media outlets'. Coalition is considered as an option only if civil society organisations can benefit from attracting the attention of mass media or more effectively pressure the political actors. Although some interviewees cautiously suggested that mass media more

actively and eagerly transmits information that comes from the NGO coalitions, rather than a single organisation. In general, NGO leaders conclude that strong and long-lasting organisations do not need to improve these aspects of their work and claim that they can successfully carry out projects without any support from other NGOs.

Similarly CiFRA Group director stressed that they abstain from joining the coalitions that are artificially created by foreign donors, although they take part in some shared projects that *'correspond to the interests of CiFRA's participants'* (N.Boyko). The civic movement CHESNO was born from a coalition of several organisations and represents a loose union of a number of NGOs and civic activists who work together on various monitoring projects. According to the activists, this form of cooperation has proved to be successful. At the same time as of 2017 there were no shared projects with the election monitoring organisations. Some interviewees suggest that lack of close cooperation can be explained with the different levels of expert knowledge and very diverse approaches towards methods of action used by different groups. Yulia Shypilova from IFES explained that *two big organisations conduct monitoring for more than a decade, they have experience and knowledge in this field < ... > other organisations are good at organising flash mobs or conduct very good journalistic investigation, but they are weaker when it comes to analysis.* She concluded that *'when it comes to cooperation, big organisations look at smaller haughtily'.*

Furthermore, different approaches and world views of NGOs sometimes result in contradictions between them, particularly when it comes to advocacy campaigns. For example, OPORA activists have developed a bill that would allow voting of internally displaced persons from the Eastern Ukrainian territories. At the same time, CVU considered this bill to be 'absurd' because only residents of a specific locality should elect local representatives. According to some ac-

tivists, such contradictions are normal and should exist in a vibrant and lively civil society. In general, stable coalitions of election monitoring organisations in Ukraine are not present because most of the activists express doubts that this can increase their efficiency and produce better 'product' as an outcome of the cooperation. Moreover, during off-the record discussions OPERA activists were rather critical towards the CVU central office and CVU close relationships with some political actors.

4. Labour Division Between Election Monitoring Organisations

In general, in Ukraine labour division between organisations is not very explicit. Representatives of IFES, one of the most prominent donors who work with electoral watchdogs explained, that organisations receive grants and support from donors based on their expertise, hence, donors decide which organisation will conduct any specific project. In turn, NGOs develop their own 'portfolio' that they present to different donors in their applications and some expert knowledge and specialisation is valued by the donors (Yulia Shypilova, IFES). OPORA representatives claimed that their projects are large in scale and cover the whole country, while CVU mission is smaller. At the same time, they stressed that 'spheres of interest of two organisations overlap' (interview with Yuriy Khorunzhiy).

Both CVU and CHESNO conduct projects related to the quality of legislative work of the members of the Parliament. CVU director stresses that approaches in these similar projects are very different: while CHESNO focuses on quantitative methods and ranks MPs according to the number of initiatives, CVU attempts to assess the *'quality of bills proposed by the legislators'*. At the same time, CVU director mentions that on the national level projects conducted by the organisation are very narrow and specific, on the regional level the line between organisations' priorities and labour division is rather blurred. For example, the

CVU central office does not monitor media on the national level because there are professional NGOs who focus on media monitoring. At the same time, some local CVU branches conduct monitoring of local media outlets during political campaigns.

5. Advocacy Campaigns

As defined on the CVU website, the purpose of this organisation is not only to control the electoral process, but also to initiate institutional changes that could bring Ukrainian society 'closer to democratic standards'. CVU representatives mentioned advocacy campaigns among their main strategies aimed at improving the quality of elections. Although interviews did not focus on such campaigns, they often mentioned successful cases of electoral laws being changed under the pressure of monitoring organisations. For example, CVU ressed authorities advocated changes to criminalise some cases of administrative pressure on voters. For example, under the pressure from CVU cases of pressure on voters and controlled voting were criminalised after 2014, so observers 'can call police if they see representatives of administration who control voters' (Y.Byt). CVU has also suggested and advocated for changes in electoral law to give a legal definition to the 'bribery of voters'. CVU director complained that this law has been sent to the Parliament a few years ago, but it is 'not considered as a serious bill'.

OPORA representatives have also mentioned that advocacy campaigns are an important part of their work, although failed to give examples of recent suggestions made by the monitoring organisations. One of the activists admitted that *'if not for our foreign partners, activists could not conduct successful advocacy campaigns'. Particularly such civic activity increased after the Revolution of Dignity the Eastern regions like Zaporizhia, Donetsk, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Kher-*

son that received massive flow of foreign grants'. Analysis of the OPORA website revealed several 'position papers' devoted to the electoral laws amendments discussed in the parliament[18]. At the same time, much stronger advocacy efforts are conducted by OPORA in spheres like housing and communal services or education.

6. 'Preventive Reporting' and Publicising of Manipulations

Publicising electoral fraud and manipulations is one of the most important strategies used for combatting misconduct by all organisations in the post-Soviet region. Election monitoring organisations use different tools to make misconduct public. For example, in 2012 OPORA has launched the Map of Violations portal to present information from each region n a transparent and comparable manner. Information that appears on this map is usually collected by the electoral observers and only rarely comes from citizens. Only data that can be supported by some hard evidence (photo or video recording, printed materials) is submitted on the map of violations.

On the election day OPORA conducts parallel votes tabulation (PVT) that helps to summarise and transmit election results faster than CEC (example, figure 6.8). Each significant deviation from the calculations of NGOs casts doubt on the legitimacy of the official results. CVU also used to conduct PVT for several electoral campaigns as a mechanism of electoral fraud prevention.

In addition, Ukrainian observers mentioned conduction of exit polls during the national level elections or local campaigns in large cities. CVU director confirms that this is not a regular strategy, but sometimes it is very helpful to understand electoral trends. Oleksiy Koshel talks about the intimidating role

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[18]For example, 'Position on the results of the meeting of the working group on improving electoral legislation, May 20, 2011' available in Ukrainian at `http://oporaua.org/news/ 1025-2011-05-19-08-04-44` (access 27 February 2017)

of observers present at the polling stations where violations occur: *'When the potential electoral lawbreaker sees that our observer fills out "The Act of the Electoral Law Violations" and puts signatures of witnesses, it works in 90% of cases'*. The CVU leader shares his interpretation that the main role of electoral monitoring organisations is to prevent violations of laws. At the same time, he stressed that the most efficient prevention is possible on the highest institutional level: working with ministers, parliamentarians and the president's office they manifest that CVU always tries to prevent manipulations of the system i.e. work with the causes, not the effects.
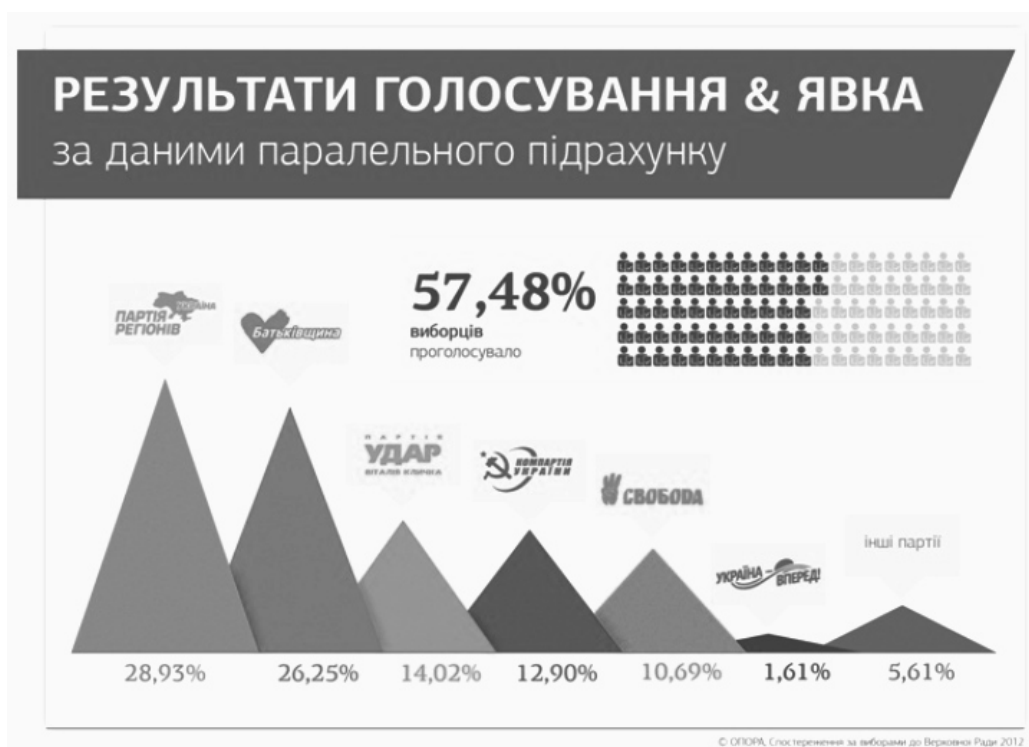
Figure 6.8: OPORA Lviv 2010 Report:Budget

Similarly to organisations in other countries, Ukrainian monitoring NGOs conduct a press conference immediately after election day. Press conferences usually take place very early in the morning, when the public has no information

about the outcome yet. During these press-conferences, they share their estima-
tion of election quality and highlight main issues. According to the CVU Leading
Analyst, this very important event *'is never missed by all the main TV channels
that talk about elections'*. Furthermore, both organisations stress that all TV
channels, regardless of their political inclinations and relations with NGOs, are
usually present at such press conferences because 'this is a good opportunity for
them to get some insights or ask for a comment'.

7. Service Provision to Citizens

All monitoring organisations stress that information provision to the citizens
in different forms and about different aspects of elections and political life is one
of the main strategies used by organisations. Such activities are aimed at long-
term improvement of election quality and change in attitudes towards democracy
and elections. CHESNO and CVU activists were particularly explicit about this
strategy. Representatives of both organisations mentioned that organisations
publicise information on the performance of local politicians and members of
Parliament. To make it easier to digest they rank politicians based on differ-
ent qualitative aspects (CVU) or quantitative data aspects such as number of
Parliamentary sessions attended or number of bills introduced (CHESNO):

> *We launched a campaign 'Don't Elect a Truant! against those who
> missed more than 50% of sessions in [regional] parliaments. We
> indicated about 5000 of truants and 3000 were not re-elected. But
> it is hard to say if this is our achievement.*

> *(Yegor Poliakov, CHESNO)*

Some CVU representatives have framed their organisation as a service provider
for the local communities. For example, Kyiv regional office director Yuriy But

explained that strategies and coverage of precincts during election day depends on the 'customer's request'. He mentioned political parties and foreign donors among their customers that order specific monitoring for example, a representative sample designed to conduct PVT or full coverage of all precincts to prevent any manipulations. Hence, changes in the strategies of electoral monitoring are always conditioned upon the preferences of those who 'order' an election monitoring project.

6.5   Transactional Activism of in Ukraine: Short Conclusions

Ukrainian election monitoring organisations are one of the oldest NGOs in the country with a long history of election monitoring activities and control of the political actors. Network of monitoring organisations is very diverse and combine classical watchdog organisations and new formats that develop following different strategies. At the same time, classical watchdogs in Ukraine are less hierarchical and more regionalised due to the size of the country and strong local differences. This section attempts to summarise general trends in the development of transactional activism in Ukraine between 2006 and 2014. Previous studies stress that election observers played a particular role in pro-democratic uprisings spreading information that triggered the wave of Colour Revolutions (Broers 2005; Tucker 2007). These events did not bring long term democratisation and raised distrust in opposition and civil society organisations.

In the period investigated in the chapter, Ukrainian CSOs remain partly insulated and distant from the political actors, while their resources were limited and constantly shrinking. Some scholars stress contradictory trends in the

development of the state-civil society relationships in the Yanukovych era: on the one hand, the government adopted several laws that made registration and operation of CSOs easier, on the other hands, legal requirements to the work of volunteers became more complicated and imposed additional taxation and bureaucratic procedures on the domestic donors who wanted to support NGOs (Stewart and Dollbaum 2017).

Election observers oftne characterised Ukrainian civil society as 'hibernating' or 'reactive' in the period between the Orange Revolution and The Revolution of Dignity. Nonetheless, weak and unconsolidated authoritarianism allowed certain activity and independence of the civil sector. Clearly such a contradictory environment and competition for the limited resources were neither instrumental for the development of cooperation between monitoring organisations and the state, nor for the cooperation between domestic civil society organisations. Cooperation with the state actors is often conducted through the personal connections, while no formal platform for the discussion of elections has been established. In turn, relations between domestic NGOs often characterised by competition for grants and mutual distrust. Hence, transactional activism in Ukraine is predominantly conducted through cooperation with external actors. Similarly to the previous studies (Bidenko 2018, 35), this chapter shows that foreign donors provide support and endorsement to the monitoring organisations in Ukraine. Interviews have confirmed that foreign donors that are often labelled as 'partners' or even 'customers' provide not only funding, but also credibility to the election monitoring projects and findings. Formal and informal connections with the foreign donors helps local organisations to develop unique projects that are not represented in any other post-Soviet state, for example, open lectures and educational activities including even unique events such as 'electoral tourism'. In general, strategies to change the behaviour of political actors and improvement of election quality

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were best summarised by one of the CVU regional office directors who explained three main methods used by the observers:

1. Legal pressure through the writing of complaints;

2. Publicity i.e. making misconduct public;

3. Drawing attention of the international actors to the electoral misconduct.

These strategies are based on different approaches to cooperation with state actors, for example, CVU is better connected with the state actors, while other organisations prefer to keep distance from political interests. At the same time, they collect and share different information that can be spread through mass media or shared with international donors who can influence the behaviour of Ukrainian political actors. Similar strategies are employed when activists advocate for the changes in electoral laws: they often use either support and endorsement from the foreign actors or examples from the foreign context.

Strong regionalisation and lack of hierarchy except during electoral campaigns is another distinctive feature of the Ukrainian election organisations' strategies. Regional chapters are free to carry out their own projects, apply for funding and connect with local organisations and politicians. Furthermore, some election monitoring organisations put significant efforts in providing consultations with local branches to add legitimacy to the projects and advocacy campaigns conducted by the central office.

Ukrainian observers are not as critical of their work and their ability to pressure politicians as their colleagues from Georgia and Moldova. Indeed, they agree that elections never become free and fair until there is political will to conduct elections properly and until elites do not see benefits from playing according to the democratic rules. They highlight that while working with the regional

politicians is easier and brings improvements sooner, the national level is almost impossible to target for the civil society sector. In turn, some observers provide examples that their activity results in unexpected improvements of electoral integrity, particularly on the local level. For example, describing monitoring campaign of local elections, OPORA regional coordinator shared his certainty of the monitoring mission's role:

> *Just imagine the level of such an event! We engage mostly regional coordinators and LTOs from all over Ukraine, they come to one unfortunate town and cover 100% of precincts with experienced observers! Poor candidates who planned to rig something and already have calculated their victory! And here comes OPORA and destroys all their plans!*

Organisations in Ukraine stress different aims of their activity that are not always linked with the election monitoring directly: they suggest that educational activities and information provision leads to the change of political culture. Such work is often framed as 'service provision' to the Ukrainians: observers provide unbiased information about performance of elected officials creating various rankings and estimations that should help citizens to make their choice at the next electoral cycle. Activists stressed that the 2014 crisis opened new opportunities to the civil society that increased its pressure on the state actors and became more 'active'. While interest towards elections might be decreasing, flexible and non-hierarchical organisation of the monitoring missions allows them to develop new projects and address new challenges that Ukraine faces after the Crimea annexation and beginning of the war on its territory.

7 Transactional Activism in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine Compared

This chapter presents a comparative analysis of strategies developed by the observers and paths towards transactional activism in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It starts with comparison of resources and political context that conditioned divergent paths of pro-democratic activism development in three countries. Next section summarises internal and external strategies employed by the observers introducing a summary of tactics that belong to the transactional activism. Investigating transactional activism, the study relies on the classical definition by Petrova and Tarrow (2007, 79) stressing the aspect of cooperation between different actors and non-contentious activities. At the same time, the study presents creative interpretation of this mode of activism by the NGOs. The project presents and compares interpretation of the NGOs and their explanations of how NGO strategies developed to mitigate scarcity of their financial resources and non-democratic features of the political context. The chapter concludes discussing goals and outcomes of monitoring missions in three countries suggesting how changes in quality of elections might have impacted development of NGOs.

7.1 Resources and Strategies of Election Monitoring Organisations

Traditionally social movements scholars related mobilisation and success of activism to the availability of tangible and intangible resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Shorter and Tilly 1974; Staggenborg 1998). At the same time, NGOs in the post-communist region were criticised for their reliance on foreign funding (Fagan 2005; Kudlenko 2015; Mendelson and Glenn 2002; Lutsevych 2013). The study indicates that comprehensive election monitoring missions require extensive preparation and resources. And in all three countries foreign donors are the only reliable source of funding for the political NGOs. Donors who work in this region include 'usual suspects' – large organisations that work on the democracy promotion and elections-related topics in all three countries since they gained independence (e.g. USAID, NED, OSCE/ODIHR, foreign embassies) and smaller organisations that cooperate or provide grants only to special on some occasions or for narrow, specialised topics (GIZ, DW Akademie, Pakt Inc). Some international organisations prefer to open offices and conduct their own projects in the recipient countries. For example, ISFED works as an expert organisation in Ukraine alone or in cooperation with the domestic organisations (OPORA and CVU), and sometimes provides financial grants for the local NGOs. Other organisations prefer only to distribute grants and do not conduct their own projects alone (e.g. Eurasia Foundation). Graph 7.1 depicts the network of donors that fund election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and shows considerable overlap in funding organisations between three countries, meaning that NGOs might compete for funding not only on the national, but also on the international level.
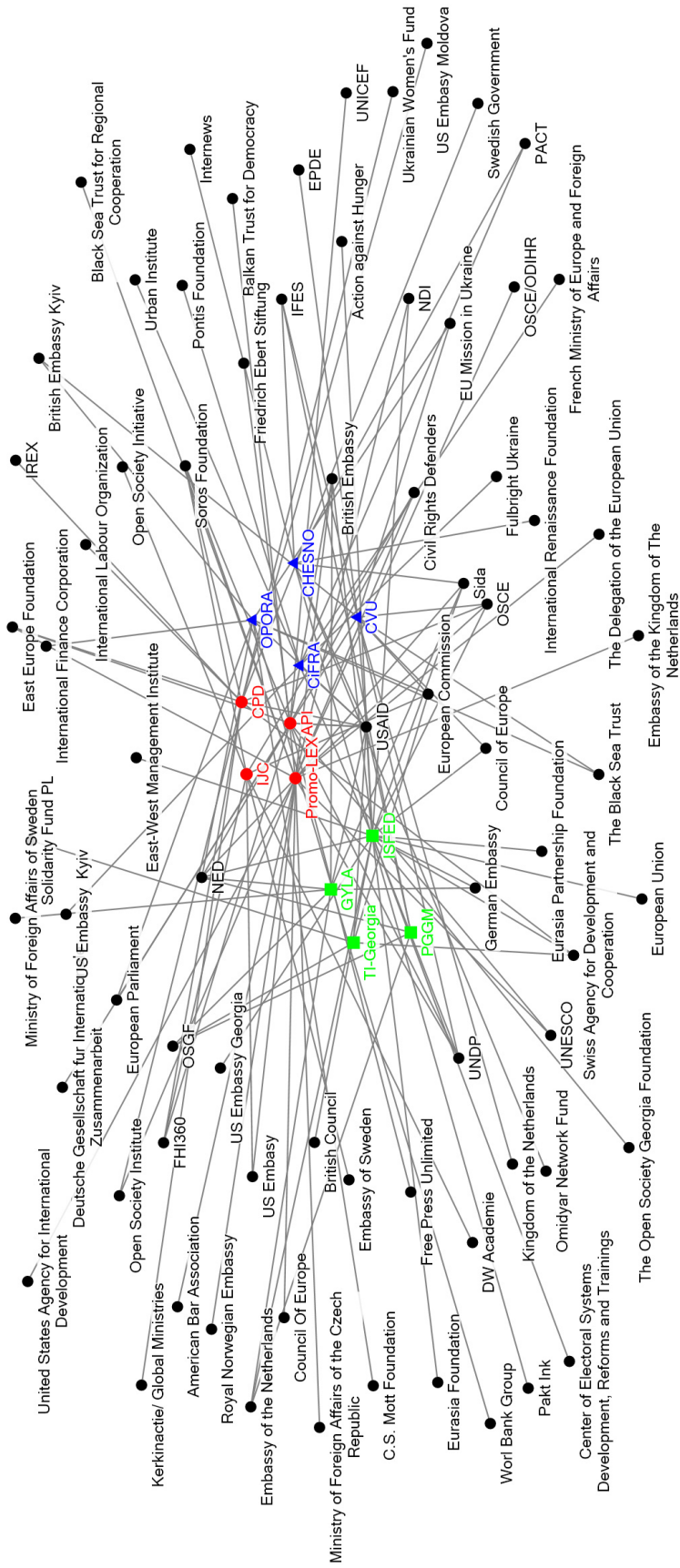
Figure 7.1: Election Monitoring Organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: Network of Donors

Importantly, there is no unanimity among activists if reliance on foreign funding is a positive aspect of their work. In Georgia, a more optimistic outlook persists; observers stress that their activities cannot be associated with any domestic political force to ensure their non-partisan reputation. The Georgian NGO representatives agree that donor dependence is not a problem for these organisations as it helps them to be truly independent from the local political actors. Most of them stressed that foreign partners do not set an agenda and all organisations are free to decide which projects they apply for and what aspects of the election process they observe and control locally. The nature of election monitoring tasks performed by these NGOs requires them to be equally distant from all political parties to gain credibility for their findings. Similar statements were made by the majority of Moldovan and Ukrainian activists stress that funding required for the election monitoring is only available from foreign sources and missions will not exist without foreign support.

At the same time, in Ukraine and Moldova, alternative views on funding appear and sometimes even turn into state policies. Some activists express their doubts that foreign funding is the best way to finance important monitoring missions. In Moldova a philanthropic tax was suggested by the activists to allow citizens to support non-state organisations that they consider to be important. In 2017 a new 2% law was introduced to allow redirecting part of the income tax to some NGOs or religious organisations. Most of the NGO representatives had doubts if funding through this tax could completely substitute foreign funding. Nonetheless they stress that funding by citizens has two important implications, firstly: it will indicate if the population thinks that election monitoring is a necessary task beneficial for the society; secondly it will help citizens to be more disciplined and responsible with taxes that they pay. In Ukraine ideas of introducing a similar tax are cautiously expressed by a minority of observers and

seem not to be very popular among NGOs leaders. Similarly to organisations in Moldova and Georgia, electoral watchdogs in Ukraine follow the principle of equal distance from all political parties. Their reputation and credibility can be easily destroyed by such allegations of close connections to any political party. Hence, most organisations prefer to use classical approach and rely on foreign funding.

Finally, careful examination of projects and list of donors supported the claim made by Petrova (2014): local organisations such as Ukrainian Women's Fund from the post-communist region develop cooperation and projects to support democratic development in this region through funding and through sharing knowledge and relevant skills. Furthermore, NGOs in the post-Soviet region stress that they have obtained enough expertise that can be shared through regional networks. For example, Georgian NGOs pioneered monitoring of party financing and shared this knowledge with foreign colleagues in Moldova and Ukraine. Such knowledge is based on common experience, similar problems that NGOs face in this region, hence can be even more valuable than expertise brought from very different contexts of Western democracies. Although, foreign donations are the main source of income, skills and knowledge do not flow unidirectional from the West to the East any more.

To summarise, election monitoring organisations in all three countries strongly depend on foreign funding and support from the European and US actors. Funding flows unevenly to the organisations and in the periods under consideration, elections appear to be one of the least funded areas in all three countries. In turn, funding flow increases when some crisis happens or some crucial national elections are approaching, while local and regional elections observation is rarely supported by the international community. In turn, some activists, particularly in Ukraine, suggest that regional elections might be even more important for the cit-

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izens and development of the political system, although they are not observed as closely as they should be. In response to the constraints in resources civil society actors develop different strategies and tactics to mitigate these limitations.

7.2 Political Context of Election Monitoring

Political context and structure of political opportunities are known to be another set of crucial factors that define strategies and outcomes of civil society activities. Each chapter presented detailed analysis of the political context in which election monitoring is performed. Country cases investigated in this study have a number of commonalities that allow fruitful comparative analysis: for seven decades Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine were part of a vast Soviet Empire ruled by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes with planned economy, lack of personal freedoms, and suppressed civil society. After gaining independence in 1990-s all post-Soviet states went through times of crisis following an uneven path of democratisation and development of civil societies.

Next, political and social development of these states was strongly influenced by the Colour Revolutions that occurred in the early 2000s in Georgia and Ukraine, while in Moldova the protests occurred later and on a smaller scale. Case studies cover periods of time after mass mobilisation waves and look into the development of non-contentious strategies during the 'normal' times. Although numerous studies of mobilisation waves showed the importance of civil society in facilitating these events, the post-revolutionary context appeared to be very difficult for the NGOs. The retrospective examination shows that Colour Revolutions appeared to be a short 'democratic moments' (Onuch 2014, 213–14) and move towards democracy in many countries was soon reversed (Forbrig and Demeš 2007). Similarly, Lutsevych (2013) argues that collective power mani-

fested during electoral revolutions in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine has not been translated further in day-to-day political life, hence these countries did not take a steady democratisation path. Although civil society played a crucial role ousting autocratic incumbents (Broers 2005), some studies claim that it has been used as an instrument 'to bring change into a situation of paralysis' in the old elites (Cheterian 2009, 158).

In most of the states (except Georgia) revolutionaries failed to replace old political and economic elites and did not bring radical change and improvement in the life of ordinary people because old legal framework of the state as well as 'political culture and, choices or ideological orientations of society' were not questioned (Stewart 2009). Moreover, civil society was even weakened after these revolutions because foreign donors shifted funding from the NGOs to the state actors believing in their democratic intentions and attempting to establish relations with the new leaders (Stewart 2009). These factors combined with inability of opposition to present coherent programme of action to improve the economic situation of the local citizens lead to the considerable disillusionment with revolutions and new elites, criticism towards the 'revolutionaries' and civil society actors who put them in power as well as further disengagement of the population from the politics. In turn, these waves of mass mobilisation indicate that post-Soviet civil society can use both contentious and non-contentious repertoires even targeting the same issues of election quality showing that transactional activism is only one mode of civil society operation.

Protest waves develop and decrease creating cycles of contention, while election monitoring organisations operate during all stages of this process and have to employ strategies that correspond to increase and decrease in levels of public mobilisation. Moreover, personal involvement in these events might have shaped strategies of the NGOs and development of their repertoires of action.

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For example, Georgian observers never mentioned their connections or personal involvement in the Rose Revolution, and when asked explained that these events are too remote and irrelevant for the current development of civil society. In turn, Moldovan activists stressed their distance from 2009 protests, and explained that non-participation in Twitter Revolution is one of the signs of their independent and non-partisan approach. In turn, Ukrainian activists proudly discussed their involvement in street politics in 2004 and the fact that the OPORA organisation grew out of those contentious events. Other activists shared experience of participation in more recent protest events such as 2014 Euromaidan protests. Undoubtedly, personal experiences of the organisations' leaders and rank-in-file activists shape strategies and approaches of the organisations for decades.

During the investigated periods all three countries were labelled as 'hybrid regimes' that combine features of democratic and autocratic types (Karl 1995; Howard and Roessler 2006) and in which periods of democratic progress alternate with periods of backsliding (Knott 2018). Scholars have acknowledged that instead of being in transition between autocracy and democracy (Carothers 2002), this 'grey zone' of neither full democracies, nor full autocracies, belongs to its own regime type with specific features and internal dynamics. In-depth analysis points at considerable differences in political context that defines development of election monitoring strategies despite similar 'hybrid' regimes labels. In turn, comparative analysis indicates differences in development of transactional activism in three countries due to the contextual factors and availability of resources.

Investigation shows that in Georgia political context is the most instrumental for the development of monitoring organisations; they participate in the process almost as equals, supply political elite with educated cadres, provide expert knowledge and ensure communication with foreign actors. Although the

period of Saakashvili rule and UNM domination was labelled as autocratic by the majority of activists, they often stressed that Western donors preferred to deal with the government directly instead of sponsoring civil society after the victory of the Rose Revolution. These factors lead to depletion of civil society, not only of material resources, but also of qualified specialists who moved to work for the government. In 2011 international attention increased and the pre-electoral political context turned out to be the most hostile towards election monitoring organisations, while the quality of election was relatively low. At the same time, the importance of the 2012 elections forced observers to prepare the 'disciplining' measures like 100% coverage of precincts during the election day. The subsequent peaceful change in ruling coalition and stepping down of Saakashvili from government resulted in continuous calm and peaceful co-existence of civil society and governing bodies.

Georgian observers stress that they prefer to work with state actors: *'NGOs in Georgia are not very good at cooperating with each other'* (the CDD Director), while authorities are rather open to work with civil society. Hence, cooperation between election watchdogs and state actors becomes the main characteristic feature of transactional activism in Georgia. At the same time, political context creates lots of opportunities for the creation of new monitoring organisations who are closely linked to some political parties and conduct 'fake' observation creating noise and distrust in CSOs during elections. Voices of independent watchdogs might get lost in the cacophony of these noises, hence, such contexts require strategies that match not only welcoming political context, but also the competitive side of the third sector. Political context in Georgia and long-term cooperation with the Western donors defined transactional activism in terms of cooperation with state actors and less with domestic organisations. At the same time, narrow third sector forces Georgian monitoring organisations to divide

labour and focus on different issues to decrease levels of competition for funding.

Moldova between 2009 and 2016 represents the opposite extreme in which politicians often only 'pay lip service' to the reforms and cooperation with the civil society. Some initiatives related to service provision by monitoring organisations (e.g. education projects) are accepted, while the majority of civil society propositions related to the quality of elections are ignored. Immediately after the 2009-2010 political crisis, monitoring organisations had more opportunities to influence policies as well as electoral performance because power was not yet consolidated in the hands of Democratic Party, this period was referred to as a 'Golden Age' when pressure on civil society decreased and NGOs where invited to take more active part in political life. At the same time, observers did not mention that many skilled activists became part of the new government; hence civil society remained distant from the state agencies even in this period. The victory of pro-European political coalition gave an impression to the foreign governments that Moldova finally got on the democratisation track. Consequently, external support to civil society groups decreased considerably, while connections to the pro-European politicians increased. Gradual consolidation of power in the hands of power oligarchs running Democratic Party closed opportunities for the civil society to influence the quality of elections, electoral policies or media performance, while foreign support remained low.

Under these circumstances, cooperation skills developed by the monitoring organisations when they were in opposition to the Communist Party became useful again. The main distinct feature of transactional activism in Moldova is the presence of the Coalition for Free and Fair Election 'Coalitia 2009' that helps cooperation and strengthens voices of election monitoring organisations. Election watchdogs in Moldova show the highest levels of cooperation among each other in three case studies. Although Coalitia 2009 was inspired by the foreign donors and

developed in the face of 'common enemy', it remains a central strategy to face constraints of political context. At the same time, cooperation is realised on the level of projects and events arranged by organisations together. Interestingly, civil society actors in their interviews have not mentioned much of change in strategies and methods of action despite gradual closure of political opportunities in 2014-2016. Having the classical watchdog approach they continued attempts to work with the state actors, rather than development of new activities or shifting to more contentious strategies.

Civil society in Ukrainian can be placed in the middle of two extremes between Georgian and Moldovan examples. Activists agree that the decade between two Maidan Revolutions was a period of attenuation of activism and decreased levels of cooperation between civil society and state actors. While some activists claimed that 'autocratic rule of Yanukovich' prevented civil society from influencing the political situation, others were more critical towards the Ukrainian NGOs themselves suggesting that they should have been more active and engaged. At the same time, in this period new monitoring organisations were created and new approaches developed. OPORA that grew out of Pora! Movement of Orange Revolution developed as a network rather than a hierarchical NGO with a strong regional focus. In general, organisations in Ukraine tend to cooperate less with any domestic actors, like NGOs or state agencies. In turn, Ukrainian monitoring organisations rely strongly on the cooperation with foreign actors who seem to pay more attention to the elections in Ukraine, rather than Georgia and Moldova. In turn, activists stress that foreign donors act as partners who do not influence the agenda, but only provide financial support, while all skills and expert knowledge comes from the local activists, often based in the regions. Such strong emphasis on the cooperation with foreign actors seems to be a central characteristic feature of transactional activism formed in Ukraine.

Similarly to Spicer et al. (2011, 1753) this study confirms the importance of the political context that enables different activities of NGOs and defines development of their strategies. In turn, changes in political context open new opportunities to the NGOs to develop projects and cooperate with various actors. Although this process goes with different speed in three countries, the general tendency shows that monitoring NGOs get more opportunities to work and invest in political development in their countries. In all three countries, election monitoring activists confirm that quality of elections has improved and outrageous fraud is not committed on election day. At the same time, incumbents use a broad range of half legal and illegal techniques to skew the playing field in their favours. The most popular method is to apply administrative pressure forcing dependent populations to vote for incumbents or public employees campaigns on behalf of them. This is often combined with illegal bribing of voters with entertainment, presents or just increased expenses on the social projects on the eve of elections. These methods are applied by all political actors as soon as they get in power and are sometimes indivisible from some legal strategies of electorate mobilisation. Finally, media biased coverage of the electoral campaign and misinformation of the electorate, black PR and hate speech are broadly used by the political contestants in all three countries. In turn, observers respond with expansion of their missions and changes in their monitoring methodology that includes new aspects of political campaign. For example, a new trend is monitoring of political finances, such as electoral campaign spending made by competitors.

Is it possible to conclude that decrease in direct and blatant electoral fraud is a result of electoral monitoring activities? The answer that comes from election monitoring organisations themselves is both positive and negative at the same time. On the one hand, their permanent presence and control produces a

disciplining effect particularly because they immediately publicise cases of fraud. On the other hand, election monitoring efforts should be combined with political will of incumbents or their inability to monopolise elections completely (as it appends in Russia, for example). Publicising violations among citizens and foreign donors is the strongest tool used by observers because it denies the legitimacy of electoral results and casts doubt on the democratic intentions of the election winners. Governments of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine depend not only on the domestic public opinion, but also on support of the Western states that often put free and fair elections in the list of conditions under which such funds are granted. Hence, election monitoring is not only relevant for domestic public opinion, but also international reputation. Interviews suggest that domestic political actors are more open to civil society when they want to present themselves as democratically-oriented demonstrating cooperation with civil society to the Western states. Foreign pressure is mentioned in the interviews as an important factor that shapes domestic political context for civil society. In turn, NGOs provide foreign actors with reliable information on the political process and quality of elections.

7.2.1 Comparison of strategies of election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

The section provides detailed comparison of the external and internal strategies used by the political NGOs who monitor elections in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Classical definitions of transactional activism stress external aspects of NGOs strategies, such as connections and cooperation between NGOs political parties and foreign donors. Authors suggest that transactional activism strategies are aimed at the national and international coalition building that in turn,

helps to mobilise the support of other actors that can pressure governments into changing their policies (Korolczuk and Saxonberg 2015). In addition, studies have also discovered the importance of labour division among NGOs involved in transactional activism in the post-communist states (Mazák and Diviák 2018). At the same time, internal developments of NGOs that are involved in transactional activism are rarely discussed, hence enough is known about what internal features help NGOs to build cooperation. This part of the chapter is based on the comparison of their perceptions of political opportunities and constraints and rationale behind organisations structure and strategies. Two sections below provide a brief comparative summary of internal methods of action and external strategies developed by the election observers in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Comparison of Internal Strategies

As case-study analysis indicates, internal methods of monitoring organisations' development seem to be similar across three countries. Previous literature does not focus much on the internal development and features of the organisations involved in transactional activism. The present study offers some insights, although does not claim that only these methods and tactics belong to the internal side of the transactional type of activism.

In all three countries organisations that conduct election monitoring projects belong to the classical watchdog types of civil society actors and clearly represent the 'elite' of the local third sector. On the one hand, these NGOs create a monopoly on the market of election monitoring services, particularly in smaller countries, like Moldova. On the other hand, their expert knowledge and long term experience creates certain reputation of knowledgeable and independent actors and helps them in cooperation with the domestic and foreign donors who look

for trustworthy information on domestic political processes. The study concludes that in all three countries, internal development of all organisations is aimed at the creation of a reputation of non-partisan and independent actors.

Almost all organisations develop hierarchical structures to collect reliable information on the electoral process around the country. NGOs rely on the professional and well-trained employees who have to follow a strict set of rules, i.e. the Observer Code of Conduct. Strategies of monitoring missions' development in Georgia and Moldova rely on the professionalisation and education of observers, 'growing' the civil society elite. Although in Ukraine monitoring NGOs rely on function as networks of regional representatives, during national elections fall NGOs shift to the hierarchical approaches of data collection and project management when regional offices report to the headquarters. Even NGOs and movements rooted in youth protests and grass-roots initiatives rely on skilled labour with in-depth legal knowledge and understanding of local or national political processes.

Similarly, evolution of the reporting tactics is aimed at delivering impartial and trustworthy information by the civil society because incumbents are often interested in biased information provision through controlled media outlets. Organisations representatives in Georgia and Moldova explained that they rely on strategies of balanced reporting always highlighting both improvements and negative aspects of the electoral process, while in Ukraine, strategies are more diverse and rely mostly on reporting misconduct. Such differences might be explained by larger amounts of information to report from Ukraine as well as higher levels of regional variation which is hard to generalise. In turn, some activists mention that journalists usually write about positive development, while watchdogs have to stress negative sides of the electoral campaign.

Another important aspect concerns topics covered by the political NGOs. Election watchdogs report that they have gradually expanded their missions to monitor further aspects of political life, such as financing of electoral campaigns, behaviour of elected officials or policy change in certain areas. In general, expansion of topics covered by organisations is often related to two factors: firstly, their ability to cover additional spheres i.e. personal interest, knowledge and skills of employees; secondly, NGOs interest in gaining financial support and sustaining themselves between elections. Furthermore, electoral manipulations became more and more subtle in all three countries and this makes monitoring NGOs change or expand issues that they control. Talking about elections in Ukraine, one of the activists mentioned that 'this process is never over; we live in a permanent electoral campaign'. That is why monitoring various aspects of political life is tightly coupled with the electoral process and electoral performance in these post-Soviet states.

Although different electoral campaigns occur almost without breaks, foreign funding is accessible mostly for the national campaigns. Hence, monitoring NGOs develop alternative projects and apply for funding to support their local missions and related projects. Such approach has been widely criticised by scholars (Aksartova 2009; Hemment 2004; Lutsevych 2013; Mendelson and Glenn 2002), but NGO representatives developed response to such criticism drawing attention to other positive aspects of their work. Firstly, there exist personal reasons to develop an agenda and target other issues: some activists lose interest in elections, or develop additional knowledge and skills related to other aspects of the political process. NGOs allow their employees create and realise projects related to these new interests under the brands of NGOs. In this case both sides gain some benefit: activists can realise their own projects, NGOs gain more public representation and increase their pressure on authorities. Secondly, for some

NGOs, elections are only part of a broader interest towards human rights (e.g. Promo-LEX in Moldova), professional associations such as GYLA anti-corruption NGOs (TI Georgia). These organisations do not start with election observation, but develop monitoring missions in relations to other aspects of their main goal.

Undoubtedly, personal experience of activists strongly influences directions of internal organisation development and tactics that they employ. For example, Georgian activists stress their levels of education and professional training and international experience, they see the role of NGOs as educating and enlightening, helping Georgians to understand and accept such complicated terms as 'democracy' and 'elections'. Moldovan NGO activists share a rather top-down hierarchical approach and discipline in the organisations. Coming from legal and law-enforcement background Promo-LEX leadership presents this NGO as one of the classical watchdog organisations; they stress the limitations of the captured state context. These old-school post-transition democrats prefer working directly with the policy makers and influence their perceptions and understanding of elections. The toolkit of Ukrainian activists seems to be the most diverse, they often rely on such creative events as 'electoral camps' or various campaigns that help to educate young citizens or collect data on attitudes. Although they work with policy-makers and political parties, NGO representatives often stress their distance from big politics and rather non-hierarchical approach to the development of their NGOs.

Internal strategies of election monitoring bear close similarities not only in case of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, but also other monitoring watchdogs in the post-Soviet region. Initially, the project included the fourth case, namely election observers in Russia who also develop similar activities aimed at building reputation and trust, developing hierarchical data collection and analysis strategies as well as covering broader range without focusing just on elections

themselves. These strategies help non-state actors gain legitimacy and support the validity of their claims and conclusions about election quality.

Internal strategies related to transactional activism are aimed at creating reputable organisations that can legitimise their work providing impartial and objective information provision to the domestic and foreign political actors and citizens . Spotless reputation is crucial for establishing connections with other NGOs, foreign donors and even domestic political actors, i.e. is important for the development of external strategies that are often ascribed to the transactional activism. In turn, autocratic incumbents use various methods to attack and ruin their NGO reputation, e.g. through labelling them as 'foreign agents'. Only Ukrainian activists have mentioned that some politicians label them as 'grant-eaters' ('грантоеды') as a way to stress their close affiliation to the Western actors and question their allegiances. In Georgia and Moldova activists did not mention such labels to be not applied to attack NGOs.

Table 7.1: Internal Development of Monitoring Organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

Method	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
Hierarchical structure of the organization	+	+	+/−
Professionalization and high standards	+	+	+
Specialisation in certain areas	+	−	−
Broad range of monitoring issues	−	−	+
Impartial and balanced reporting	+	+	−

Comparison of External Strategies

Following previous studies, this project confirms the importance of coalition build-ing and labour division among NGOs that use transactional activism. At the same time, depending on the political context, observers develop different cooperation strategies. In Moldova the highest levels of cooperation between domestic NGOs was observed. All election monitoring organisations were united under the aus-pices of an umbrella movement 'Coalitia – 2009 For Free and Fair Elections'. It was inspired and funded by foreign donors to serve two purposes: firstly, to divide scarce foreign funding and avoid overlaps in projects; secondly, respond to the oppressive incumbents with the 'unified and strong voice' of civil society. At the same time, levels of cooperation have decreased since the political con-text became less hostile towards civil society. During interviews activists often mentioned that they are working on relaunching Coalitia-2009 and strengthening cooperation because they started facing new challenges from the PD govern-ment. In Georgia, cooperation and coalition building was never a prerequisite for the NGOs survival. Open political context stimulates NGOs to build connections either with local political actors or with foreign donors. Cooperation between NGOs occurs ad hoc: for example, when some outrageous event occurs during elections, while most of the time, NGOs in Georgia are competing between each other. In Ukraine low levels of cooperation between NGOs were explained by experts and NGO activists through different reasons. Election monitoring or-ganisations in Ukraine are very diverse: while CVU and OPORA belong to the watchdog and expert types of NGOs, such organisations as CHESNO are more a social movement organisation engaged in different projects from various fields. Therefore, all organisations possess different levels of knowledge and expertise and those narrow-oriented expert-style NGOs see no benefit from cooperating

with organisations that superficially cover a wide range of issues. Ukrainian activists explained in interviews that they cooperate with foreign NGOs and donors, rather than with the state actors or domestic NGOs.

NGOs develop different approaches working with local political actors. Observers in Moldova and Georgia stress their independence on multiple occasions during the interviews. NGO representatives emphasise that no political party funds their missions and any cooperation with political parties is limited to some educational programmes for the members of polling station commissions who are delegate to the precincts by political parties. In turn, in Ukraine, main monitoring NGOs confirm that cooperation with political parties exists on multiple occasions. For example, some regional offices of CVU conduct observation on behalf of political parties, although this is more an exception, than a rule. In turn, OPORA mentions parties being important information channels and that political parties provide OPORA with some insights of electoral campaigns, hence certain levels of cooperation exist.

In general, levels of observers' involvement in domestic political processes are very different in three countries and strongly depend on local legal and political context. In Georgia, by law electoral observers are the active part of the electoral process and they have legal rights to be involved at all stages of the elections. Unlike in Moldova and Ukraine, observers in Georgia have the right to submit complaints when they witness violations of electoral laws, while in other countries only voters and political parties (or official candidates' representatives) have such rights. Therefore, in Georgia, observers are much more actively involved in the electoral process and are acknowledged to be one of the stakeholders. Furthermore, some experts from Georgian NGOs move between third sector and positions in the government: switching between third sector and positions in the government is considered to be a good career development.

In Moldova such cases were not reported and no information about moving between third sector and positions in state administration were mentioned during interviews. Ukrainian CVU developed tight links with the local politicians suggesting that after 2014, this NGO even received its 'representation in Rada'. Reports from earlier electoral cycles also indicate that CVU experts were moving between positions in government and third sector. On the one hand such close connections make the advocacy process somehow easier, on the other hand the independent stand of CVU is questioned by other civil society actors. Some NGO representatives claimed that such close links with state actors destroy civil society cooperation on the national level because there are doubts if NGOs promote political interests or serve interests to society.

In the case of Georgia and Moldova activists stressed the importance of labour division between NGOs that monitor different aspects of the electoral process and specialise on targeting different issues. Labour division is closely linked to the internal development, such as professionalisation of activists and special knowledge required for their work. In Georgia it occurs on the level of areas of expertise, while in Moldova tasks are divided on the level of projects. In Ukraine, election monitoring organisations target the same issues and do not develop strict labour division. This might be explained simply by the size of the country, where available public space and civil society are much larger and have big regional differences. Therefore, labour division is not required for the organisations' survival; they target the same issues and develop similar methodologies that depend on the availability of funding, rather on choices of NGOs.

Similarly to previous studies, investigation found the importance of advocacy campaigns as one of the methods to target authorities. For example, monitoring NGOs are involved in the electoral reforms in all three countries submitting their proposals and working on the improvements or alternative reform mea-

sures. Change of the electoral system is not a rare event in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and these important legal changes require permanent attention from the civil society. At the same time, all organisations advocate for small improvements in laws and procedures to make the electoral system more coherent and more democratic. Interviews stress that advocacy campaigns are an important part of observers' strategic repertoire and are often conducted in cooperation with other NGOs or foreign donors.

External strategies of NGOs are strongly influenced by the social context and citizens' involvement in political processes and elections. On the one hand, NGO representatives in all three countries did not mention that citizens use such information to make their choice during elections and often remain politically inactive and easy to be influenced by various manipulative strategies. On the other hand, observers employ a variety of tactics to disseminate information on electoral misconduct. Combating election fraud through making it public is one of the main strategies used by election observers in non-democratic states as it denies the legitimacy to electoral results. At the same time, all watchdog organisations develop strategies aimed at awareness increase and knowledge improvement related to elections and the political process in general. Activists in Georgia and Moldova frame these projects as educational events, aimed at changes of values and culture, while Ukrainian activists see their work more in terms of service provision and creation of learning projects and infrastructure for citizens to gain knowledge on election quality as well as elected politicians and their performance.

At the same time, data on trust towards NGOs presented in the project shows rather low levels of trust towards NGOs among citizens. On the one hand, such opinion polls are general and do not distinguish between election monitoring and other types of organisations. Therefore, this information is used for illustrative

purposes and shows persisting gap between citizens and civil society in the post-Soviet states. In turn, some activists shared opposite information about their organisations reporting high levels of trust to the monitoring NGOs. For example, Georgian activists stated that some opinion poll conducted in 2017 indicated that TI Georgia and other monitoring NGOs are 'among the most trusted organisations in the country'. Another example from the Moldovan context shows that some citizens prefer to monitor elections on behalf of Promo-LEX that allows the not get involved with any political party. Indeed, these examples show that there is a small share of citizens who are aware of the election monitoring and other projects conducted by these organisations.

Low trust in civil society can be viewed as a negative side of transactional activism that is used by the monitoring organisations as the main mode of action by the monitoring NGOs. If organisations choose to cooperate with political actors, foreign donors or with other NGOs, their activities remain unknown to the general population, while mobilisation of observers concerns a fairly small share of population in each country. Logically, if organisation is unknown to the citizens, they will have rather low trust in its activities.

Finally, in all three countries international coalition building is realised in two ways: firstly, foreign donors who provide vital funding for the NGOs and, if necessary, pressure domestic governments to change their behaviour. In turn, regional election monitoring networks such as ENEMO and EPDE are another example of international cooperation. These networks are not related to the task of grants applications, but rather facilitate sharing expertise and knowledge between NGOs in different post-communist states. For example, ENEMO and EPDE perform election monitoring missions in this region hiring employees of local domestic organisations as observers in their missions. Indeed, such transnational monitoring missions lead to a diffusion of monitoring methodologies across the region.

These finding echoes conclusions made by Petrova (2014) who showed how civil society skills and knowledge do not flow in one direction from the West to the East any more, but are also produced locally in the post-communist region. Such cooperation can be highly relevant for learning new methods and techniques from their neighbours who often experience similar issues. Hence, cases studies selected for the project are not isolated instances of election monitoring NGOs, but represent parts of formal and informal networks of cooperation between pro-democratic election monitoring movements in the post-Soviet region after the USSR collapse.

Nonetheless, the statement on transnational diffusion of monitoring methodologies should be treated with caution. Indeed some ideas and practices can be borrowed by observers from one state to another, differences in legal and political context require careful adaptation and revision of methodologies. Although transnational diffusion of monitoring practices could be one of the explanatory factors of some strategic developments, election monitoring activists have not mentioned such diffusion being a strong defining factor of their strategic choices. Undoubtedly, this aspect requires further examination and can be fruitful avenue for future investigations.

In turn, the foreign actors rely on the information provided by the domestic watchdogs in their interactions with the state representatives. As one of the European Parliament think tank employees explained, after the Association Agreement has been signed with the governments of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, there are very little tools for the EU to influence behaviour of the local elites. Macro financial assistance to the post-Soviet states is one such tool, but it requires reliable information, if domestic actors fulfil conditions, respect democratic institutions and procedures and human rights. In turn, civil society actors become a reliable source of such valuable information. NGOs' spotless reputation plays a

crucial role in gaining trust not only from the domestic actors and general public, but also to communicate with the foreign actors and political process and quality of elections with the help of the foreign pressure.

Table 7.2: External Strategies of Monitoring Organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

Strategy	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
Cooperation with domestic NGOs	+	+	+/−
Official coalition with local NGOs	−	+	−
Cooperation with the state agencies	+	+	+/−
Involvement in political process	+	−	+
Advocacy campaigns	+	+	+
Labour division between NGOs	+	+	−
'Preventive reporting' and fraud prevention	+	+	+
Promoting change of values and culture	+	+	+/−
Service provision to local population	−	−	+
Legitimacy based on international standards	+	+	+/−
International coalition building	+	+	+

7.3 Role of Election Monitoring Organisations in post-Soviet States

Activists from all monitoring organisations agree that improvement of quality of elections depends on the political will of elites rather than on the pressure from

civil society actors. At the same time, they stress that without the permanent and long-term presence of election observers such political will would not have emerged or would appear much slower. Activists stress that their strategies are aimed at the provision of unbiased information on the quality of electoral process and electoral violations to the citizens and international actors.

Being independent actors that are not interested in obtaining political power, observers' reports add legitimacy to the election process. For post-Soviet countries that are economically and politically dependent on the foreign governments, such legitimacy plays crucial role in obtaining support and financial assistance from the European states and the U.S. Hence, the impact of NGOs on the domestic policies is indirect and is realised through the external actors (see figure 7.2).
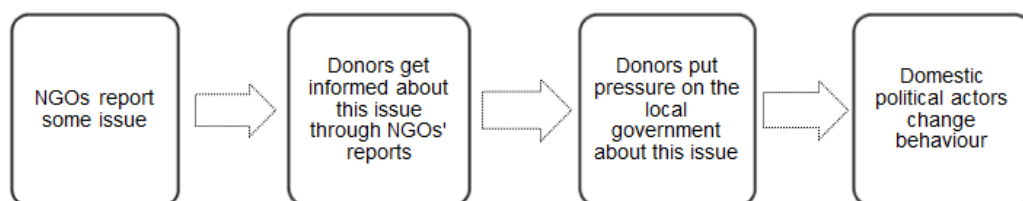
Figure 7.2: Observers Impact on the Political Process

As activists noted, politicians are more likely to accept propositions of monitoring organisations, when they do not collide with political interests of elites. For example, activists in Moldova were promoting creation of more polling stations abroad which was not supported by the Communist Party that received less votes from young and educated electorate abroad. As soon as pro-Western Coalition came into power, they created more polling stations abroad to increase support of liberal and democratic parties. Similar examples were described by the Ukrainian activists who mentioned that less opposition to the advocacy efforts occurs when MPs know that their alignment with civil society leads to political

benefits, e.g. reform that concerns voting of 'temporary moved persons' from Lugansk, Donetsk and Crimea after 2014. In general, coinciding factors that often lead to the improvement of election quality in all countries are the following: (1) Relevance of elections and international attention to the election campaign; (2) Desire of political elites to conduct free and fair elections; (3) Professional election monitoring efforts.

One of the most important roles that election monitoring organisations play is 'service provision' in the areas that are not covered by the state. Such service provision concerns educational programmes related to the electoral laws and procedures for the staff. In Georgia, organisations provide training to the polling station commissions members, although CEC is more involved in these educational activities. In Moldova, Promo-LEX conducted training for the police and investigatory bodies to improve their understanding of the electoral process (interview with P.Postica). In Ukraine, the Central Election Committee works in close cooperation with IFES that provides training for the CEC members as well as the regional election commissions' staff (interviews with the CEC and IFES representatives). Such educational events became possible after the 'opening' of political context in Moldova and Ukraine, when administration and various state bodies became more willing to cooperate with the civil society. In Georgia, the political context is more cooperative since the 2003 Rose Revolution at the same time civil society provides less 'complementary' services to the population, rather offers educational opportunities for the state actors.

Election monitoring does not necessarily lead to the immediate improvement of election quality. There is no visible correlation between presence of observers or number of monitored polling stations and decrease in the amount of violations. Monitoring reports and electoral forensics analysis indicates gradual decrease of obvious methods of manipulation, but also show that they become more sophis-

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ticated and less detectable. At the same time, the change of methods employed by the incumbents to skew the playing field in their favour might be one of those indirect signs of monitoring organisations impact. Constant pressure from the civil society forces incumbents to change their strategies into more subtle to avoid loss of legitimacy. Observers conduct other activities to address the issues of election quality through improvement of the legal system and education of the citizens and state officials. These activities might not result in immediate effect, but they teach rank-in file observers, mostly young people, ideas related to democracy and government's accountability. These ideas spread through the population, and lead to the gradual change of values and culture, hence, democratic development. According to the interviews civil society, and monitoring organisations in particular, play an important role in facilitating these changes through education and cultural change.

The study shows that strategies of transactional activism depend on the outcomes of monitoring of earlier election campaigns. Cooperative political context and improving quality of elections allows observers in Georgia to expand their projects, and pioneer new projects (e.g. monitoring of political parties financing). In turn, Moldovan activists had to strengthen cooperation with each other and to resist pressure from the oppressive state. When elections quality and cooperation with state actors improved, organisations focused on work with them and started developing new projects. When elections quality decreased, civil society responded by changing its focus on quality of information, cooperation with NGOs and development of new monitoring projects. Ukrainian activists developed a more horizontal and diverse structure that accounts for the regional differences in a vast Ukrainian state. At the same time, activists rely on cooperation with foreign donors because domestic organisations are competing with each other and state actors were not opened for cooperation before 2014.

As social movement literature suggests, political context is crucial in defining strategies and possible outcomes of activism. The study has not only shown similarities, but also highlighted differences in transactional activism developments. While resources and internal development of monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are comparable, three countries show big differences in the political context. Dynamics of political context development conditioned different paths towards transactional activism and differences in strategies of election monitoring in three countries. Although all monitoring organisations rely on cooperative and non-contentious strategies, but partners for cooperation are selected due to the contextual factors and help to maximise possible impact of civil society. To develop cooperation and legitimise their activities monitoring organisations build organisational structure, professional training of activists and develop skills and knowledge. Internal features of organisations involved in transactional activism has not received scholarly attention and presents a prospective avenue of further research.

| | Factors | | | Electoral Performance |
	Resources & Strategies	Political Context	International Pressure	
Georgia	High competition; re-sources are available (but decreasing)	Favourable; elites are opened for cooperation	High levels of pressure from foreign actors	Improving
Moldova	Cooperation between civil society actors, low availability of resources	Isolated civil society, elites pay lip service to cooperation with CSOs	Low pressure from abroad	Decreasing
Ukraine	Low levels of coopera-tion among CSOs Com-petition for resources	Fluctuating, Pressure and/or isolation from elites	High pressure from abroad	Swinging

8 Conclusion

The present project investigated domestic election monitoring organisations established in post-Soviet hybrid regimes. Following the previous studies devoted to the monitoring organisations, this investigation assumed that hybrid regimes are more instrumental for the development of stable monitoring ecologies (Grömping 2017), hence this study attempted to conduct in-depth study of these organisations embedded in a specific political context. In general, the project addressed two major goals: firstly, to disentangle the factors and paths that lead to the development of transactional activism by election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Secondly, to try to establish the role these organisations play in the improvement of election quality assuming that changes in quality of elections leads to subsequent changes of the NGOs' activities and strategies. Partly, the puzzle of this study was inspired by the discrepancy between the conventional wisdom about the weakness of the post-Soviet civil society and certain success in the democratic development and improvement of electoral integrity in these countries (Foa and Ekiert 2017). The broader research question of the project concerned the strategies of pro-democratic organisations that belong to a repertoire of transactional activism. The project inquired as to how the surrounding social and political context and resources of these monitoring organisations shape their strategic choices. It attempted to understand under

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which conditions NGOs adopted transactional activism and what were the specific traits this action mode in each state. Finally, it concerns how outcomes of election monitoring shaped the political context in which these organisations operate.

Election monitoring organisations were considered as elements of election monitoring movements stressing ties between NGOs and their shared aim of improvement of election quality. Although in-depth investigation of each case-study looked at each organisation individually, the empirical findings stress the network nature of the monitoring ecologies in each country and importance of cooperation. These finding go in line with the increased attention to the overlapping theoretical and empirical cross-fertilisation of social movement and civil society fields of research.

Transactional Activism in the post-Soviet States

Scholars suggested that NGOs in the post-communist region rely on transactional activism that is defined as a distinct, non-violent type of activism that uses cooperation with various political actors to achieve various goals, rather than on contention and mass mobilisation (Petrova and Tarrow 2007; Císař 2013a). This study looked at the election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine through the lenses of comparative investigation that demonstrated differences and similarities between organisations and their strategies. The research attempts to reconstruct development of transactional activism in post-Soviet states focusing on the political NGOs that monitor elections in hybrid post-Soviet regimes. In general, social movements and civil society studies put significant efforts into understanding how strategies are selected or how different strategies lead to the success or failure of movements (McAdam 1983; Maney et al.

2012). In turn, studies reconstructing development of certain tactical choices are yet limited to very few studies (Bosi and Zamponi 2020). Furthermore, not much is known yet about transactional activism in post-Soviet states, particularly, how this mode of action developed in this region and what are the internal features of organisations that facilitate this type of activism. Therefore, transactional activism in post-Soviet countries requires deeper investigation and focused scholarly attention. Building on classical social movement literature, the study concentrates on two major explanatory factors that are assumed to define the development of transactional activism: firstly, the resources available to the election monitoring organisations and secondly, the political context that surrounds them. The approach suggested in this study emphasised the dynamic and interactional nature of strategic choices consciously made by these organisations in response to the activities of political elites, international actors and domestic civil society. Activists' interpretation presented in the study illuminated not only reasons for strategic choices, but also their understanding of goals and the outcomes of election monitoring efforts.

Resources of Election Monitoring Organisations

Each case study presented careful investigation of resources available to monitoring organisations in each of the three countries and linked them to the strategies developed by observers. Resource mobilisation theory suggested that the ability to mobilise or produce certain tangible or intangible resources is crucial for defining strategies of civil society actors. At the same time, civil society in the post-communist region often is criticised for the resource-dependence on foreign donors who not only provide funding, but also set agenda for the civil society activities in the recipient states (Mendelson and Glenn 2002; Mendelson 2001; Petrescu 2000). Waves of Colour Revolutions clearly indicated that the issue

of election quality is important for citizens of post-Soviet states and election fraud can even mobilise protests (Wolchik and Bunce 2006, 8), hence, election monitoring organisations cannot be accused of working with an irrelevant agenda imposed by foreign states.

In turn, investigation of resources available to the election monitoring organisations starts with the obvious assumption summarised by one of the activists: 'if there is no money, there is no monitoring mission'. The majority of interviewees agreed that, at present, there is no alternative source of funding available to the majority of election monitoring organisations in this region, including electoral monitoring missions. At the same time, similarly to previous research (e.g. Císař 2010), the study finds that reliance on foreign funding helps monitoring organisations to stay independent from domestic political interests. Hence, it also becomes a very important symbolic resource that stresses autonomy of the observers and adds legitimacy to their conclusions about the quality of elections. In turn, strict observation of the *equidistance* principle legitimises reports of the organisations and gives them access to policy-makers regardless of which political force governs the country.

In-depth investigation and comparison of the election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine highlighted one important commonality in their internal development: all organisations invest a lot of efforts in developing their reputation to present themselves as non-partisan actors 'above the political fight'. In so doing organisations rely on professional employees, discipline, hierarchical structures and sophisticated methods of data collection and feedback. Empirical investigation confirmed that in all three countries election monitoring is performed by various groups that not necessarily follow high democratic standards and aim at the improvement of elections quality. The most visible example can be drawn from the Georgian context, where partisan election monitoring,

often labelled as 'fake observation' became a wide spread phenomenon. In turn, Moldovan activists reported that independent election monitoring organisations have to compete with political parties employing election observers. Clearly this phenomenon goes beyond examples of Georgia and Moldova. For example, in Russia and Belarus incumbents mobilise election monitors from dependent strata of population with the aim of elections legitimation. To address these differences in context of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the project has labelled investigated organisations as 'pro-democratic' stressing their non-partisan nature, ethical principles and transparent methodologies.

To the certain extent, the present study attempts to address criticism of the NGOs in the post-Soviet region that are blamed for being bureaucratised organisations aimed at grant-extraction from foreign donors rather than representing citizens' interest. The study shows that hierarchical organisations are more professional and are better equipped to develop cooperation with domestic and foreign actors. Furthermore, symbolic resource of spotless reputation obtained through professionalism seems to be crucially important for NGOs that use transactional activism: cooperation is established only between organisations that are not associated with any political interests. Independence and reputation are important cornerstones of the transactional activism of all monitoring organisations in the three case studies.

It would be wrong to state that all leaders of the monitoring organisations unanimously agreed that foreign funding is always a positive aspect of their work. While in Georgia such doubts were almost not expressed, in Ukraine several high-profile activists suggested that foreign donations should be gradually substituted by citizen funding collected through different taxation mechanisms. In turn, in 2017, Moldovan authorities introduced a new law that allowed citizens to direct 2% of their income tax to civil society organisations. Potentially, this innovation

will make civil society actors less dependent on foreign donors, but also will allow citizens to decide on the relevance of NGOs.

Political Context of Election Monitoring

Political context and the structure of political opportunity is another important set of explanatory factors that determine development of transactional activism in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The political process model pays attention to external factors that influence the strategic choices of election monitoring organisations. Scholars have stressed that the civil society developed in this region facing very specific constraints compared to civil society in the Western democracies (Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2013). It can be suggested that political opportunities determine not only the mode of activism used by civil society actors (Korolczuk and Saxonberg 2015), but also the development of each mode of activism. The present study shows that although transactional activism is used by all monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, it develops differently and various strategies dominate in each country. The investigation carefully reconstructs the political context of election monitoring and disentangles factors that influence different paths towards transactional activism and different repertoires that transactional activism covers.

Political context largely defined the various paths that the development of transactional activism took in the three case study countries. As Petrova and Tarrow (2007) suggested, the main characteristic feature of transactional activism is reliance on cooperation rather than contention. This section summarises factors that define trajectories of these cooperative strategies evolution in terms of the mechanisms behind them. As classical definition suggested by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly suggests: *'Mechanisms are a delineated class of events that alter*

relations among specified sets of elements in identical of closely similar ways over a variety of situations. Processes are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformation of those elements' (2001, 24). Different mechanisms lead to different proprieties in cooperation. The first mechanism that unfolded in Georgia could be defined as 'supportive political context'. Successful substitution of political elites during the Rose Revolution, open political environment and direct pressure from the West facilitates cooperation of monitoring organisations with state actors rather than other NGOs. The second, rather opposite mechanism can be labelled as 'repression'. This mechanism is illustrated by the case of Moldova where organisations experienced high levels of pressure from the state actors and relatively low levels of competition among NGOs. This mechanism facilitated close collaboration among monitoring NGOs united under the auspices of the Coalitia-2009 movement. Finally, the third mechanism that could be broadly labelled as 'competitive civil society environment' was illustrated by the case of Ukrainian monitoring organisations. This mechanism helped to establish cooperation with foreign actors rather than the state or domestic organisations. Particularly, this mechanism became obvious when autocratic tendencies increased, while competition for funding among NGOs remained rather strong. In addition, in Ukraine, cooperation between various actors is manifested more significantly on a regional level than on the national level.

This study argues that, due to the differences in political context, monitoring organisations develop different sets of cooperative strategies: in a more open context, they rely on cooperation with state actors; while a closed and hostile environment helps to develop cooperation between organisations. Although in all three countries, transactional activism is a dominant mode among monitoring organisations, the set of strategies differs depending on the external context and

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the resources available. At the same time, neither political context nor strategies are fixed variables, as they evolve due to previous election monitoring efforts, international pressure and the political will of incumbents. To summarise, the present research attempted to reconstruct the various paths that lead to the development of a strategic repertoire associated with transactional activism in three post-Soviet countries.

Outcomes of Election Monitoring

Another aim of the study was to establish if monitoring efforts lead to changes in the quality of elections. The study related outcomes of previous actions and changes in election quality in each state to the later development of observers' strategies. Previous scholarship has convincingly argued that success of social movements can determine avenues of later mobilisation (McAdam 1999; Tarrow 2011), can open new institutional opportunities for challengers (Evans 2016, 17) or alternatively, can decrease support and funding (Gupta 2009). Obviously, social movements can not only be successful; they can fail or produce unexpected outcomes, internal or external to themselves (Snow and Soule 2009).

The present research treated the quality of elections as a 'high profile issue' (Giugni 2004) that is hard to change without the will of local political actors. Clearly, correlation between the very presence of the election monitoring organisations and the improvement of election quality does not mean that the former cause the latter. Even organisation representatives themselves agree that quality of elections mostly depends on the political decisions of the ruling elites to manipulate or not to manipulate elections. At the same time, changes in the menu of electoral manipulations, as well as a decrease in number of violations, can be associated with the permanent pressure of the election monitoring organisations.

Although activists agree that the most outrageous methods of vote rigging disappeared in recent years, they also stress that all incumbents, independently of their ideological stand, attempt to skew the electoral playing field in their favour. In turn, changes in the menu of manipulations force monitoring NGOs to change their monitoring focus and add more aspects to their monitoring missions. Outcomes of previous monitoring efforts become part of the context of next elections in a never-ending interaction between civil society and state actors. Summarising mechanisms of the election monitoring outcomes it is possible to suggest that the following coinciding factors lead to the improvement of election quality: (1) Relevance of elections and international attention to the election campaign; (2) Desire of political elites to conduct free and fair elections; (3) Professional election monitoring efforts. These factors determined certain improvement in quality of elections observed in all three cases, and, at the same time, lead to the changes in manipulatory practices employed by the incumbents.

Scholarly Contribution

The aim of the study was to conduct an in-depth investigation of the activities of election monitoring organisations in hybrid regimes. Theoretically the study is placed among the new wave of civil society studies often conducted by scholars from this region who have experienced the transition and its consequences themselves and who fundamentally object to the statement of civil society weaknesses on the post-communist space. The study concludes that election monitoring organisations indeed impact the quality of electoral process in post-Soviet states, although such influence is not visible in the short term. In turn, the changing environment also results in the constant development of election monitoring organisations, their strategies and methods of action. Transactional activism is the central mode of activism used by monitoring NGOs in post-Soviet states;

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nonetheless, in each country, the set of strategies is different and strongly depends on the external factors of the political context. The project attempts to make several contributions to the field of post-Soviet civil society studies, particularly movements contributing to the democratisation process. Firstly, it is carefully reconstructs paths towards transactional activism in three countries, investigating the different factors that impact similarities and differences in this strategic repertoire. The study focuses on the political segment of civil society, an area that has received limited and biased attention in the social sciences.

In addition, the study provides a comprehensive review of the development of civil society in each country and places election monitoring organisations in the general context of the post-Soviet third sector. Given that civil societies in some post-Soviet states have received limited attention, particularly in comparative perspective, these sections provide a good summary of the recent developments of the third sector in the region. Scholars convincingly argued that civil society and democracy are closely related and reinforce each other. The notion of civil society became the focus of scholarly attention after momentous events of transition in Eastern Europe when mass mobilisation became one of the crucial factors of the collapse of Soviet empire and transition away from autocratic rule (Bunce 2003). Diamond stressed that civil society not only helps to generate transition 'from authoritarian rule to (at least) electoral democracy' but plays important role 'by deepening and consolidating democracy once established' (Diamond 1999). At the same time, this project also confirm an 'inverse association between the development of civil society and political regimes' (Bidenko 2018, 33): in all three country-cases, political regime and external context to a large extent define the quality of civil society.

The project represents a focused in-depth investigation of a very specific segment of civil society in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Nonetheless, there

are some potential research avenues that might be fruitful for obtaining more generalisable results. Firstly, it seems to be logical comparing strategies of election observers active outside of the post-Soviet region. Further studies can go beyond the borders of three post-Soviet states and investigate development of transactional activism in other countries with hybrid and autocratic regimes. Such comparative analysis can focus on the importance of political context and historical legacies for the present development of civil society.

Secondly, further research efforts can include other NGOs in these three countries, questioning whether transactional activism develops differently in other segments of civil society, or if political and non-politicised groups develop different action repertoires. Previous studies on transactional activism cover very diverse range of civil society actors including women's rights groups, organisations with urban development and ecological agenda. Furthermore organisations with anti-corruption agenda can be expected to face similar dilemmas and strategic choices. In fact, many election monitoring organisations are involved in anti-corruption activities applying similar monitoring strategies. In turn, some scholars classify electoral misconduct as a type of corruption (Moraes and Andion 2018), while others claim that civil society could be particularly instrumental in fighting against various corrupt practices (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). To summarise, project findings can be extended further to the anti-corruption organisations, while comparison with NGOs from other field and or regions can provide further generalisability.

Implications for the Civil Society

This comparative analysis has not only scientific implications but also a practical application, as it might help election monitoring organisations to see themselves in a dynamic comparative perspective and to understand their choices and strate-

gies better. The study was born as a comparative analysis of four countries and initially included case-study of monitoring groups in Russia. Data collection and preliminary analysis indicated that the Russian case is extremely different and requires its own analysis and in-depth investigation. Although levels of civil society development have diverged in these four countries, some strategies of Russian observers closely resembled the activities of their colleagues from Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Such strategies include non-contentious activism, an attempt to create a spotless reputation and the establishing of cooperative relationships with different political and civil society actors. This can be explained by the specificity of the election monitoring topic, common post-transition paths of development and a limited toolkit available to election monitoring organisations. At the same time, election monitoring organisations in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine represent a good example of strategies available to observers with higher levels of resource availability and a less oppressive political context. This study therefore provides a good knowledge base of monitoring organisations development for civil society in all post-Soviet states on the way towards democratisation and democratic consolidation.

Appendix A | Case selection, Data and Methods

Table A1: EOMs and Key Indicators of the Post-Soviet States Development

Country	EOMs	Electoral Protest	FH[1]	CSO SI[2]	FH Press Freedom [3]	ENP
Belarus	Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Viasna	no	Not free (17)	5.5	Not free (91)	yes
Moldova	Promo-LEX, API, CIJ, CDD	2009	Partly free(60)	3.9	Partly free (56)	yes
Ukraine	CVU, OPORA, Chesno, CiFRA Group	2004	Partly free (61)	3.3	Partly free (53)	yes
Russia	GOLOS, SONAR, Citizen Observer, Observers for Fair Elections	2011-2012	Not free (22)	4.8	Not free (83)	no
Kazakhstan	Foundation to Support Civil Initiatives (FSCI)	no	Not free (24)	-	Not free (84)	no
Kyrgyzstan	Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society	2010	Partly free (38)	-	Not free (67)	no
Armenia	TI Anticorruption Centre (TIAC)	2018	Partly free (46)	3.8	Not free (63)	yes
Azerbaijan	Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Centre (EMDS)	no	Not free (16)	5.9	Not free (89)	yes
Georgia	ISFED, GYLA, TI, PMMG, CDD	2003	Partly free (64)	4.1	Partly free (49)	yes

The table A1 summarizes information as of 2016 when the cases for analysis were selected. For the detailed explanation see Chapter 2 on case selection.

[1]The Freedom House (FH) 2016 rating 'Freedom in the World' Scores 0=WORST, 100=BEST, scores are available at `https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016` (last access February 2017)

[2] USAID 2016 CSO Sustainability Index (CSO SI) For Central And Eastern Europe And Eurasia, 20th Edition (July 2017), higher scores mean less sustainability of civil society organizations in each country. Full report is available at `https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf` (last access February 2017)

[3] The Freedom House (FH) Press Freedom Rating 2016. Scores: 0=BEST, 100=WORST, scores are available at `https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2016` (last access February 2017)
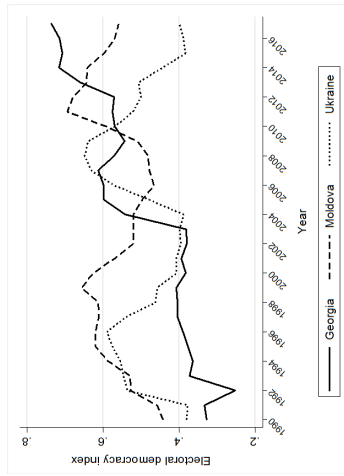
(a) V-Dem 8: Electoral Democracy Index　　(b) V-Dem 8: Clean Elections Index　　(c) V-Dem 8: Rule of Law Index
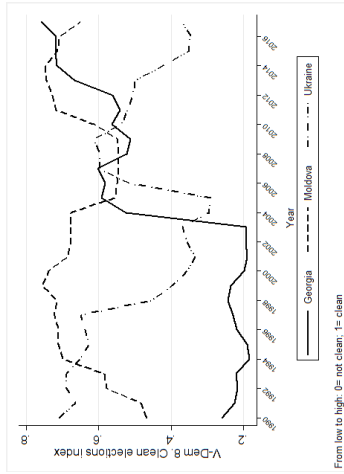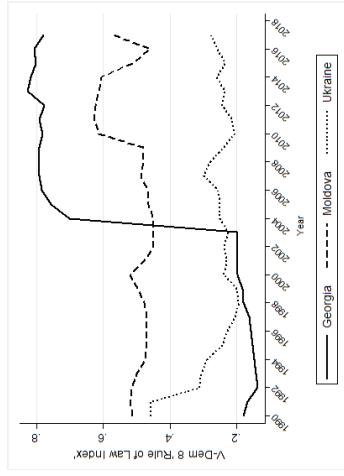
Figure A1: Key Democratic Development Measurements 1990 − 2017
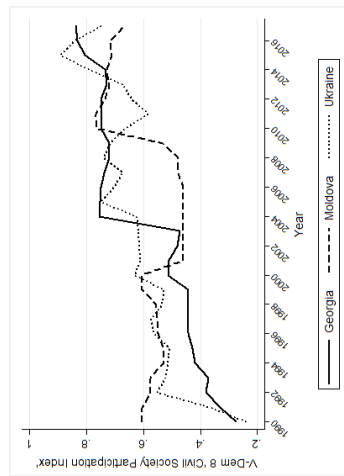
(a) V-Dem 8: CSO Participation
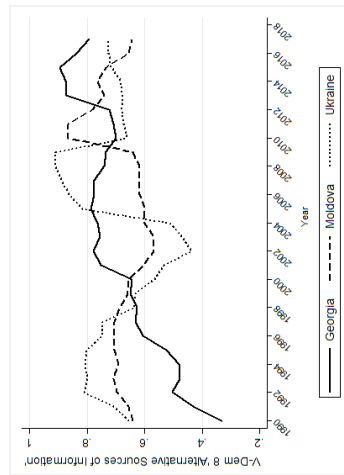
(b) V-Dem 8: Alternative Sources of Information
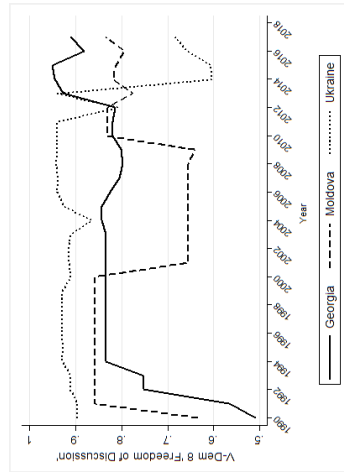
(c) V-Dem 8: Freedom of Discussion

Figure A2: Key Democratic Development Measurements 1990 – 2017
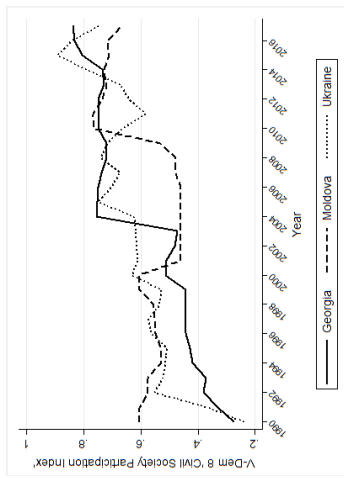
(a) V-Dem 8: CSO Participation
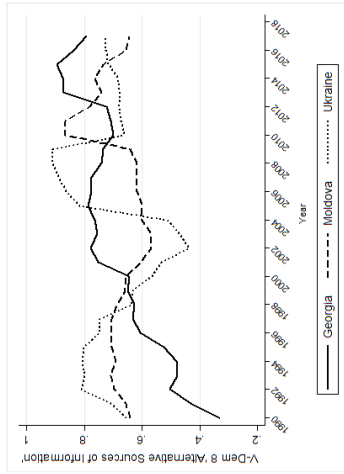
(b) V-Dem 8: Alternative Sources of Information
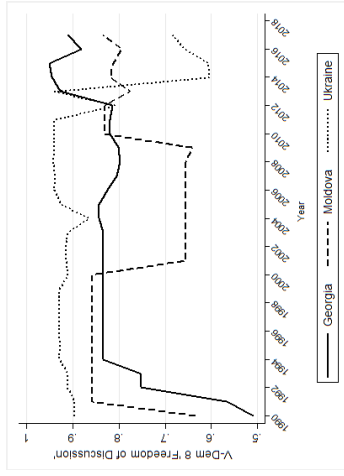
(c) V-Dem 8: Freedom of Discussion

Figure A3: Key Democratic Development Measurements 1990 – 2017

Codebook for Interviews and Documents

1. **Interview Guide Questions**

   Personal involvement

   Electoral manipulations

   Strategies of NGO

   Networks & cooperation

   Media Usage

2. **Monitoring Mission**

   Monitoring areas

   Monitoring methodology

   Observers requirements

   International standards

   Mission description

   Assistance

   History

3. **Political Context**

4. **Resources**

5. **NGO's Role**

   Trust & Skills

   Contentious

   Public Sphere

   Teaching Democracy

6. **Election organization-related issues**

7. **Pre-electoral Manipulations**

Spending Increase

Procedural/legal violations

Pressure on employees

Observers harassed

Mobilization of public servants

Use of state resources

Not informing voters

Pressure on public employees

PS equipment problem

Registration of voters issues

Financial reporting issues

Campaigning issues

8. **Election Day Violations**

Voting for another person

Other observers issues

Commission poorly trained

Unauthorized officials at PS

Ballot-box issues

PS commission issues

Home-voting issues

On-PS agitation

PS equipment problems

Access to PS denied

Domestic observers denied/intimidated

Organized transport/Carousel voting

9. **Post-Election Violations**

Mathematical deviations in final protocol

Uncertainty /intimidation

Ballot-boxes lost/removed

Observers removed

Counting issues

Protocol-related

10. **Media (Issues/Coverage)**

Pressure on media outlets

Media silence

Negative coverage incumbent

Negative coverage opposition

11. **Internal Strategies on NGOs**

Remuneration

Information collection

Conferences

Control/Supervision

Professionalization

Code of conduct

Educational programmes for staff

    – Off-site trainings for observers

Issue coverage

Reputation

International standards

12. **External strategies of NGOs**

Complaints

Education programmes

- PS members education

- Voters education

Call centre

PTT/PVT

Coverage of regions

Advocacy, Lobbying

Labour division

Irregularities/fraud publicizing

13. **Coalition/Cooperation**

International NGOs

Local actors

Domestic NGOs

14. **Election Administration Issues**

CEC decisions

Not active candidates

Organization-related issues

15. **Recommendations to EMBs /Government**

Education/Training

Actions from state

Cancel election results

Election administration

Appendix B | Georgia

Figure B1: Georgia: Administrative Division

Table B1: Georgia: Key Social and Economic Indicators 2009-2017

Year	Population (m.n)	GDP p.c.$	Urban (%)	Poverty* (%)	Life expectancy (years)	Net Migration
2008	4 030 000	3174.95	52.63	63.4	72.7	−20 542
2009	3 978 000	2706.59	52.72	60.9	72.7	−34 948
2010	3 926 000	2964.48	52.87	62.6	72.6	−30 438
2011	3 875 000	3725.06	53.02	60	72.7	−35 982
2012	3 825 000	4142.87	53.16	56.3	72.7	−21 521
2013	3 776 000	4274.38	53.31	51.4	72.8	−2 606
2014	3 727 000	4429.65	53.47	47.2	73.0	−6 543
2015	3 7171 00	3764.64	53.64	46.7	73.1	−3 408
2016	3 719 300	3865.79	53.83	45.5	73.3	−8 060
2017	3 717 100	4078.25	54.03	n/a	n/a	−2 212

*Percent of population living on $5.50 per day and less as of 2011 prices

Sources: The World Bank Data (available at `https://data.worldbank.org`);

Poverty & Equity Data Portal (`http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/home`);

GeoStat National Statistics Office of Georgia available at `http://www.geostat.ge`)

Figure B3: Presidential Elections 2008: M.Saakashvili (%)

Figure B2: Presidential Elections 2008: Turnout (%)
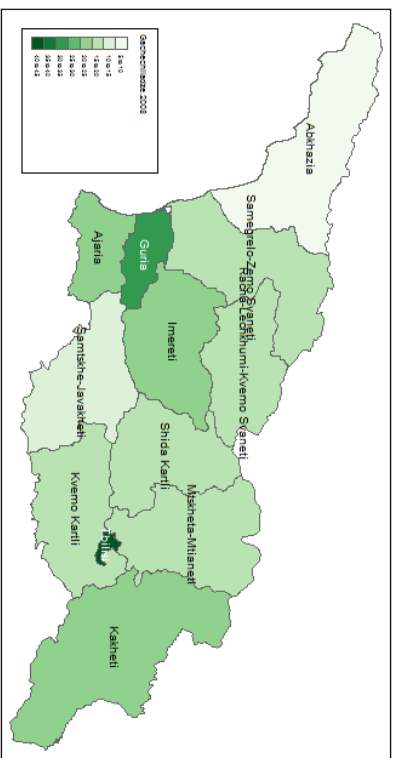
Figure B4: Parliamentary Elections 2008: L.Gachechiladze (%)
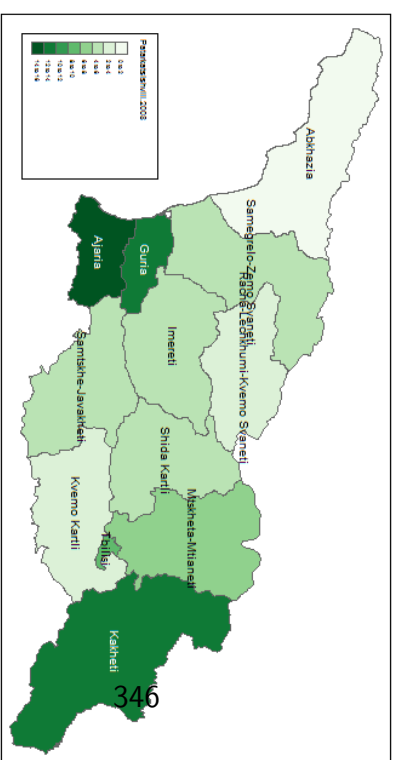
Figure B5: Parliamentary Elections 2008: A.Patarkatsishvili (%)

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Figure B6: Presidential Elections 2008: Turnout (%)

Figure B7: Presidential Elections 2008: M.Saakashvili (%)

Figure B8: Presidential Elections 2008: L.Gachechiladze (%)
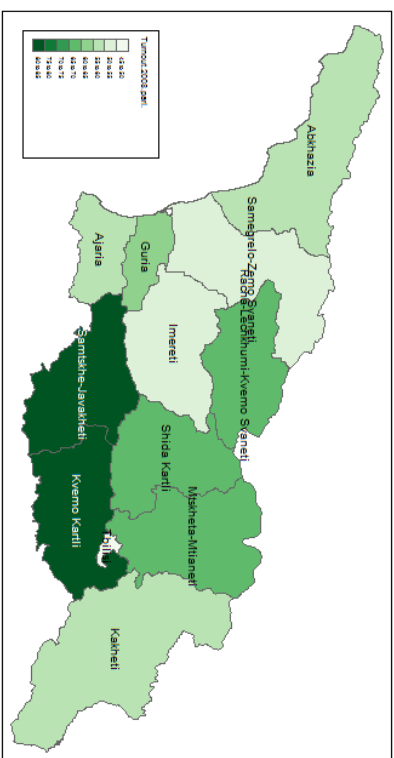
Figure B9: Parliamentary Elections 2008: Turnout(%)
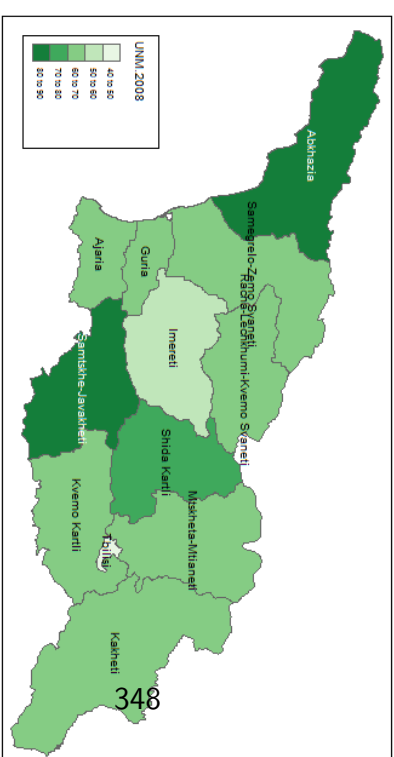
Figure B10: Parliamentary Elections 2008: UNM(%)

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Figure B12: Parliamentary Elections 2008: Labour Party (%)

Figure B11: Parliamentary Elections 2008: United Opposition (%)
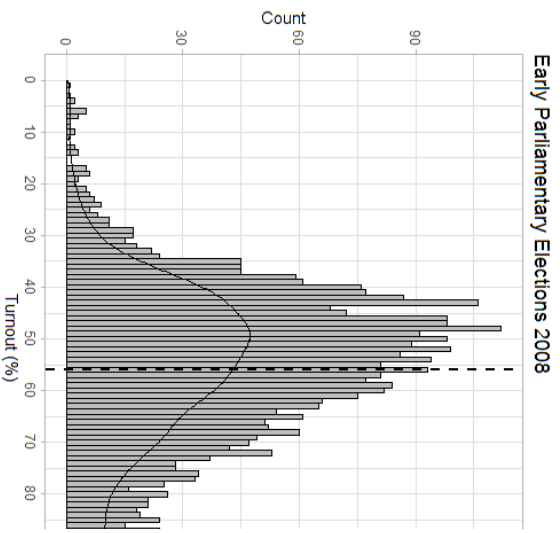
Figure B13: Parliamentary Elections 2008: Turnout (%)
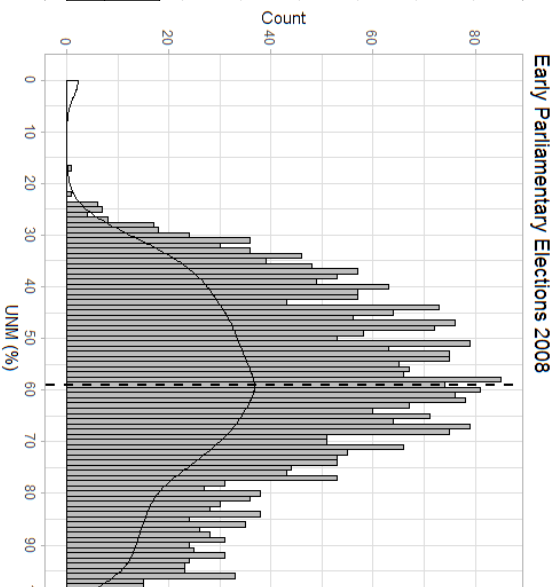
Figure B14: Parliamentary Elections 2008: UNM (%)
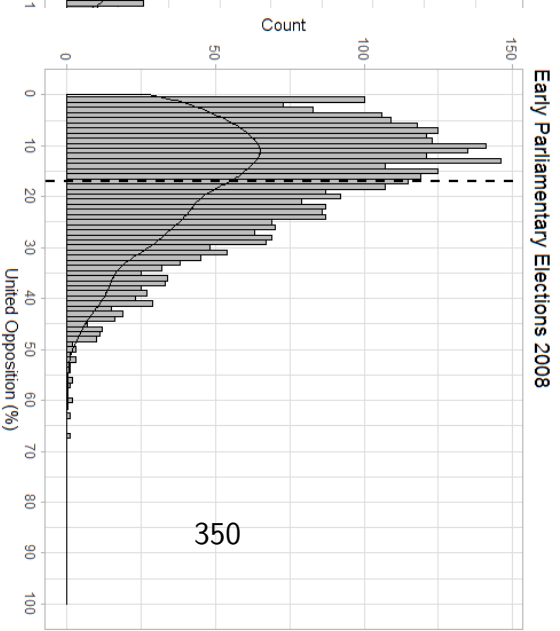
Figure B15: Parliamentary Elections 2008: United Opposition (%)

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Figure B17: Parliamentary Elections 2012: UNM (%)

Figure B16: Parliamentary Elections 2012: Turnout(%)

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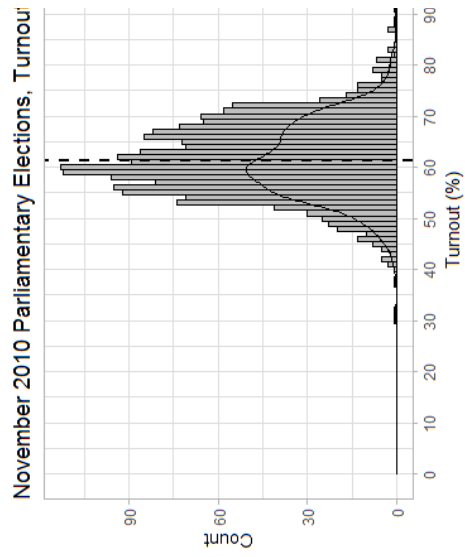
Figure B18: Parliamentary Elections 2012: GD(%)
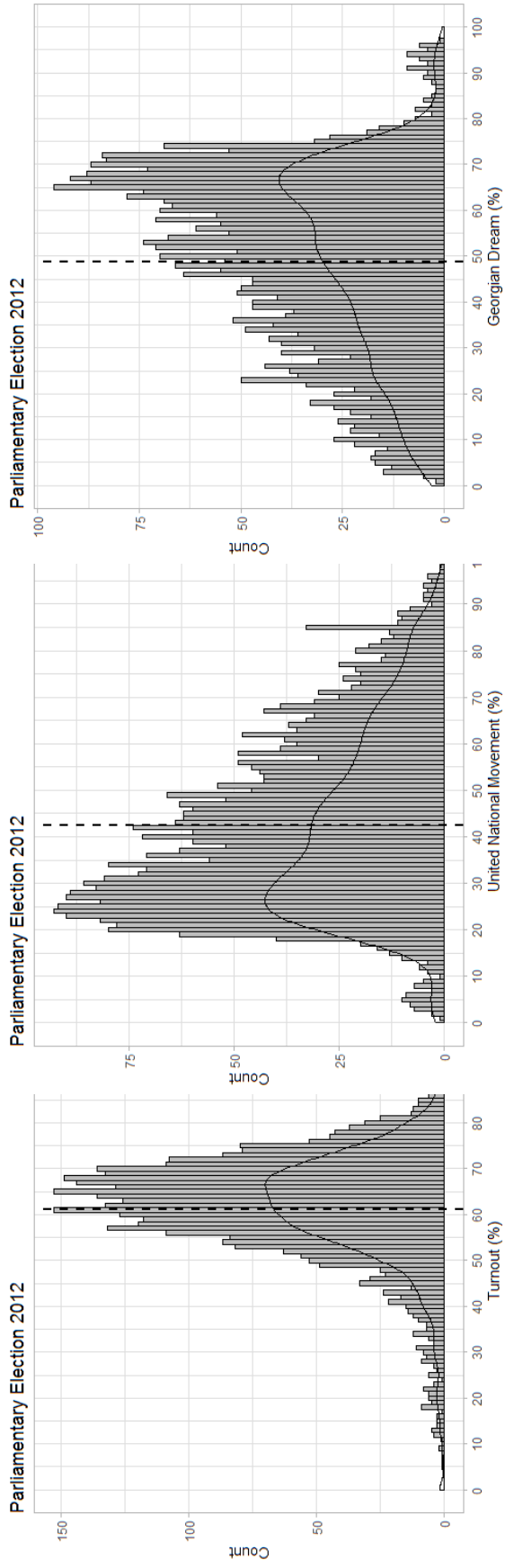
Figure B19: Parliamentary Elections 2012: Turnout (%)

Figure B20: Parliamentary Elections 2012: UNM (%)

Figure B21: Parliamentary Elections 2012: GD (%)
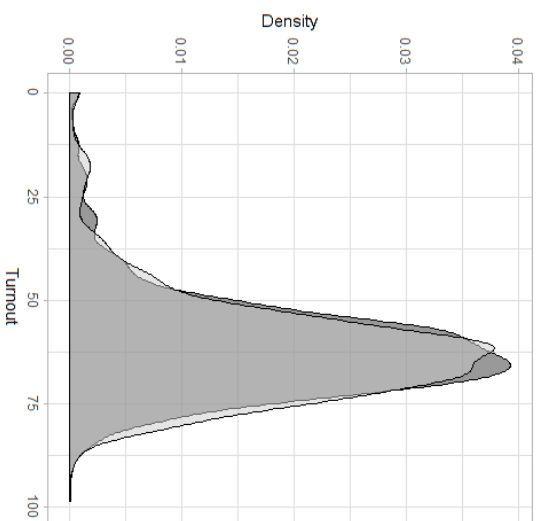
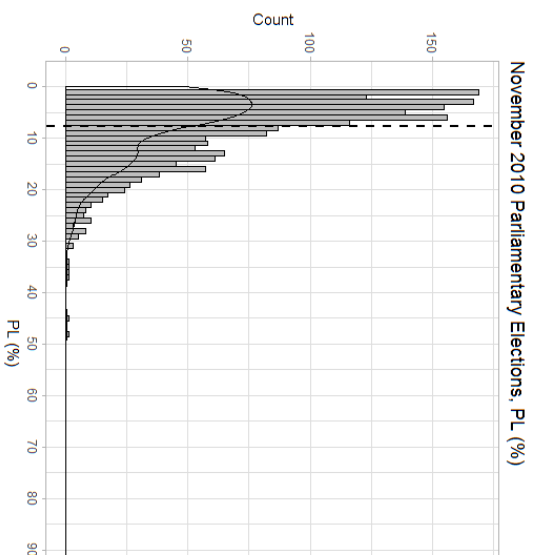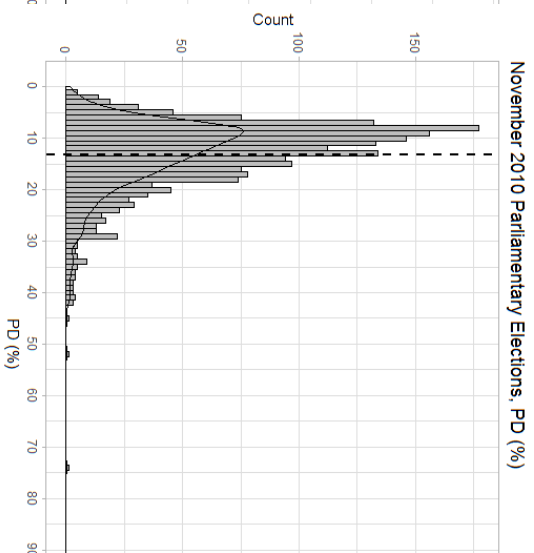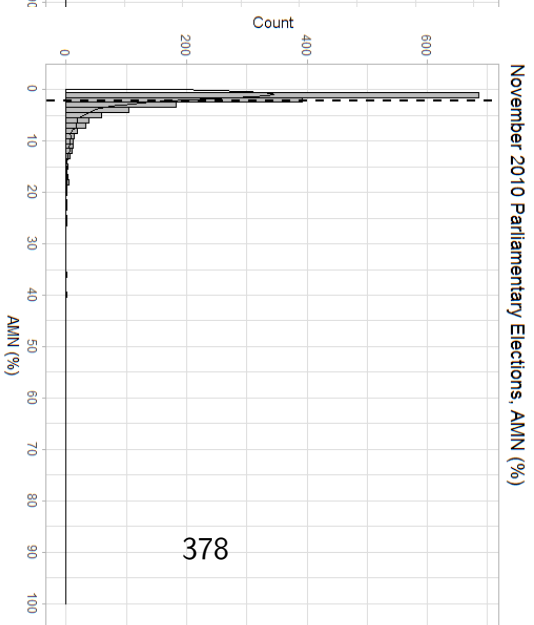Figure B22: Parliamentary Elections 2012: Turnout (%)on the Observed and Not Observed Precincts
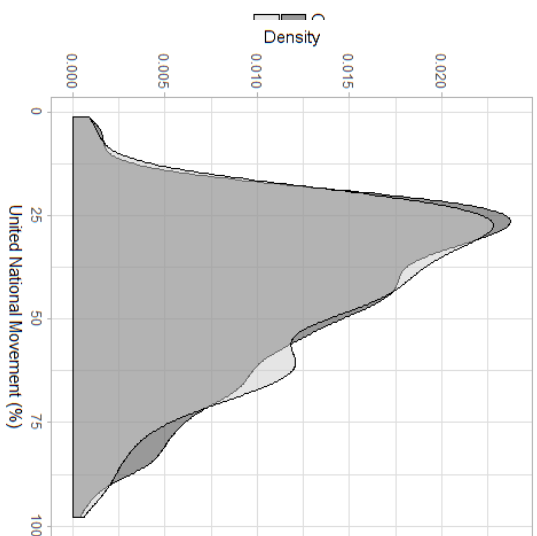
Figure B23: Parliamentary Elections 2012: UNM (%) on the Observed and Not Observed Precincts
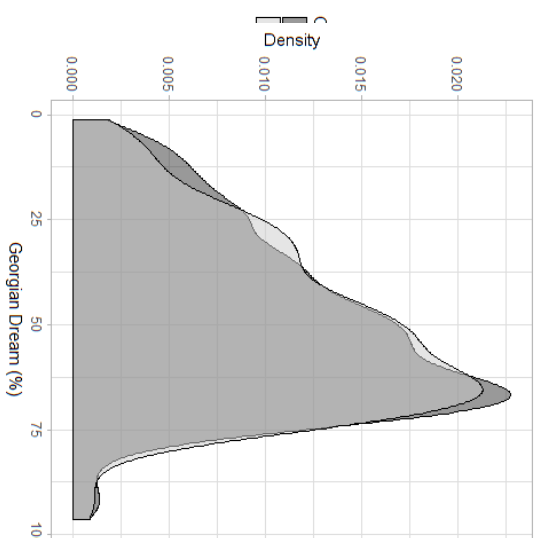
Figure B24: Parliamentary Elections 2012: GD (%) on the Observed and Not Observed Precincts

354

Figure B26: Presidential Elections 2013: D.Bakradze, % (UNM)

Figure B25: Presidential Elections 2013: Turnout(%)

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Figure B27: Presidential Elections 2013: G.Margvelashvili, % (GD)
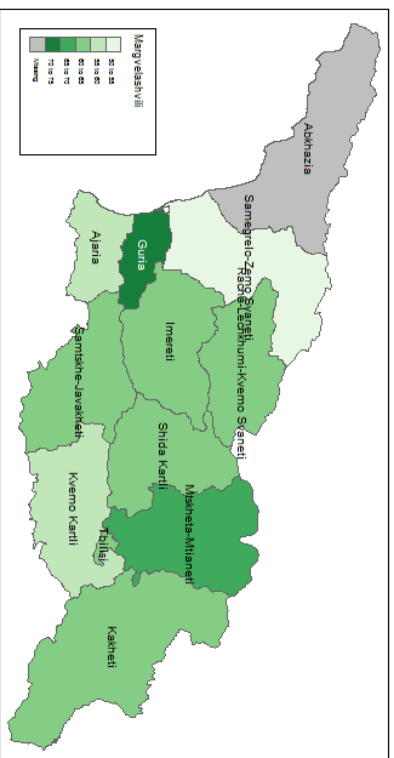
Figure B28: Presidential Elections 2013: N.Burjanadze, % (Democratic Movement-United Georgia)

Figure B29: Presidential Elections 2013: Giorgi Margvelashvili (GD)

Figure B30: Presidential Elections 2013: Davit Bakradze (UNM)
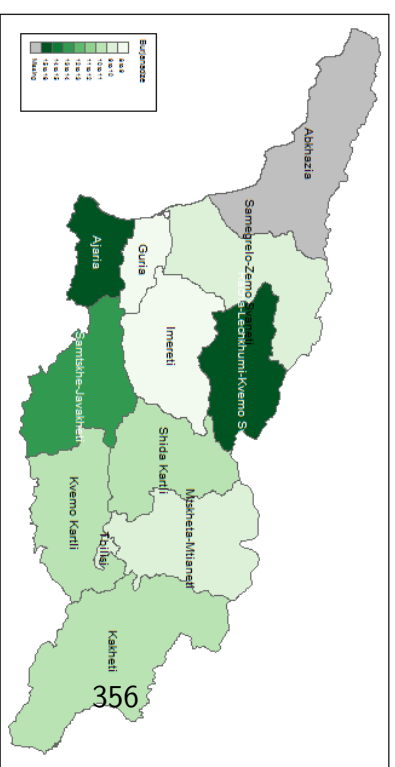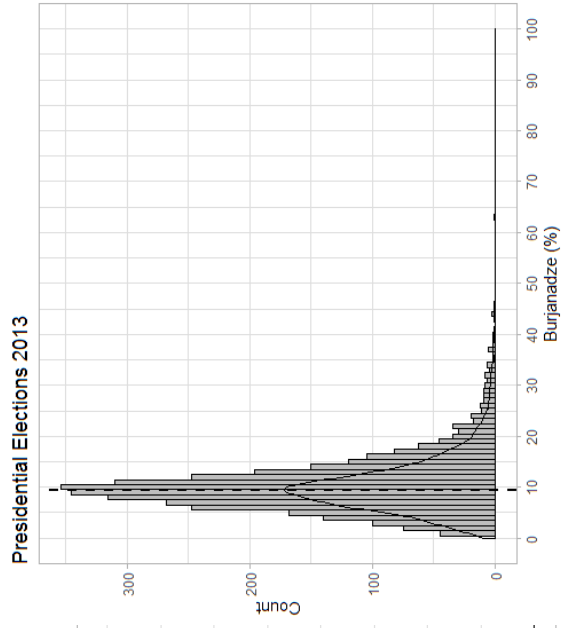
Figure B31: Presidential Elections 2013: Nino Burjanadze (Democratic Movement-United Georgia)

357
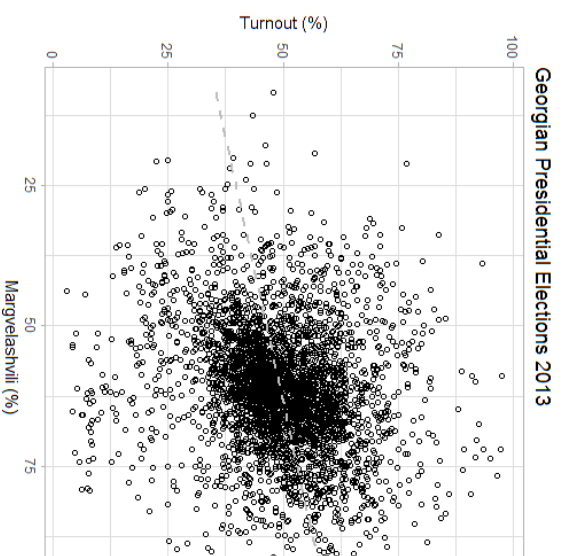
Figure B32: Presidential Elections 2013: Giorgi Margvelashvili & Turnout Correlation
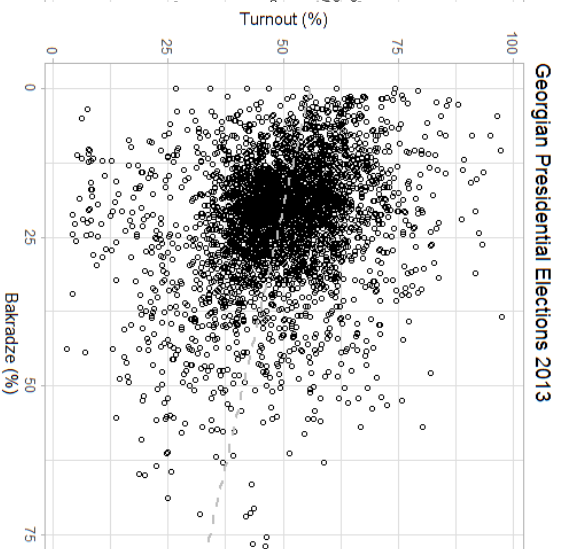
Figure B33: Presidential Elections 2013: Davit Bakradze & Turnout Correlation
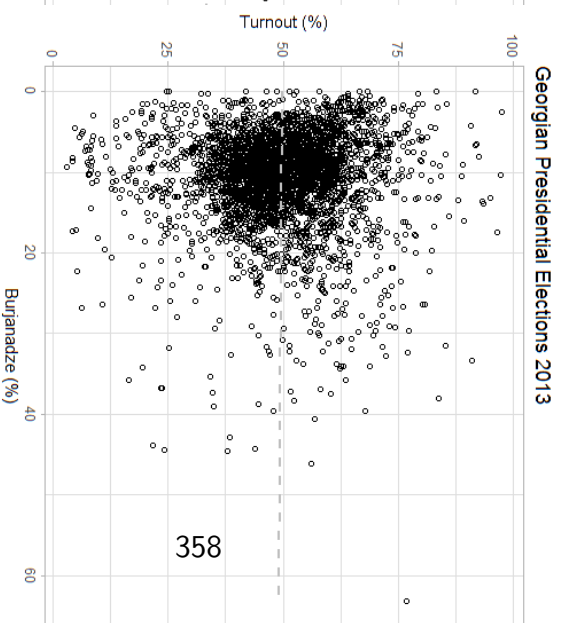
Figure B34: Presidential Elections 2013: Nino Burjanadze & Turnout Correlation

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Figure B36: Parliamentary Elections 2016: Georgian Dream, %

Figure B35: Parliamentary Elections 2016: Turnout(%)
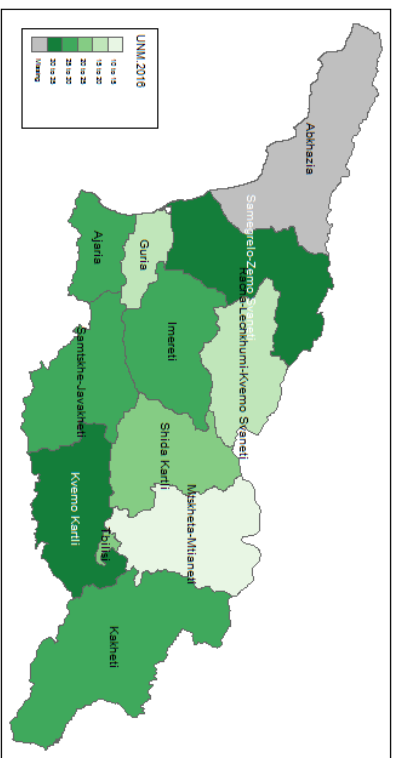
Figure B37: Parliamentary Elections 2016: United National Movement, %
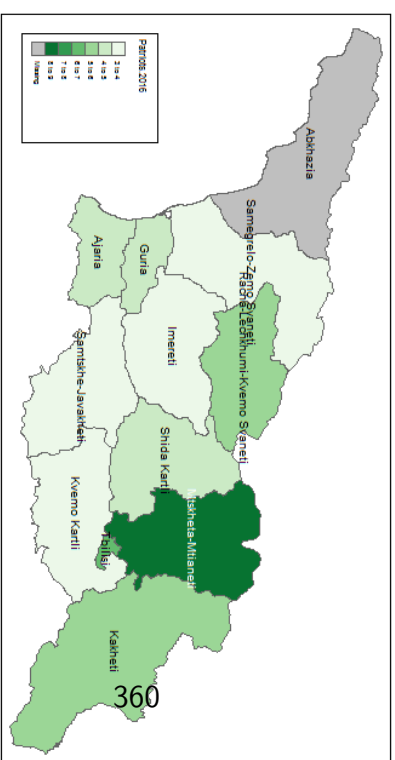
Figure B38: Parliamentary Elections 2016: Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, %

360
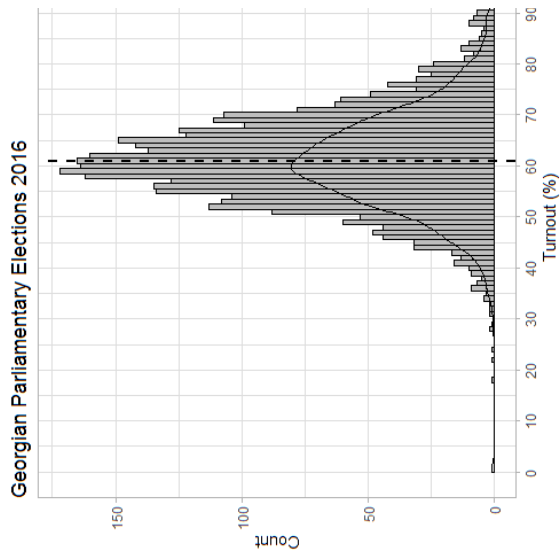
Figure B39: Parliamentary Elections
2016: Turnout
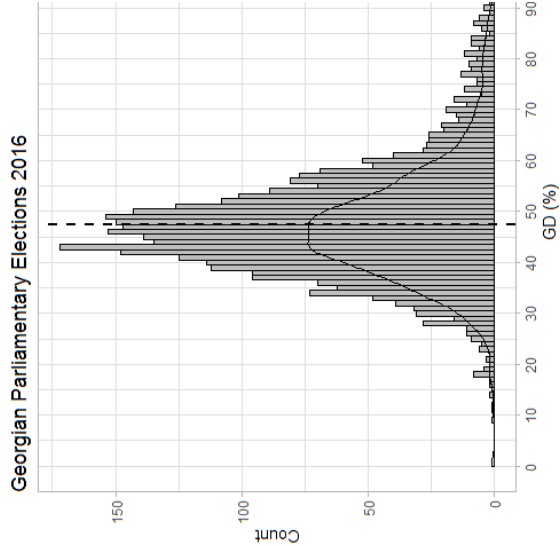
Figure B40: Parliamentary Elections
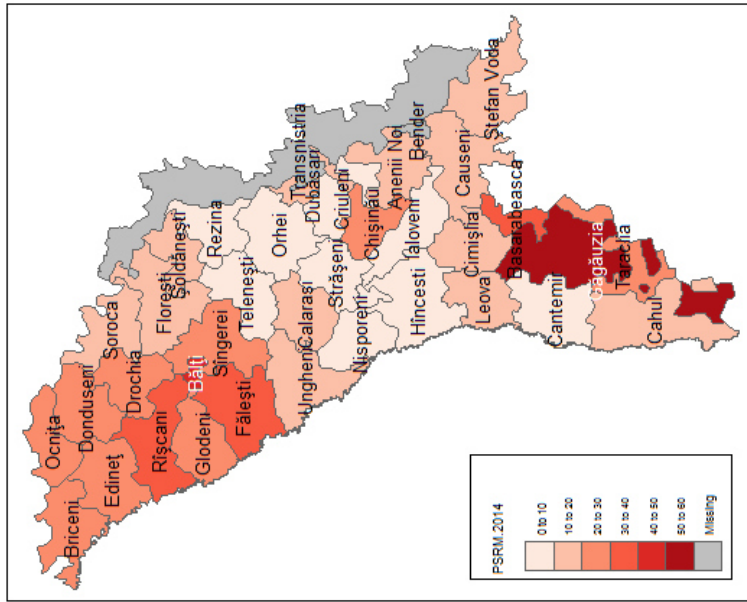2016: GD (%)
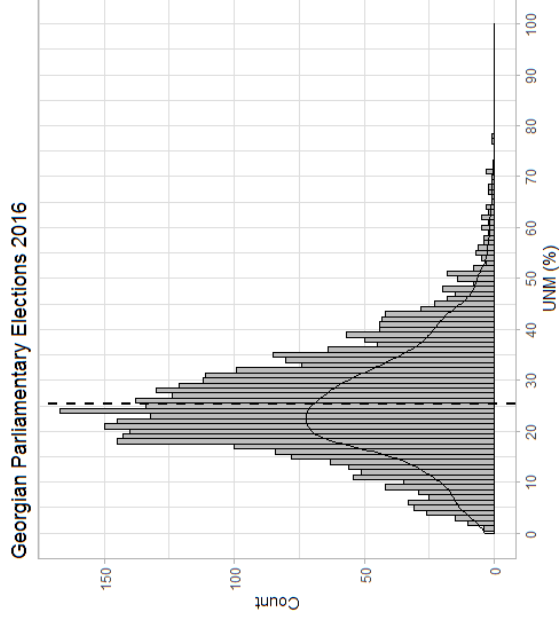
Figure B41: Parliamentary Elections
2016: UNM (%)
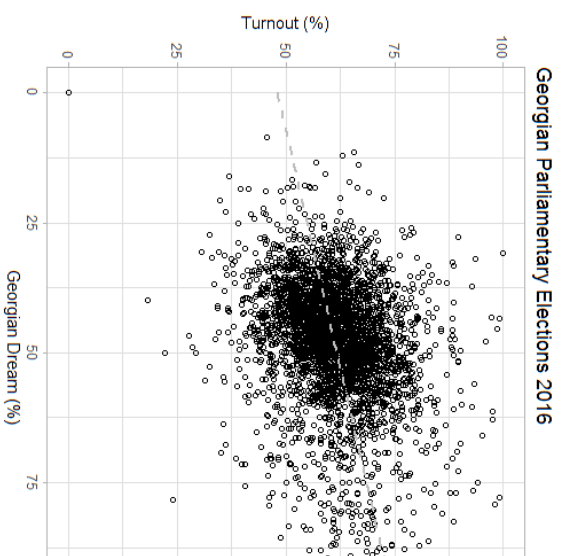
Figure B42: Parliamentary Elections 2016: GD & Turnout Correlation
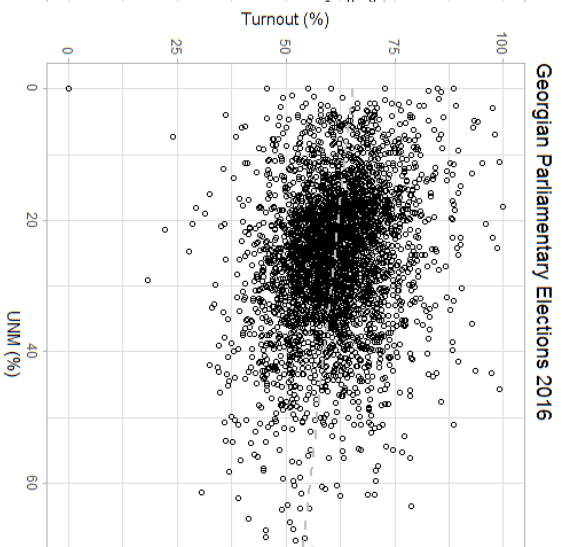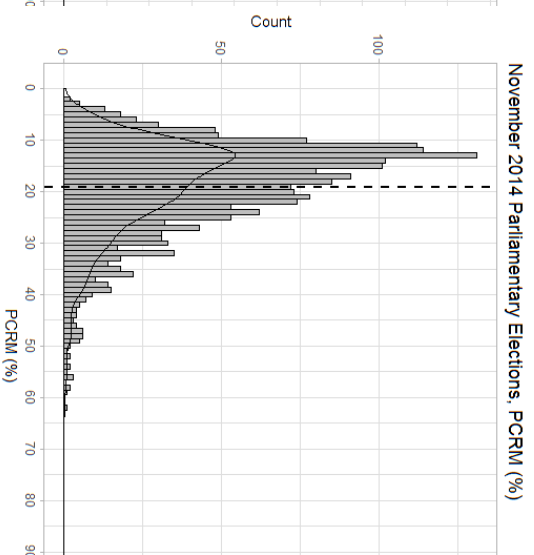
Figure B43: Parliamentary Elections 2016: UNM & Turnout Correlation
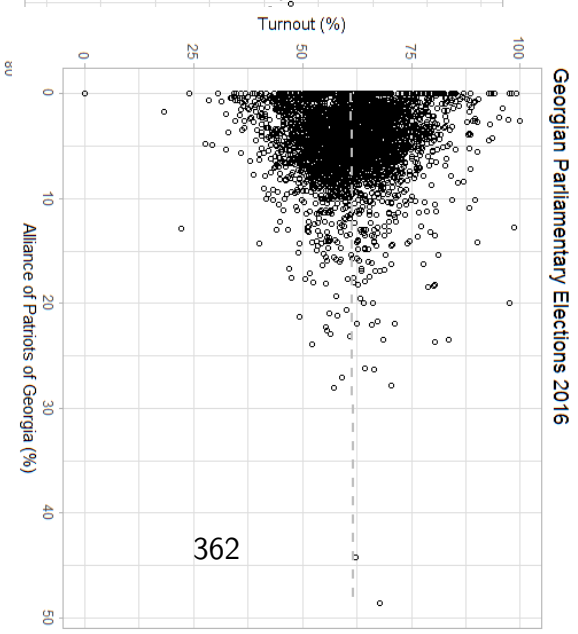
Figure B44: Parliamentary Elections 2016: Alliance of Patriots & Turnout Correlation

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Appendix C | Moldova

Figure C1: Moldova: Administrative Division

Table C1: Moldova: Key Social and Economic Indicators 2009-2017

Year	Population (m.n)	GDP p.c. $	Urban population (%)	Poverty (%)	Life expectancy (years)	Living abroad (%)
2008	3 570 108	1695.97	45.01	32.9	68.7	8.67
2009	3 565 604	1525.53	44.94	31.5	69.1	8.27
2010	3 562 045	1631.54	44.89	29	69.6	8.73
2011	3 559 986	1970.57	44.86	25.6	70.1	8.9
2012	3 559 519	2046.54	44.86	24.6	70.6	9.22
2013	3 558 566	2243.98	44.88	19.7	71	9.34
2014	3 556 397	2244.76	44.93	18.4	71.3	9.61
2015	3 554 108	1832.5	45	16.3	71.5	9.16
2016	3 551 954	1913.24	45.09	16.5	71.6	8.98
2017	3 549 750	2289.88	45.21	n/a	n/a	8.97

Figure C3: Parliamentary Elections April 2009:
PCRM (%)

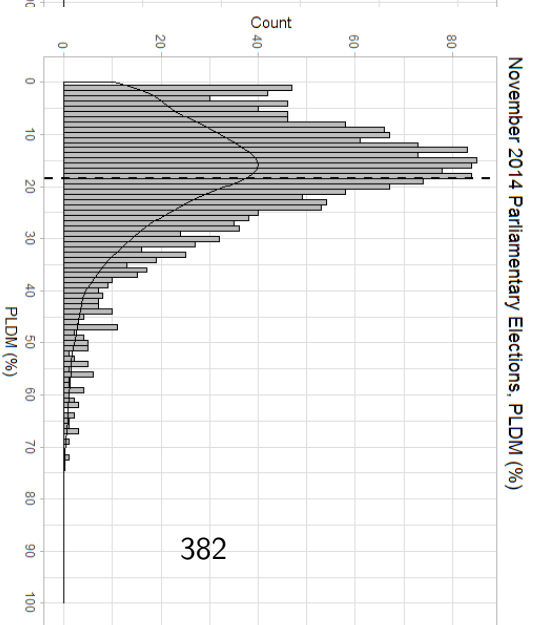Figure C2: Parliamentary Elections April 2009:
Turnout (%)
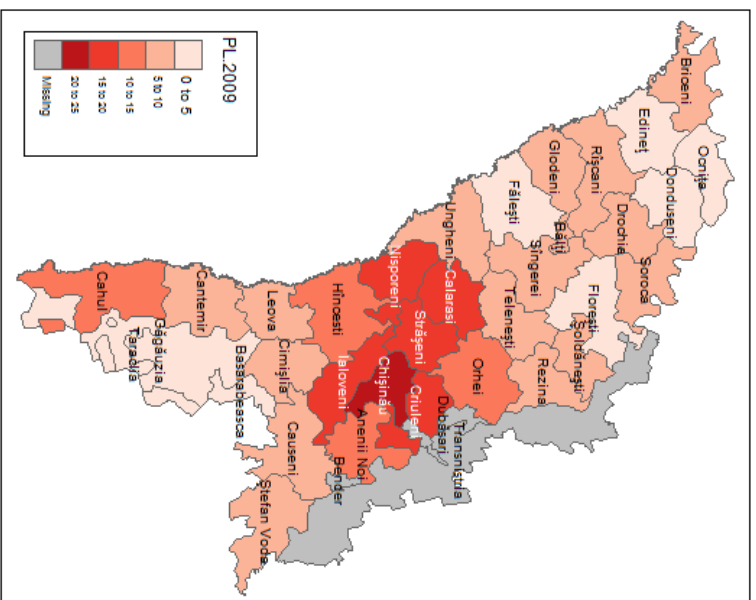
Figure C4: Parliamentary Elections April 2009:
PL (%)
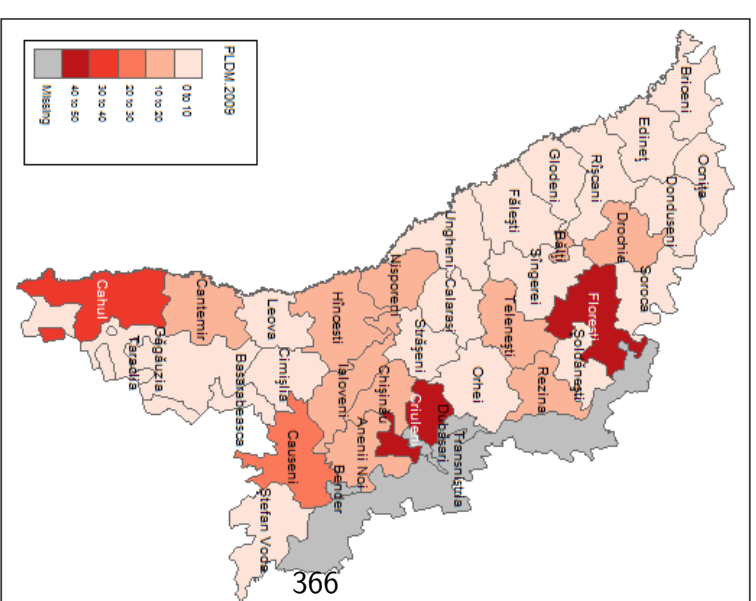
Figure C5: Parliamentary Elections April 2009:
PLDM (%)

Figure C7: Parliamentary Elections April 2009: PSD (%)

Figure C6: Parliamentary Elections April 2009: AMN (%)

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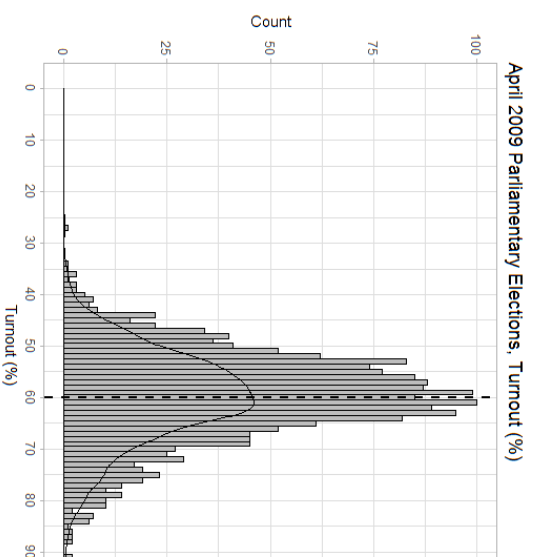
Figure C8: Parliamentary Elections
April 2009: Turnout (%)
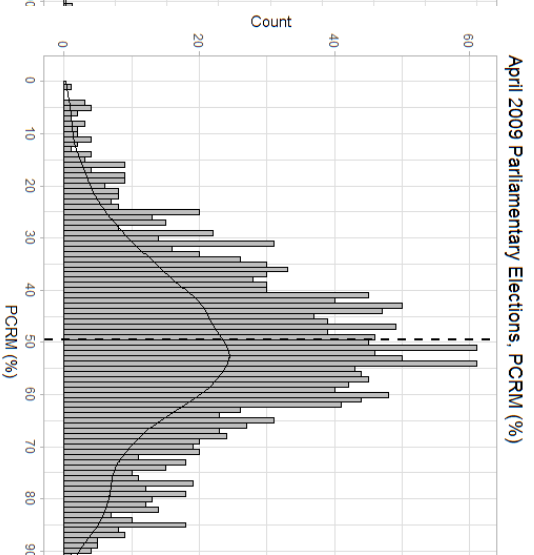
Figure C9: Parliamentary Elections
April 2009: PCRM (%)
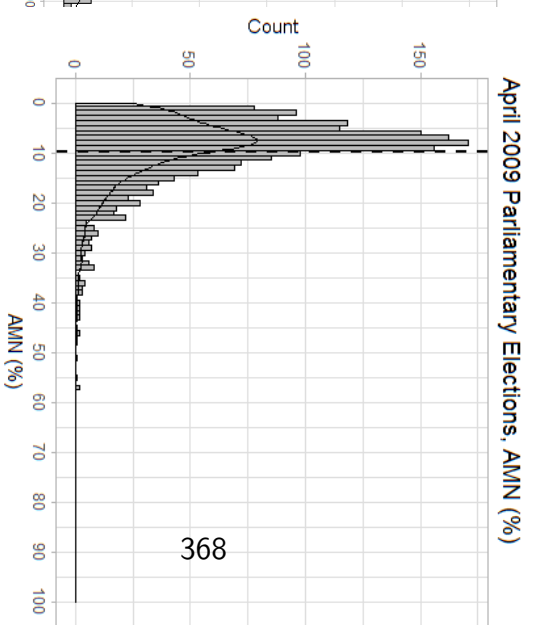
Figure C10: Parliamentary Elections
April 2009: AMN (%)

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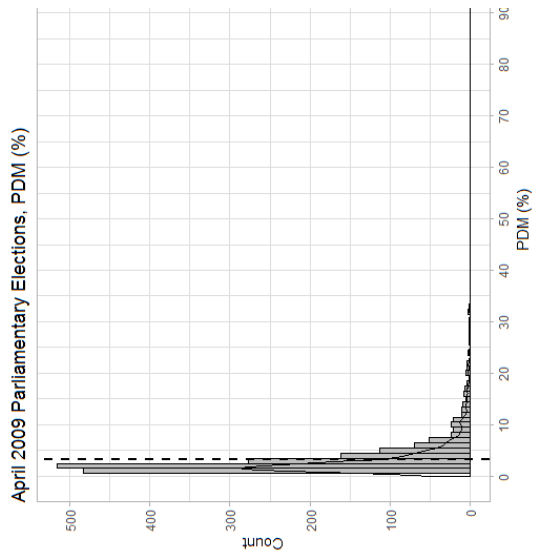
Figure C11: Parliamentary Elections
April 2009: PDM (%)
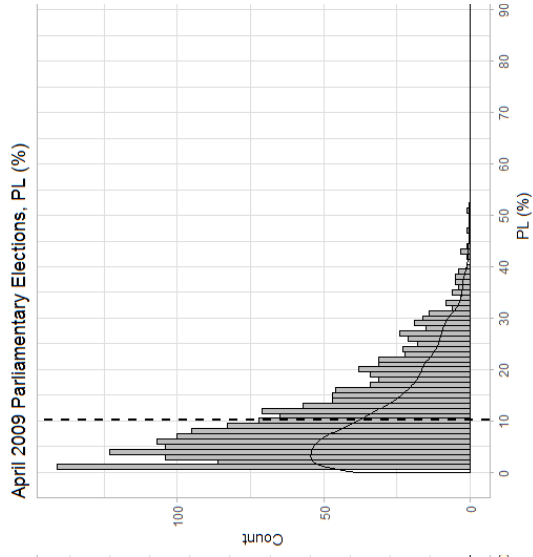
Figure C12: Parliamentary Elections
April 2009: PL (%)
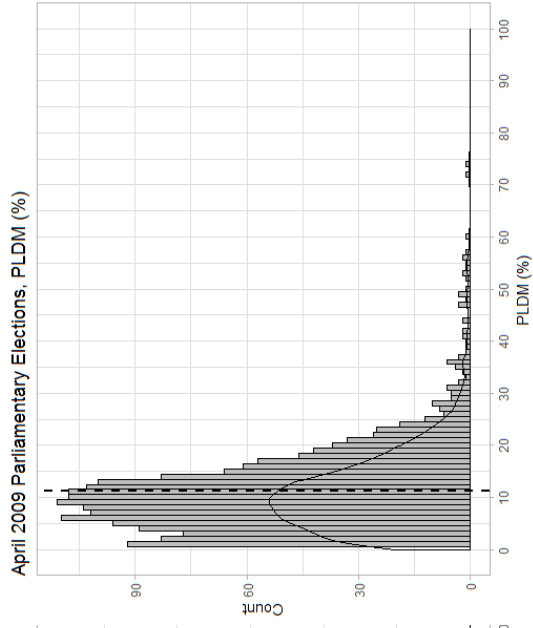
Figure C13: Parliamentary Elections
April 2009: PLDM (%)

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Figure C14: Parliamentary Elections July 2009: Turnout (%)

Figure C15: Parliamentary Elections July 2009: PCRM (%)

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Figure C17: Parliamentary Elections July 2009: PLDM (%)
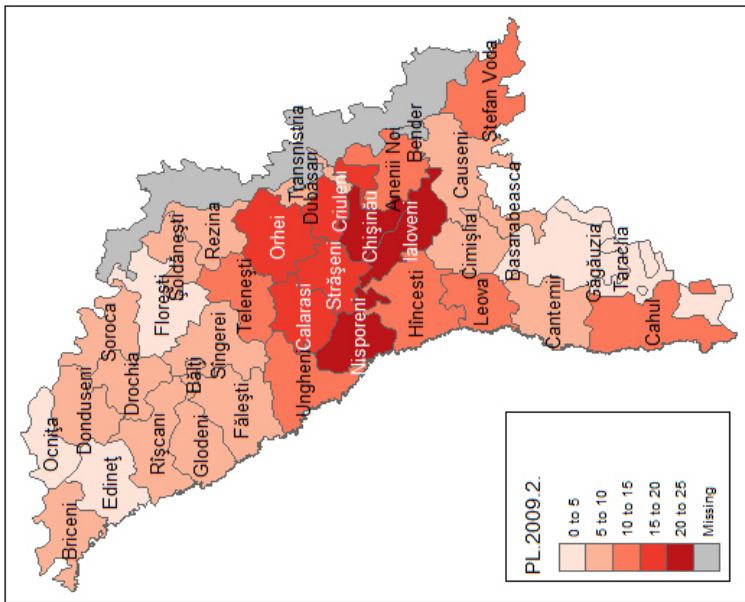
Figure C16: Parliamentary Elections July 2009: PL (%)
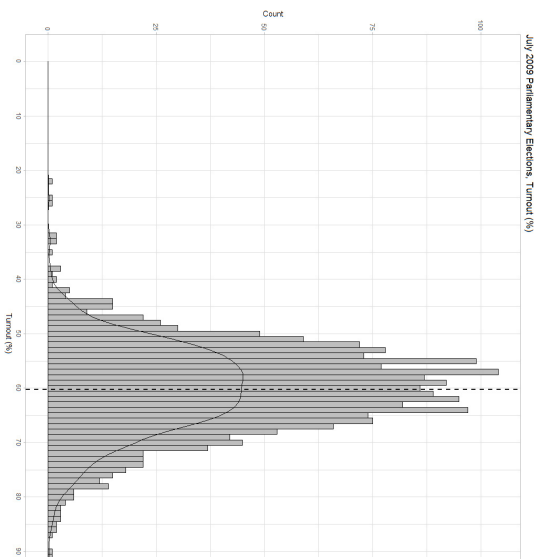
Figure C18: Parliamentary Elections
July 2009: Turnout (%)
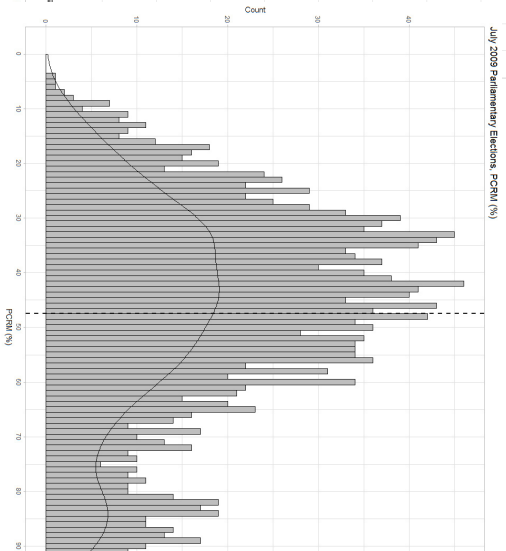
Figure C19: Parliamentary Elections
July 2009: PCRM (%)
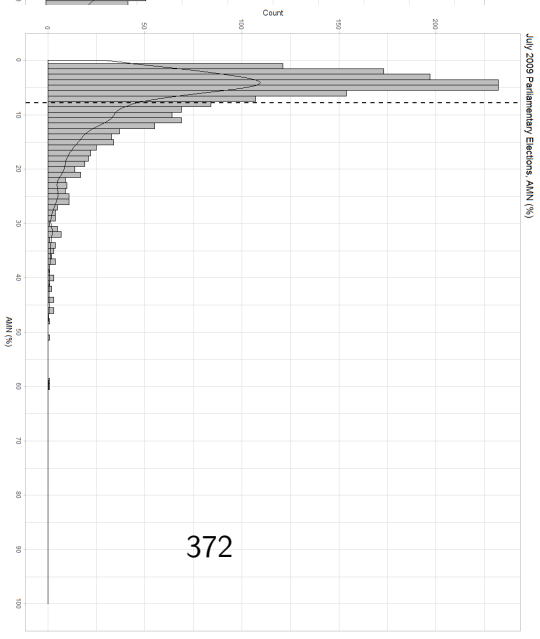
Figure C20: Parliamentary Elections
July 2009: AMN (%)

Figure C21: Parliamentary Elections
July 2009: PL (%)

Figure C22: Parliamentary Elections
July 2009: PLDM (%)
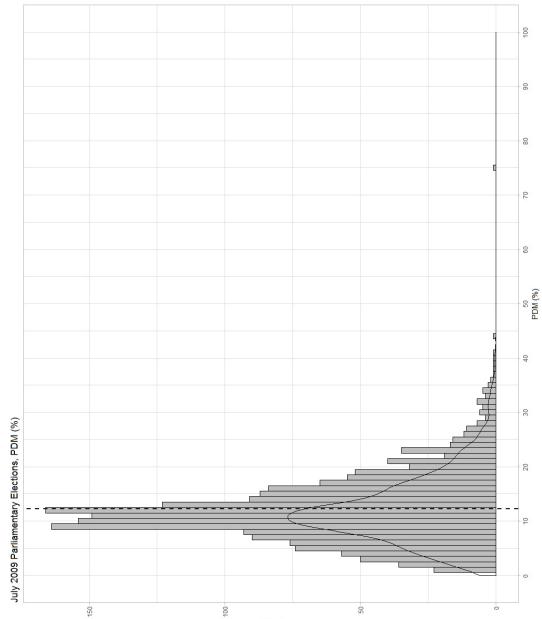
Figure C23: Parliamentary Elections
July 2009: PDM (%)
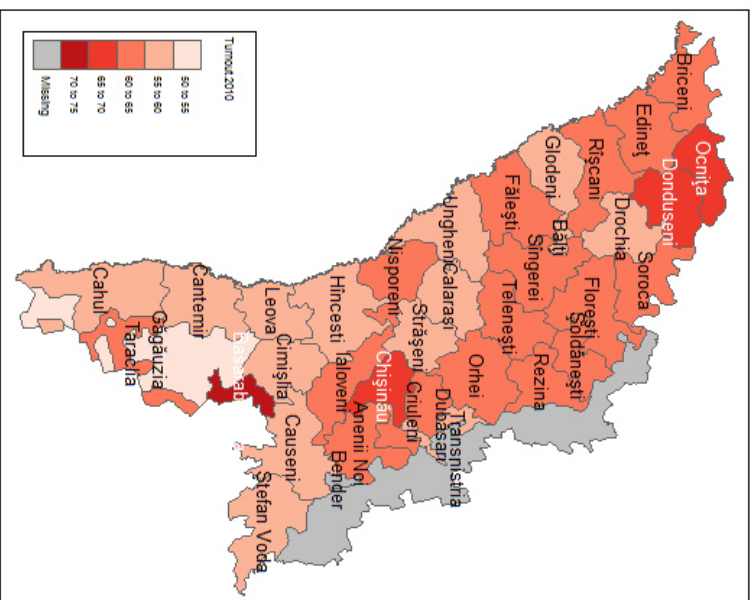
Figure C24: Parliamentary Elections 2010: Turnout (%)
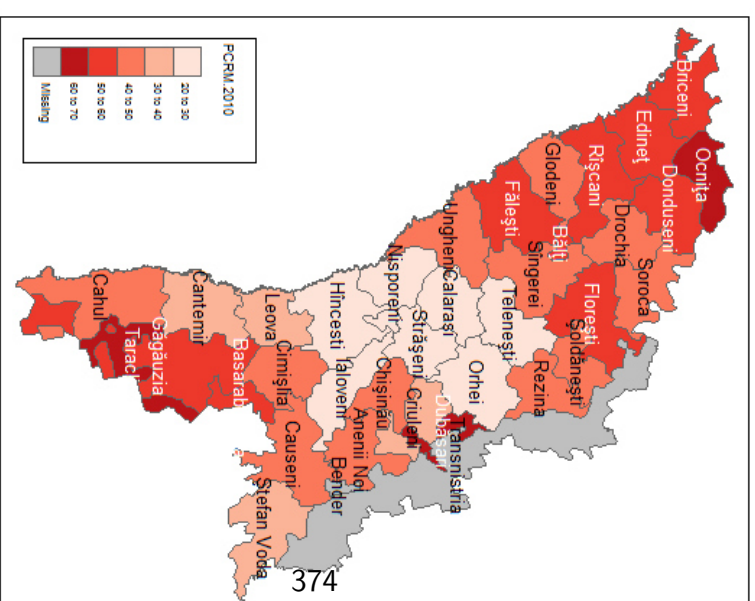
Figure C25: Parliamentary Elections 2010: PCRM(%)

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Figure C27: Parliamentary Elections 2010: PDM(%)
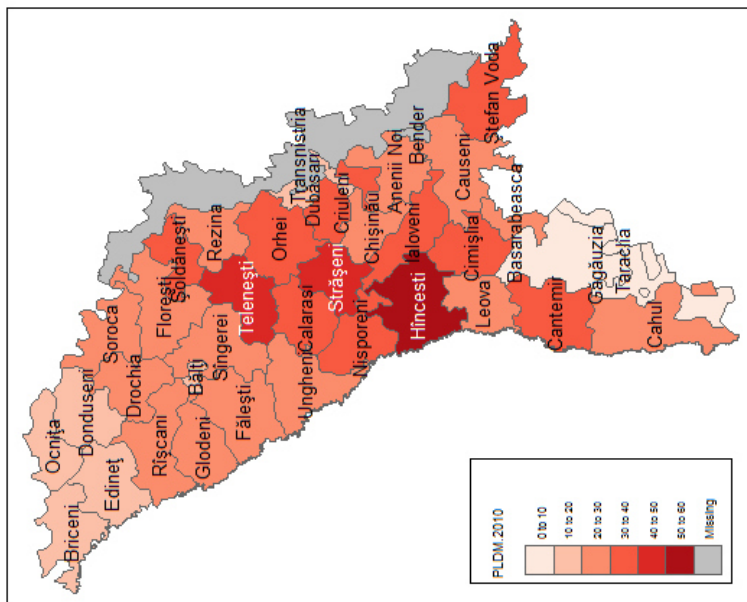
Figure C26: Parliamentary Elections 2010: PLDM(%)

375
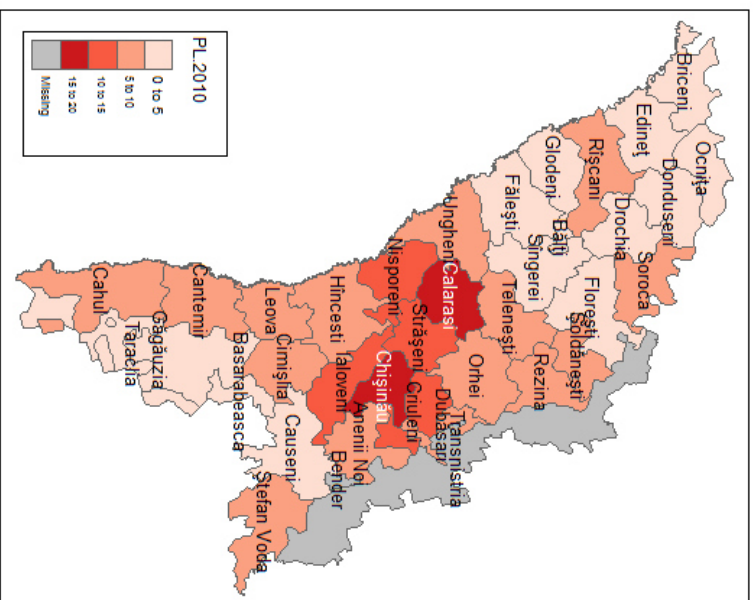
Figure C28: Parliamentary Elections 2010: PL(%)
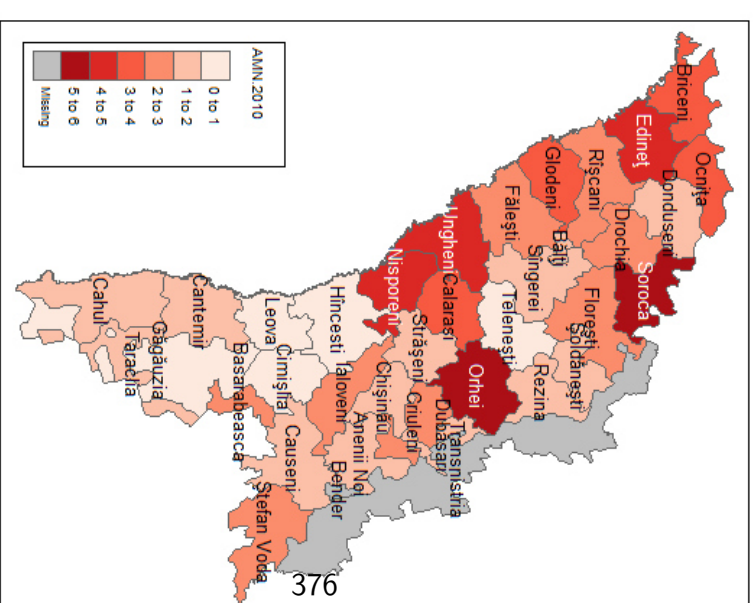
Figure C29: Parliamentary Elections 2010: AMN(%)

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Figure C30: Parliamentary Elections
2010 Turnout(%)

Figure C31: Parliamentary Elections
2010: PCRM(%)

Figure C32: Parliamentary Elections
2010: PLDM (%)

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Figure C33: Parliamentary Elections
2010 PL(%)

Figure C34: Parliamentary Elections
2010: PDM(%)

Figure C35: Parliamentary Elections
2010: AMN (%)

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Figure C37: Parliamentary Elections 2014: PCRM(%)

Figure C36: Parliamentary Elections 2014: Turnout(%)

Figure C38: Parliamentary Elections 2014: PDM(%)
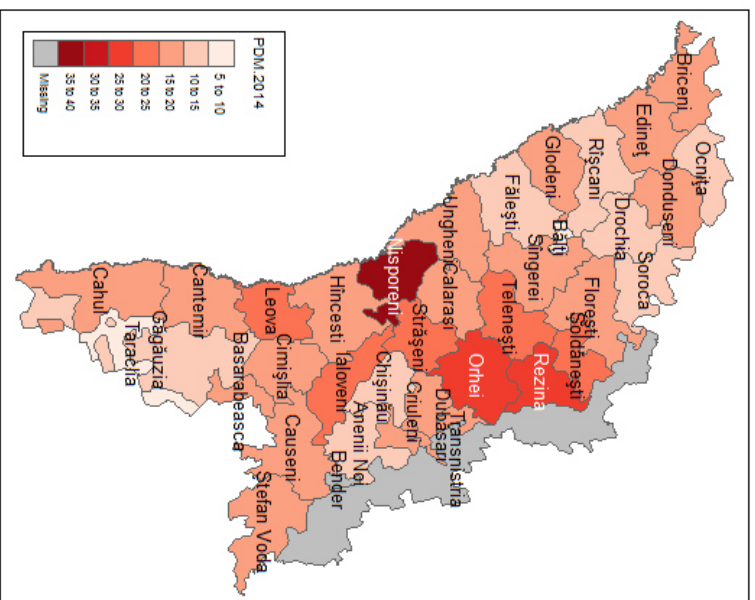
Figure C39: Parliamentary Elections 2014: PL(%)

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Figure C41: Parliamentary Elections 2014: PSRM(%)
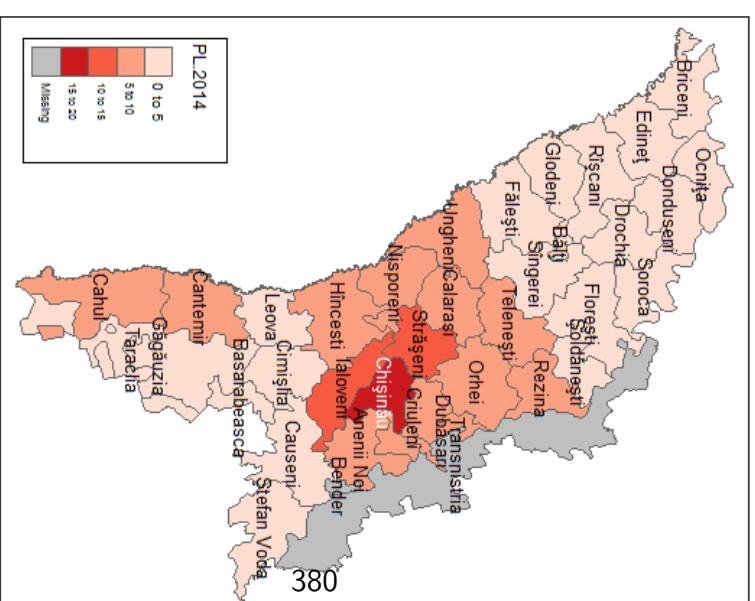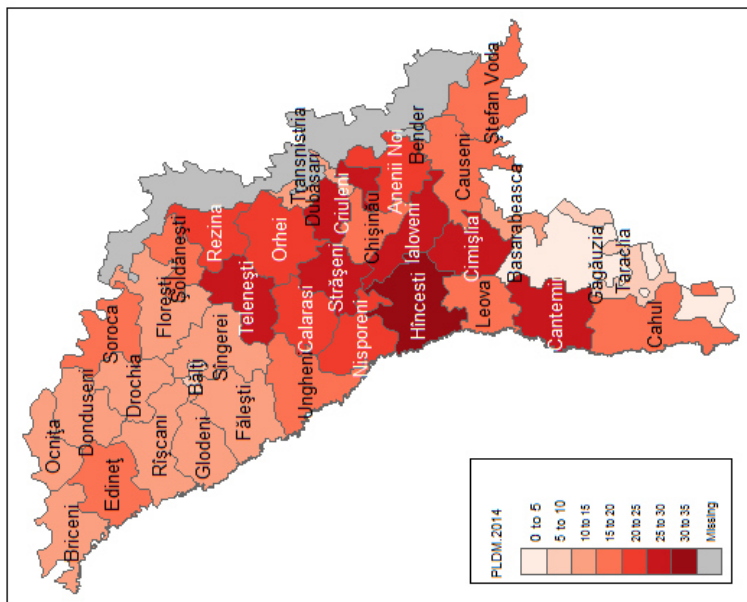
Figure C40: Parliamentary Elections 2014: PLDM(%)
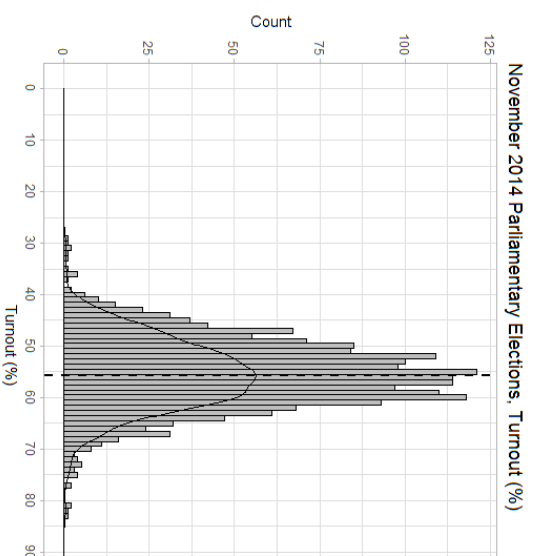
Figure C42: Parliamentary Elections
2014: Turnout(%)

Figure C43: Parliamentary Elections
2014: PCRM(%)

Figure C44: Parliamentary Elections
2014: PLDM (%)

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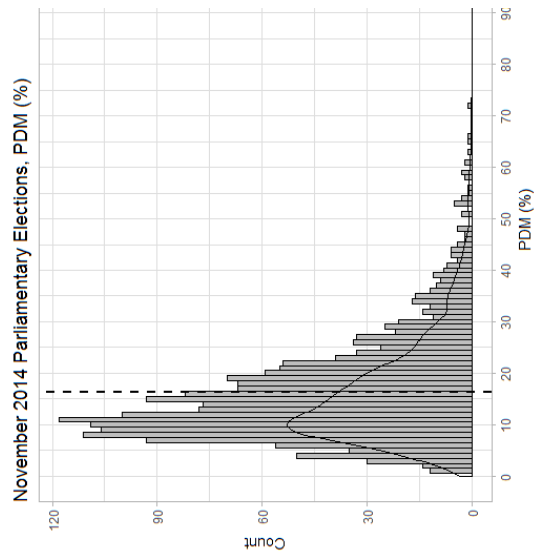
Figure C45: Parliamentary Elections
2014: PDM(%)
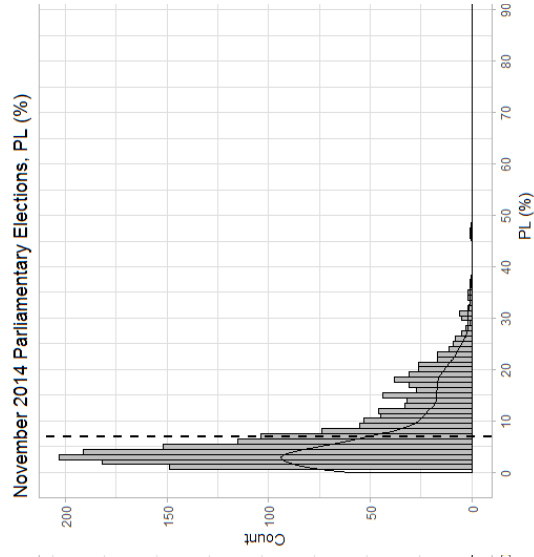
Figure C46: Parliamentary Elections
2014: PL(%)
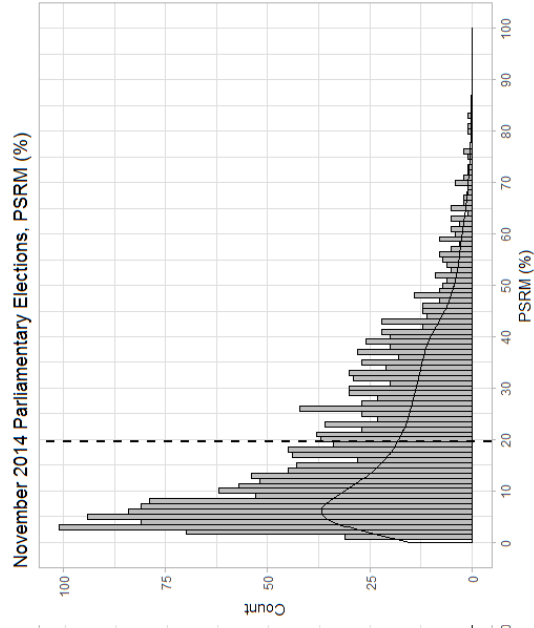
Figure C47: Parliamentary Elections
2014: PSR (%)

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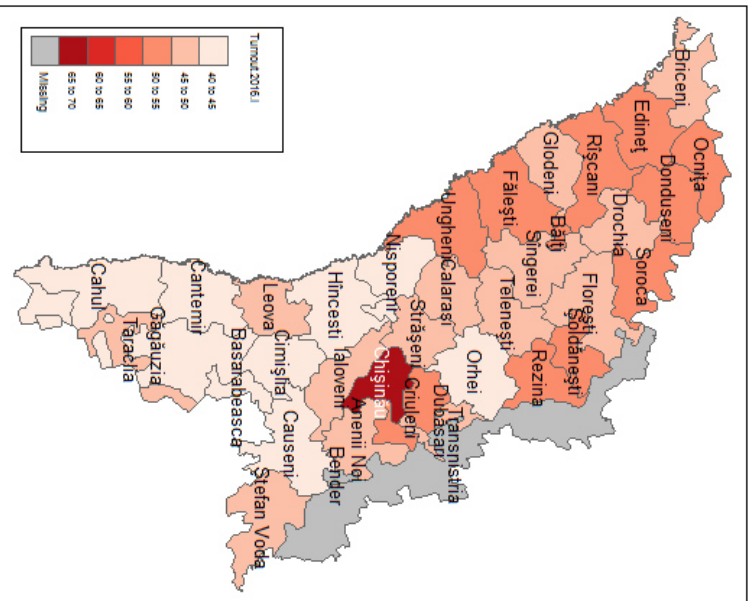
Figure C48: Presidential Elections 2016:
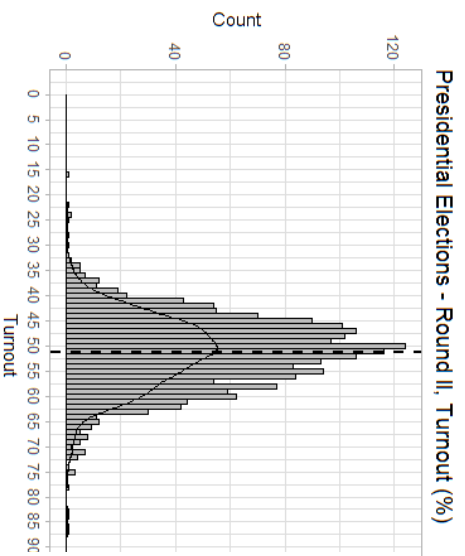Turnout, Round I (%)
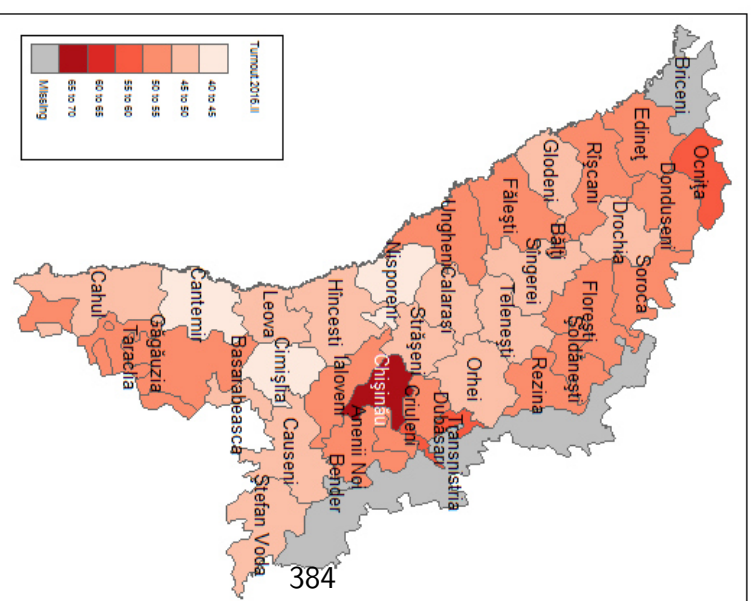
Figure C49: Presidential Elections 2016:
Turnout, Round II (%)

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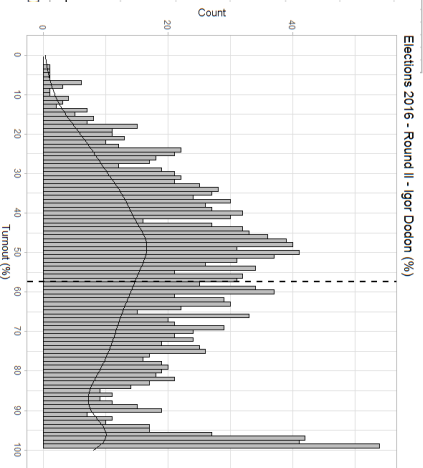Figure C51: Presidential Elections 2016: I.Dodon, Round II (%)

Figure C50: Presidential Elections 2016: I.Dodon, Round I (%)

Figure C52: Presidential Elections 2016: M.Sandu, Round I (%)
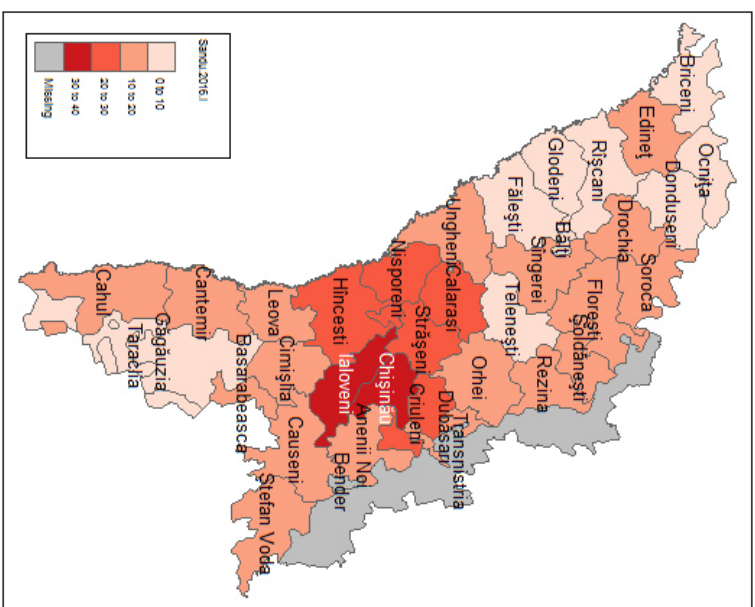
Figure C53: Presidential Elections 2016: M.Sandu, Round II (%)
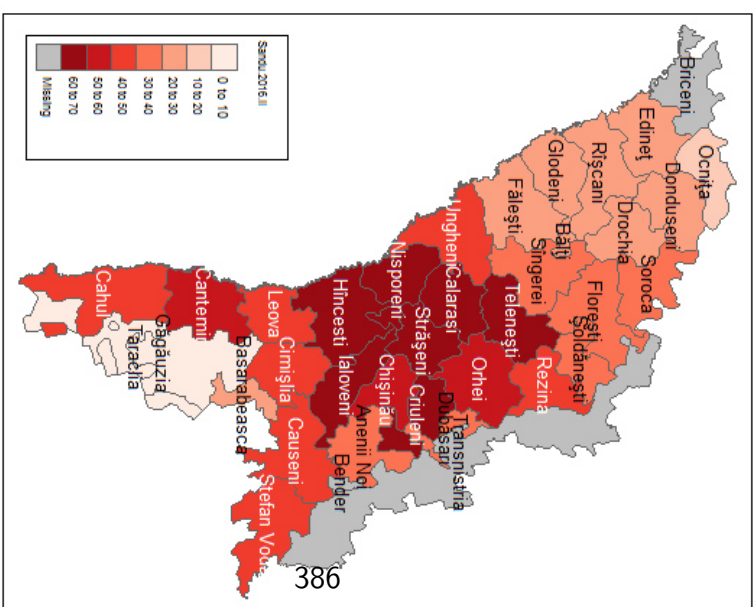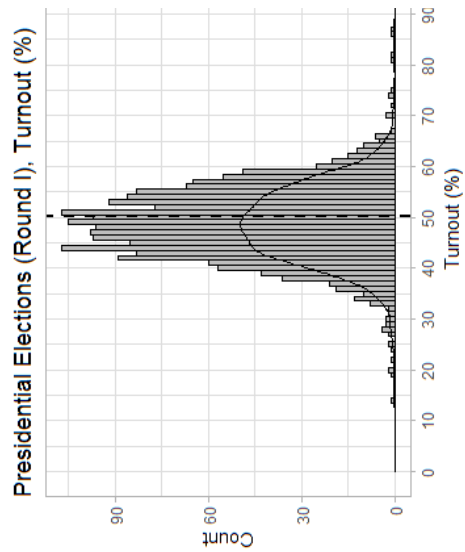
Figure C54: Presidential Elections 2016: Turnout, Round I
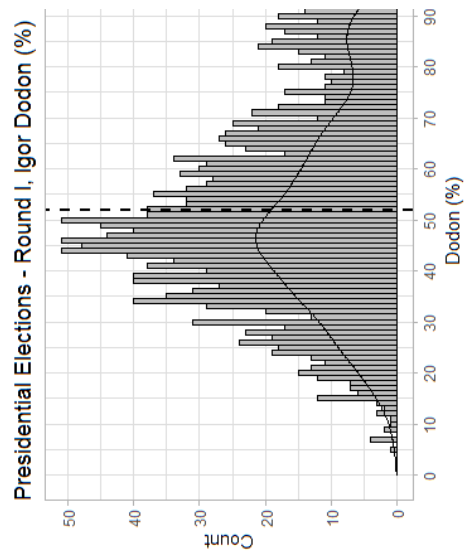
Figure C55: Presidential Elections 2016: I.Dodon, Round I
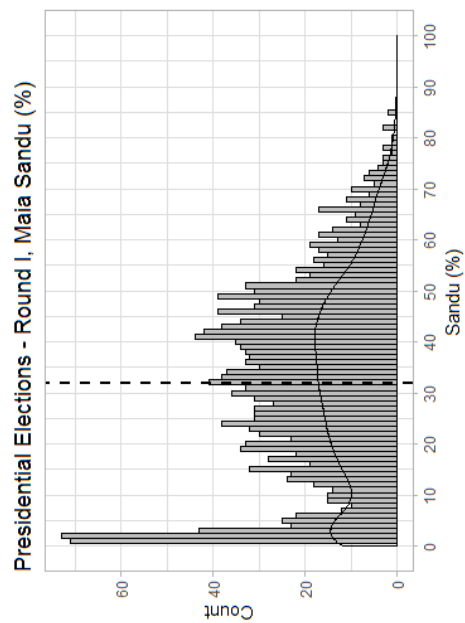
Figure C56: Presidential Elections 2016: M.Sandu, Round I

Figure C57: Presidential Elections 2016: Turnout, Round II

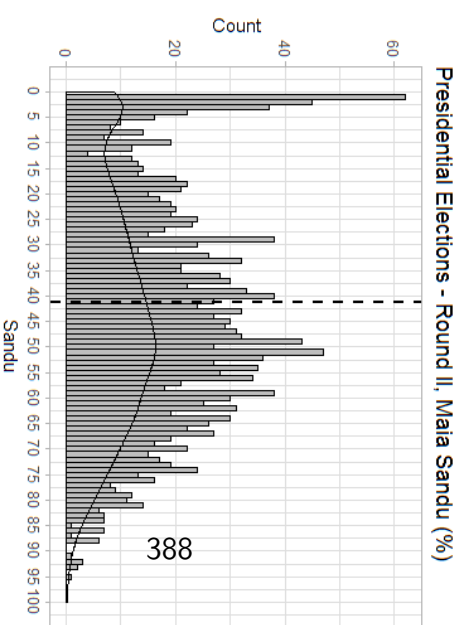Figure C58: Presidential Elections 2016: I.Dodon, Round II

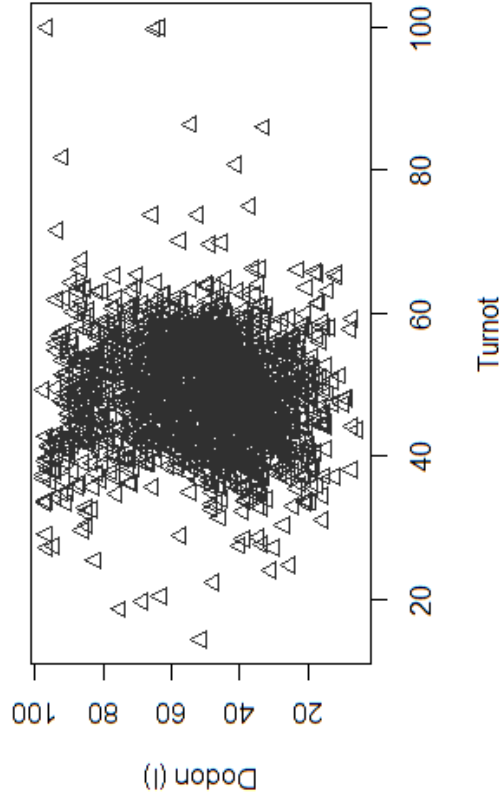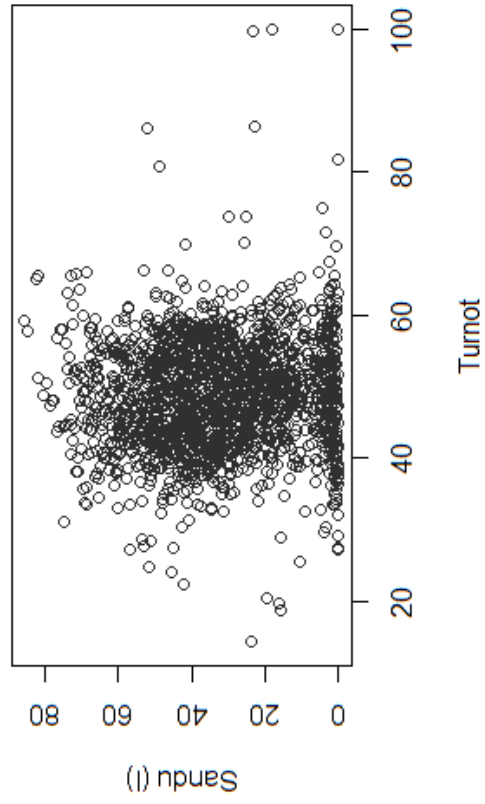Figure C59: Presidential Elections 2016: M.Sandu, Round II

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Figure C60: Presidential Elections 2016: Correlation between Turnout (%) and M.Sandu votes share (Round 1)

Figure C61: Presidential Elections 2016: Correlation between Turnout (%) and I.Dodon votes share (Round 1)
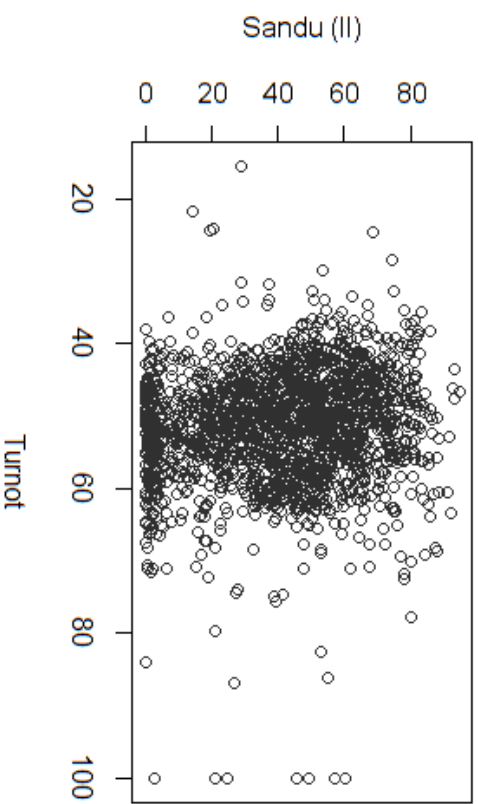
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Figure C62: Presidential Elections 2016: Correlation between Turnout (%) and M.Sandu votes share (Round 2)

Figure C63: Presidential Elections 2016: Correlation between Turnout (%) and I.Dodon votes share (Round 2)
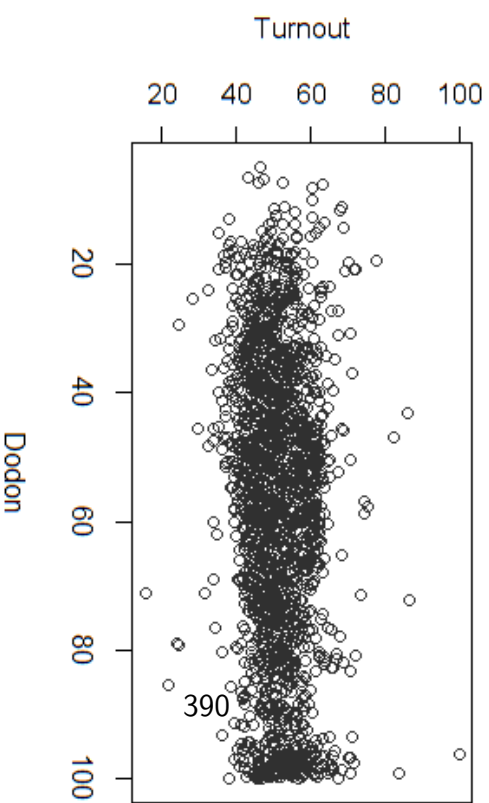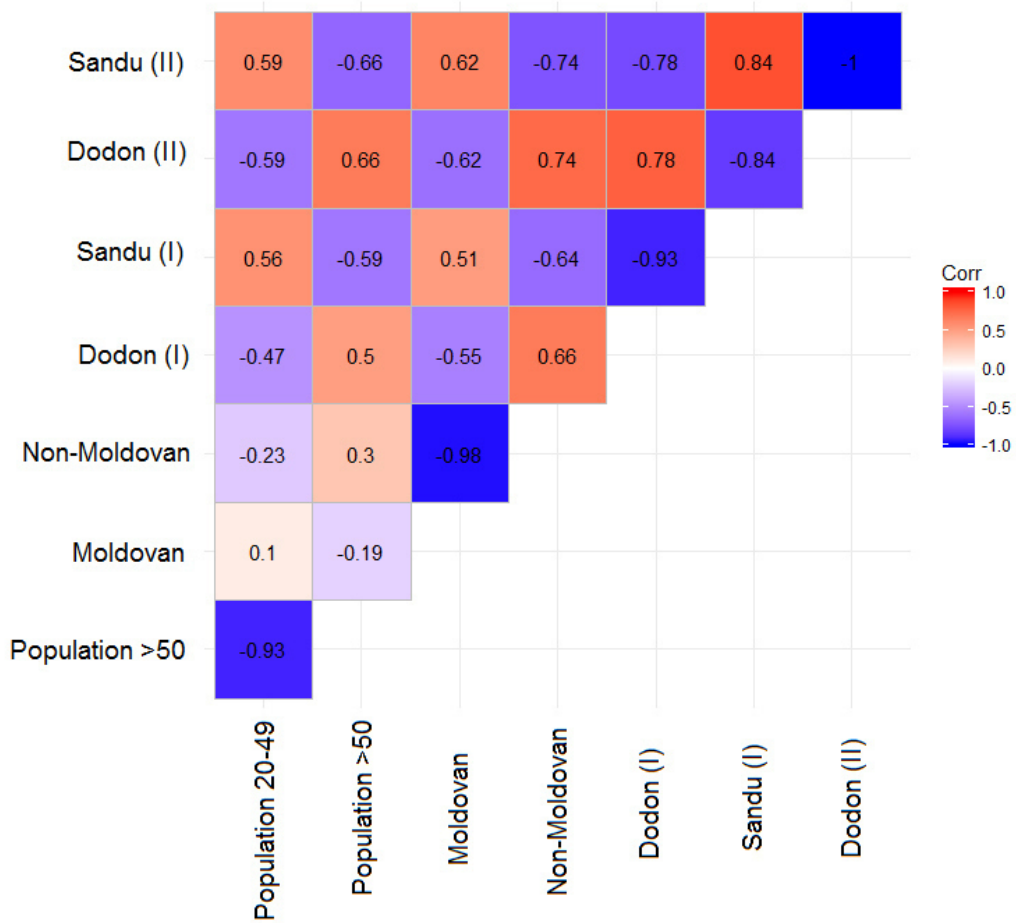
Figure C64: Presidential Elections 2016: Correlation between Demographic Characteristics and Leading Candidates (%)
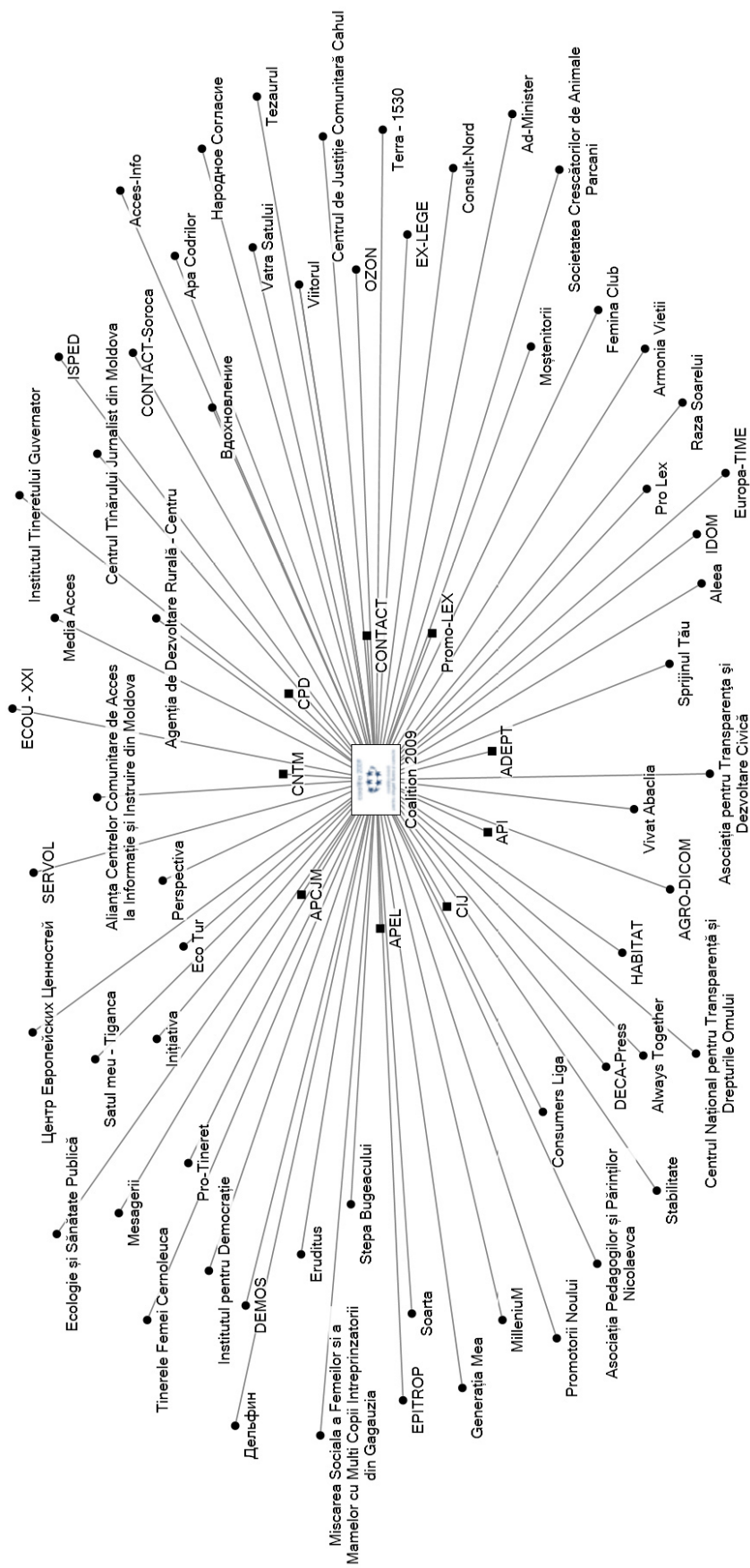
Figure C65: Members of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections 'Coalitia-2009' during 2009-2010 Elections

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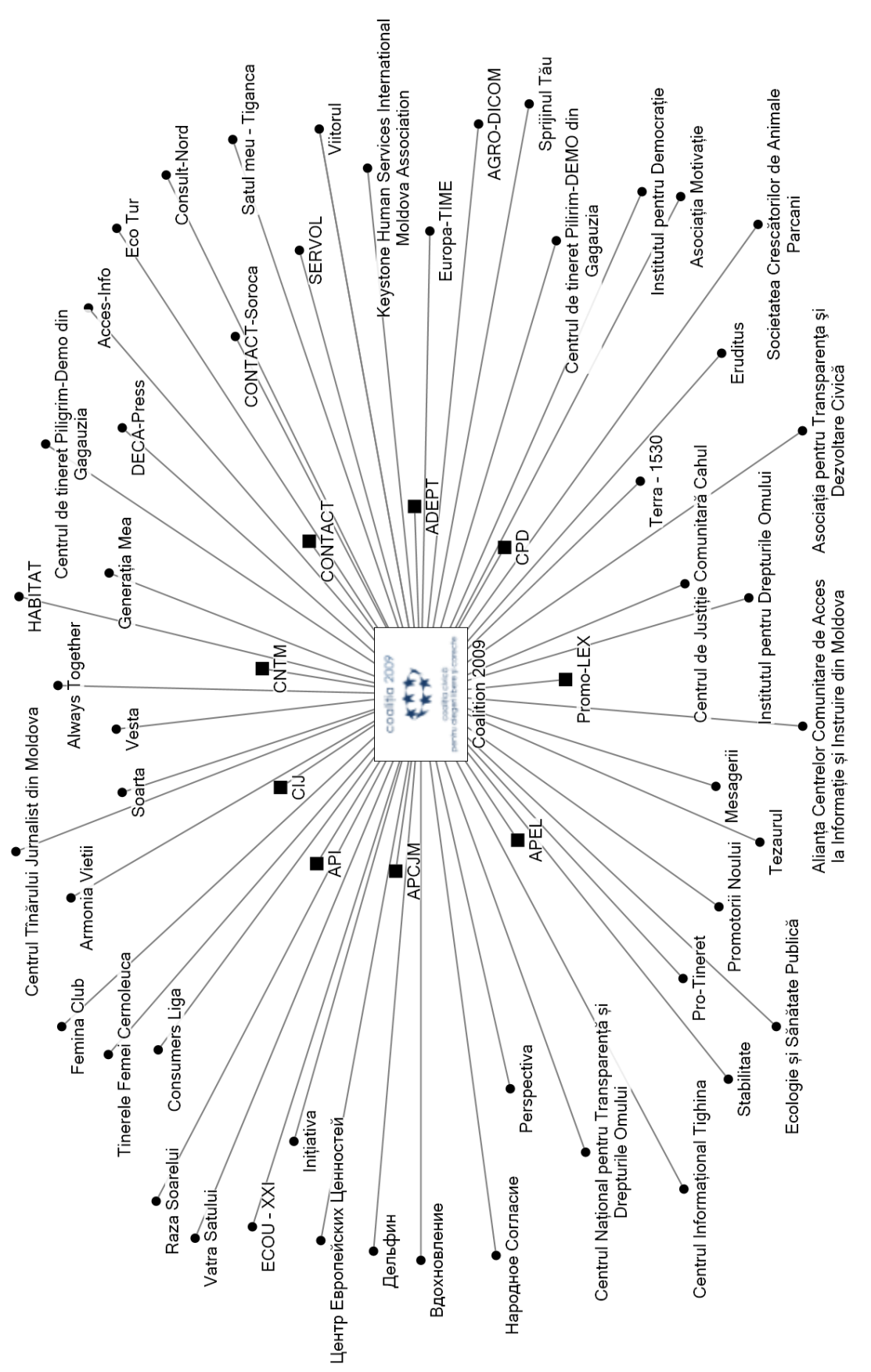
Figure C66: Members of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections 'Coalitia-2009' during 2014 Elections

Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections „Coalition 2009"

Figure C67: Members of the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections 'Coalitia-2009' during 2016 Presidential Elections

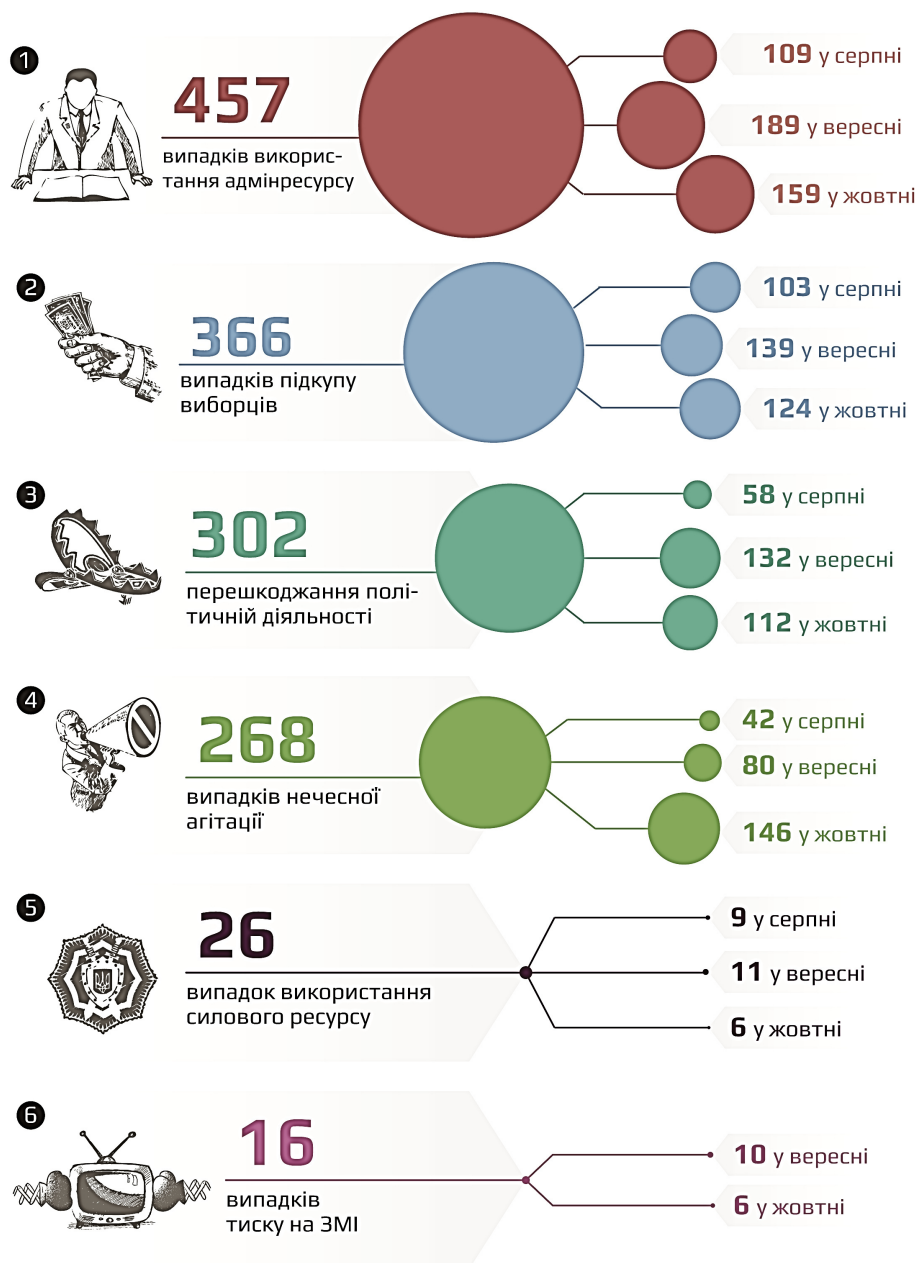Information from http://alegeliber.md

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Appendix D | Ukraine

Figure D1: Ukraine: Administrative Division

Table D1: Ukraine: Key Social and Economic Indicators 2009-2017

Year	Population (m.n)	GDP p.c. $	Urban population (%)	Poverty (%)	Life expectancy (years)	Outer migration (%)
2006	46,9	2303.0	67.97	3.2	68.1	0.064
2007	46,6	3068.6	68.15	2.9	68.2	0.064
2008	46,4	3891.0	68.33	1.5	68.3	0.048
2009	46,1	2545.5	68.50	1.7	69.2	0.042
2010	46,0	2965.1	68.69	1	70.3	0.032
2011	45,8	3569.8	68.88	0.9	70.8	0.032
2012	45,6	3855.4	69.07	0.7	70.9	0.032
2013	45,6	4029.7	69.27	0.5	71.2	0.049
2014	45,4	3104.7	69.48	0.5	71.2	0.048
2015	n/a	2124.7	69.70	1.4	71.2	n/a
2016	n/a	2185.7	69.92	1.2	71.5	n/a
2017	n/a	2639.8	70.14	n/a	n/a	n/a

РЕЙТИНГ ПОРУШЕНЬ
виборчого законодавства у серпні-жовтні 2012 р.

1 — **457** випадків викорис-тання адмінресурсу
- **109** у серпні
- **189** у вересні
- **159** у жовтні

2 — **366** випадків підкупу виборців
- **103** у серпні
- **139** у вересні
- **124** у жовтні

3 — **302** перешкоджання полі-тичній діяльності
- **58** у серпні
- **132** у вересні
- **112** у жовтні

4 — **268** випадків нечесної агітації
- **42** у серпні
- **80** у вересні
- **146** у жовтні

5 — **26** випадок використання силового ресурсу
- **9** у серпні
- **11** у вересні
- **6** у жовтні

6 — **16** випадків тиску на ЗМІ
- **10** у вересні
- **6** у жовтні

ОПОРА ▲

Figure D2: Ukraine: Statistics of Pre-electoral Violations in 2012

Table D2: Participation in civic organisations: Ukraine 2010 - 2017 (%)

Region	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Cherkasy	13.0	24.5	25.8	52.8	59.3	57.1	47.0	47.5
Chernihiv	3.5	4.4	8.5	3.1	3.9	4.4	4.0	4.1
Chernivtsi	11.2	11.1	13.9	13.4	12.9	13.4	12.8	12.8
Dnipropetrovs'k	46.5	46.2	32.9	40.6	37.7	28.3	30.7	30.9
Donets'k	16.2	19.2	14.5	14.5	3.4	7.5	3.3	3.4
Ivano-Frankivs'k	5.6	5.9	6.7	6.0	5.4	5.7	5.3	5.3
Kharkiv	14.5	14.8	15.1	12.6	11.6	11.4	10.2	10.3
Kherson	6.2	8.7	6.8	3.9	5.4	6.3	6.0	6.1
Khmel'nyts'kyy	9.5	11.0	11.4	20.3	21.4	21.7	21.7	21.9
Kirovohrad	17.5	11.1	12.0	14.6	13.6	13.0	14.2	14.3
Kyiv (oblast)	8.5	6.9	6.6	2.6	3.1	5.6	5.5	5.5
Luhans'k	8.6	8.7	10.6	8.5	1.4	2.5	2.7	2.7
L'viv	27.1	27.7	27.3	21.7	8.1	33.4	36.7	36.8
Mykolayiv	20.3	18.7	20.1	17.6	21.0	18.1	18.0	18.1
Odessa	10.7	11.2	12.9	15.4	18.0	21.6	23.2	23.2
Poltava	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.9	13.0	5.0	15.4	15.6
Rivne	7.9	8.7	10.6	8.6	5.7	5.9	7.8	7.8
Sumy	63.9	64.6	81.9	64.8	61.0	61.4	58.3	58.8
Ternopil'	3.4	4.0	5.1	4.4	5.6	5.2	4.8	4.8
Vinnytsya	64.1	39.6	41.8	50.9	38.9	38.7	37.2	37.5
Volyn	10.6	11.6	11.5	10.8	10.3	18.9	22.5	22.6
Transcarpathia	80.3	97.1	85.0	81.2	70.4	64.8	57.5	57.5
Zaporizhzhya	12.0	22.4	26.2	21.0	21.3	23.6	21.8	22.0
Zhytomyr	5.9	6.0	5.7	2.6	2.6	2.6	3.1	3.1
Kyiv City	733.9	981.4	945.5	922.6	691.6	622.4	580.7	576.9
Crimea	55.9	58.5	60.3	27.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sevastopol'	9.0	12.4	13.5	48.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ukraine	65.8	82.2	79.5	77.9	59.5	59.8	57.2	57.4

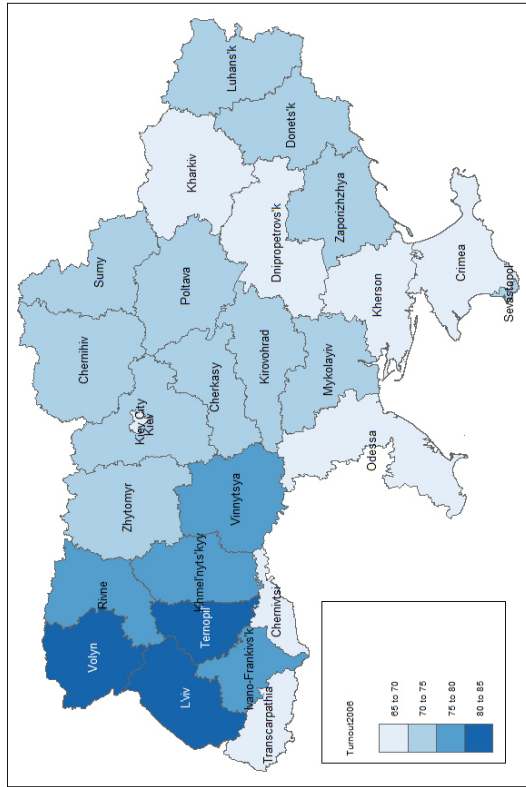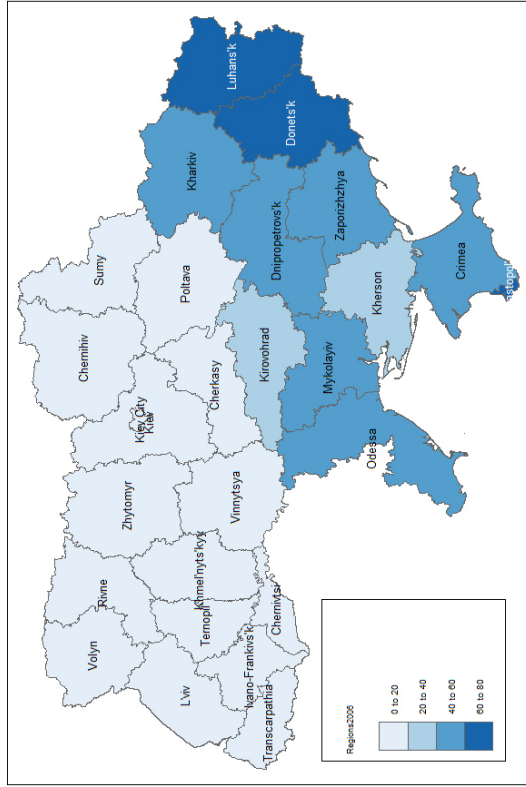Figure D4: Parliamentary Elections 2006: Party of Regions

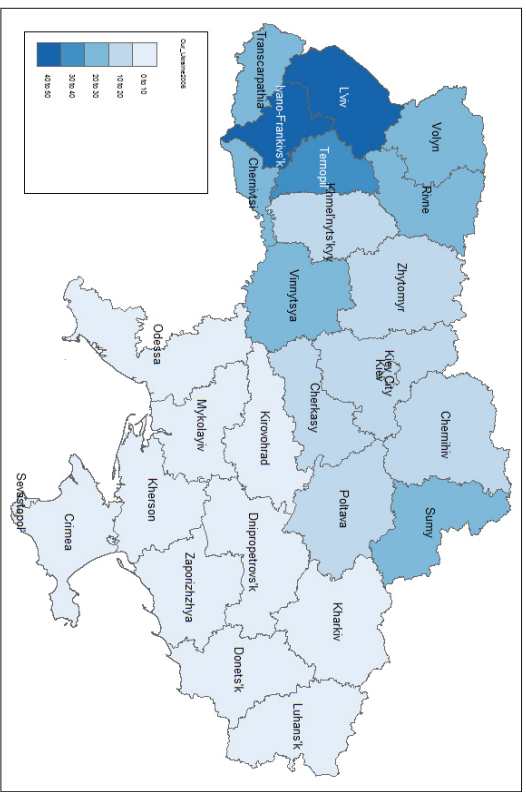Figure D3: Parliamentary Elections 2006: Turnout (%)

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Figure D5: Parliamentary Elections 2006: Our Ukraine

Figure D6: Parliamentary Elections 2006: BYuT

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Figure D8: Parliamentary Elections 2007: Party of Regions
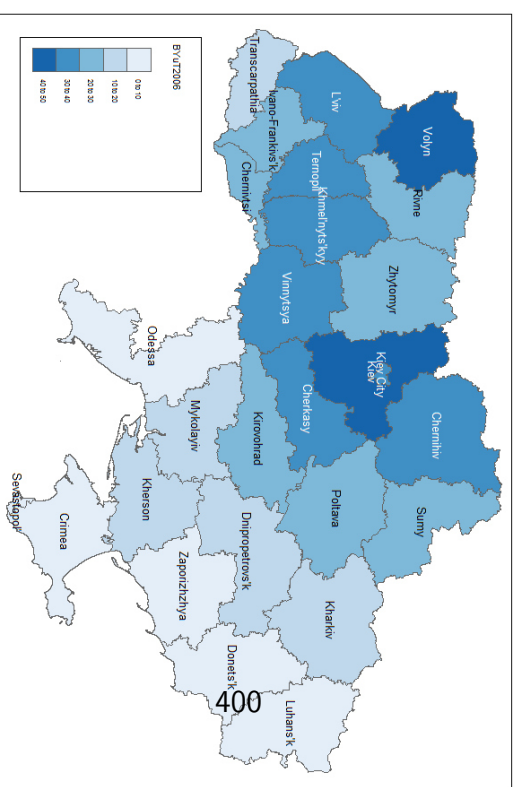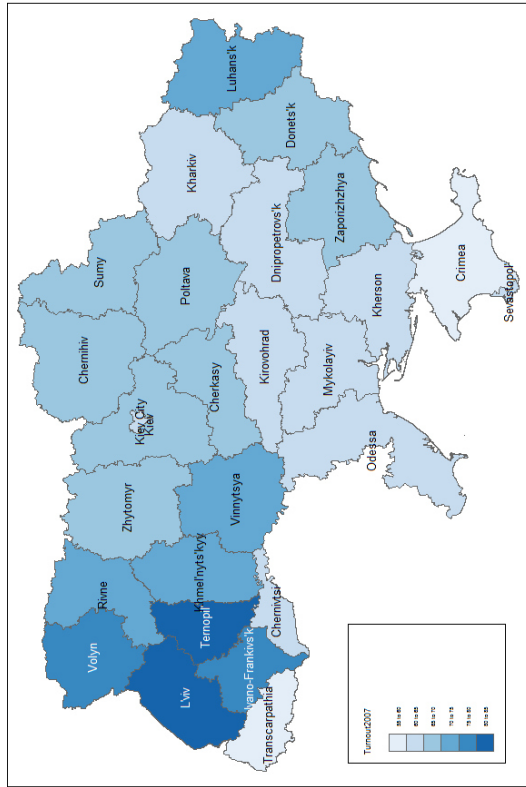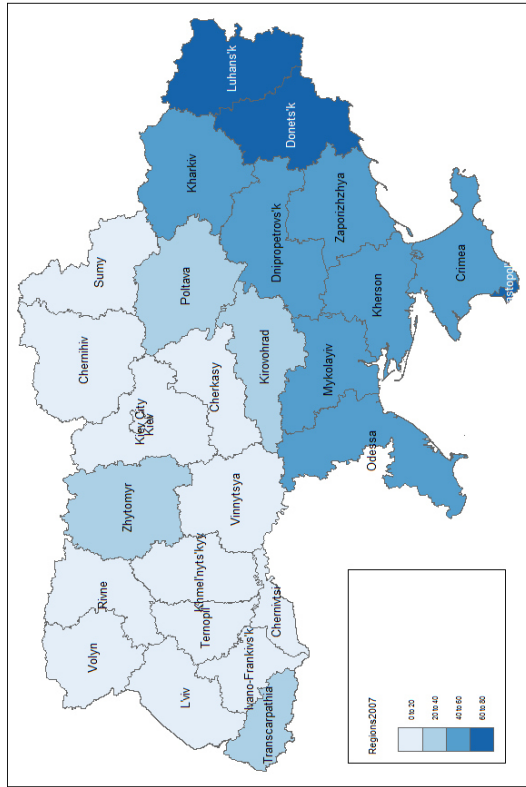

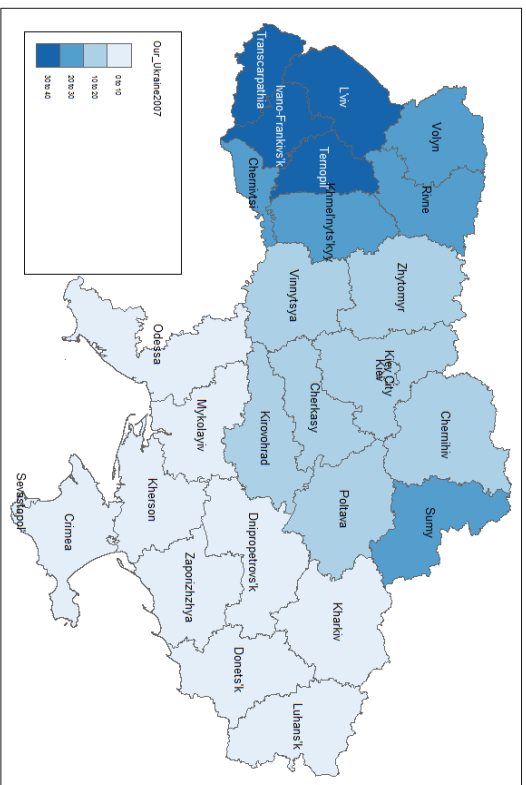Figure D7: Parliamentary Elections 2007: Turnout (%)

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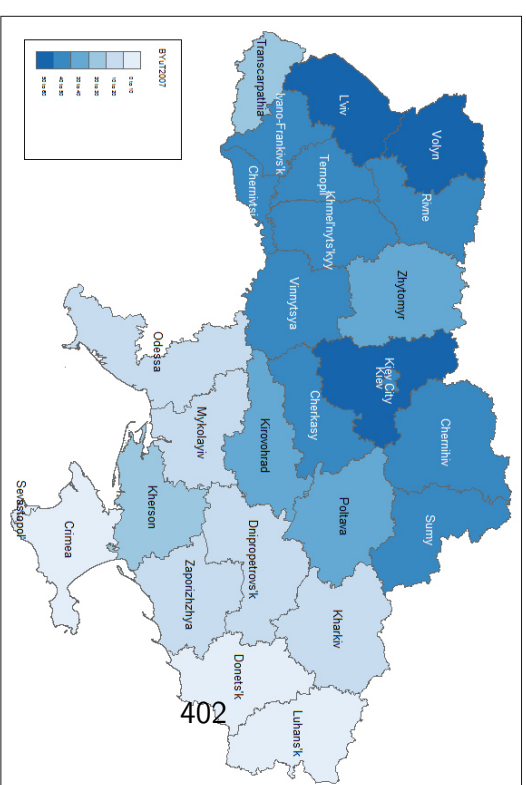Figure D9: Parliamentary Elections 2007: Our Ukraine - People's Self Defence

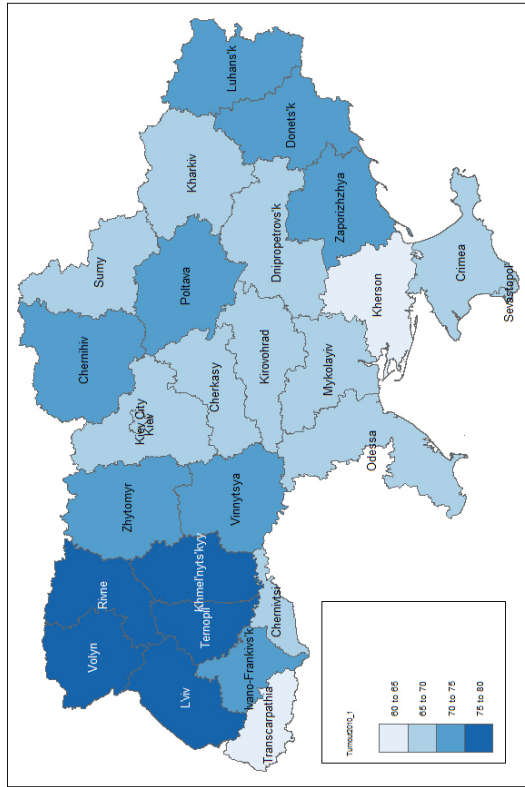Figure D10: Parliamentary Elections 2007: BYuT

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Figure D12: Presidential Elections 2010: Turnout (Round II)

Figure D11: Presidential Elections 2010: Turnout (Round I)
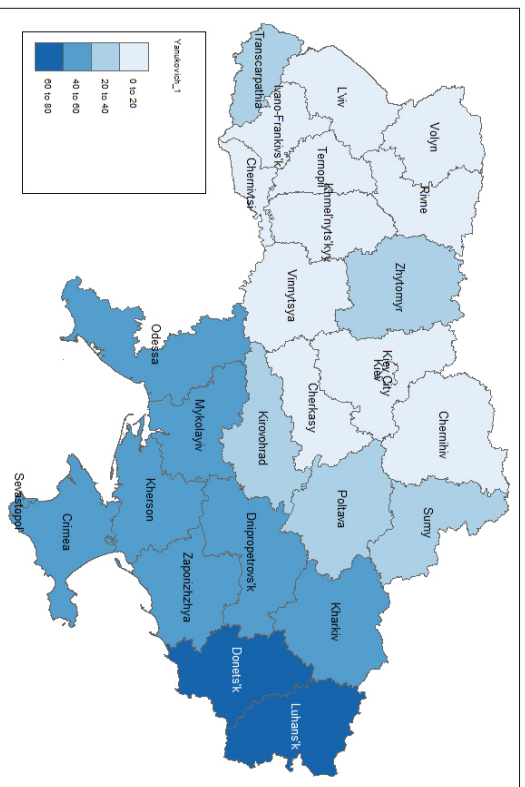
Figure D13: Presidential Elections 2010: V. Yanukovich (Round I)
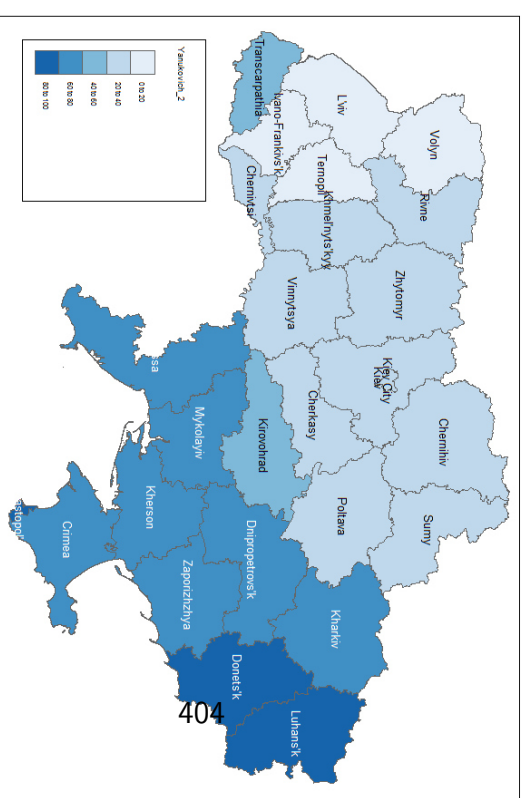
Figure D14: Presidential Elections 2010: V. Yanukovich (Round II)

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Figure D16: Presidential Elections 2010:
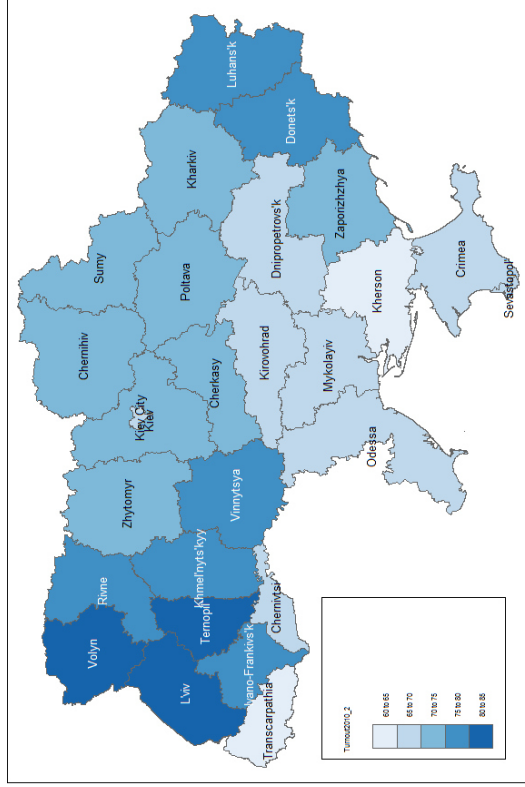Y.Tymoshenko (Round II)

Figure D15: Presidential Elections 2010:
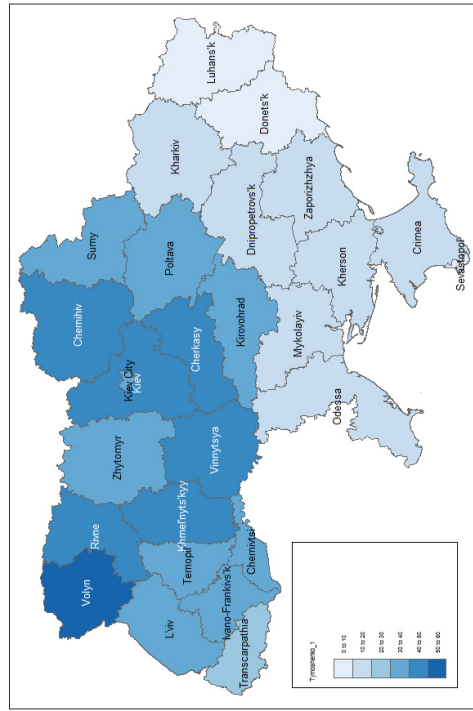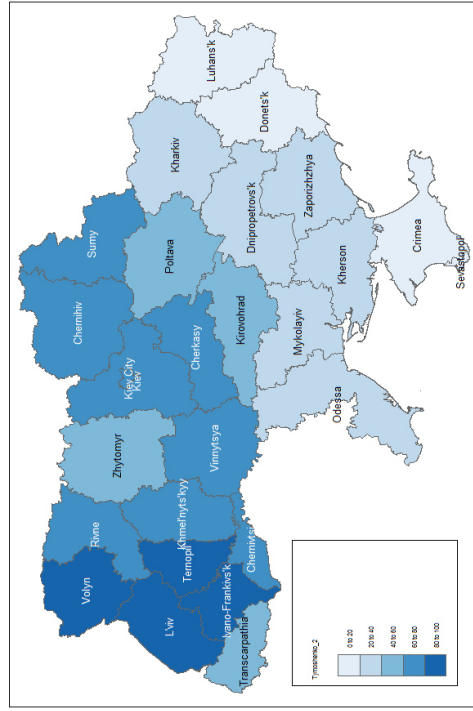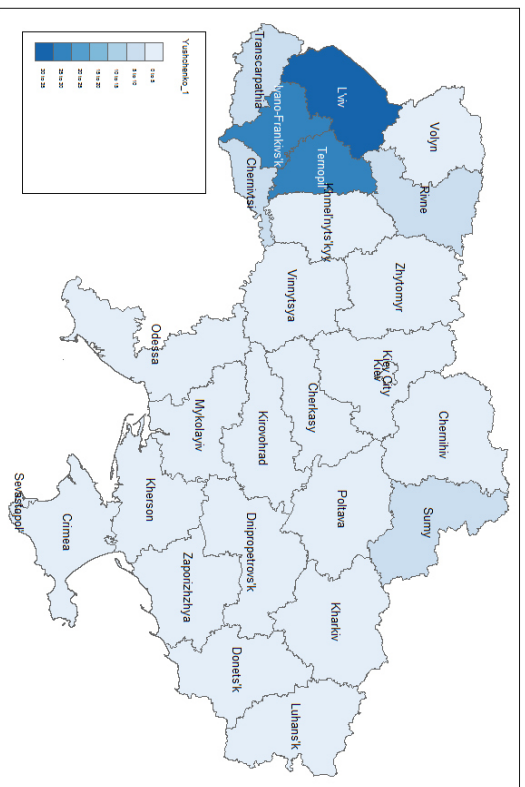Y.Tymoshenko (Round I)

Figure D17: Presidential Elections 2010: V.Yushchenko (Round I)

Figure D18: Presidential Elections 2010: S.Tihipko(Round I)

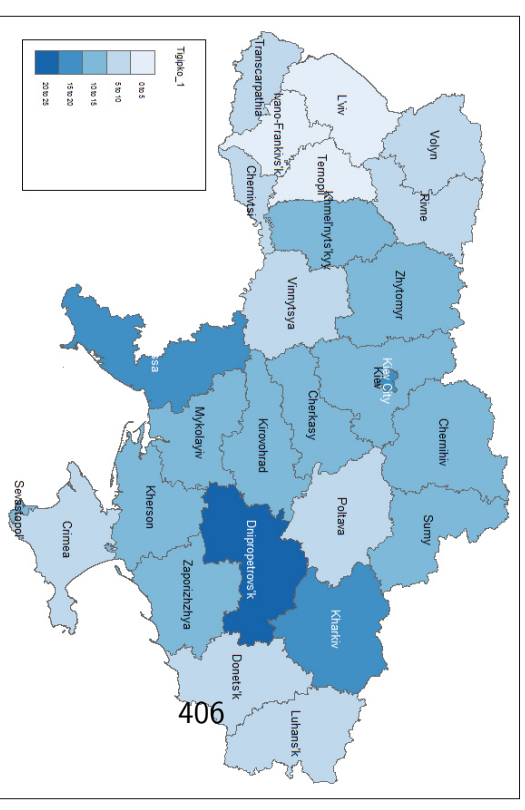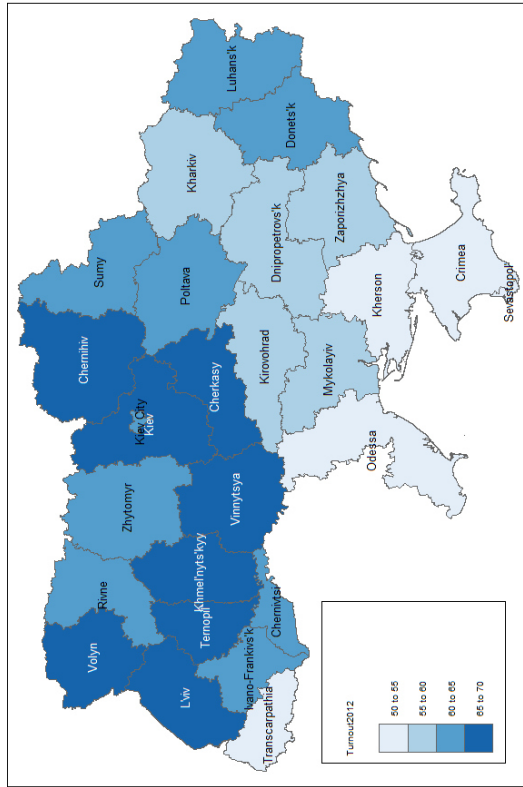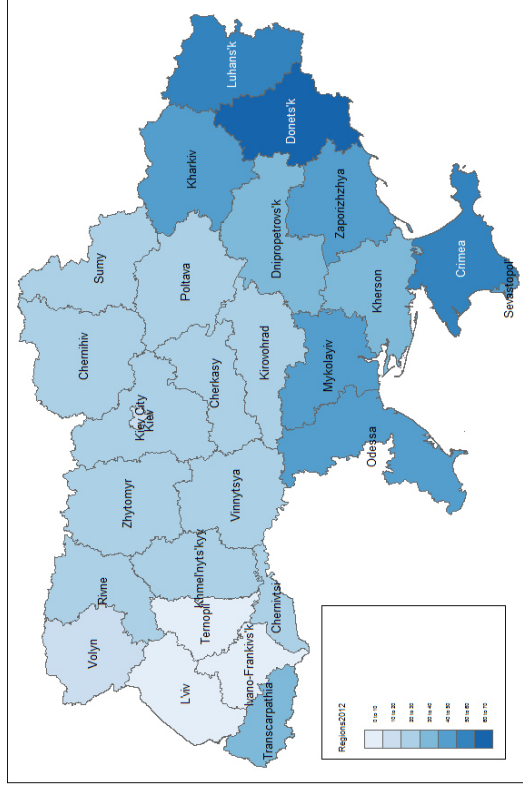406

Figure D20: Parliamentary Elections 2012: Party of Regions

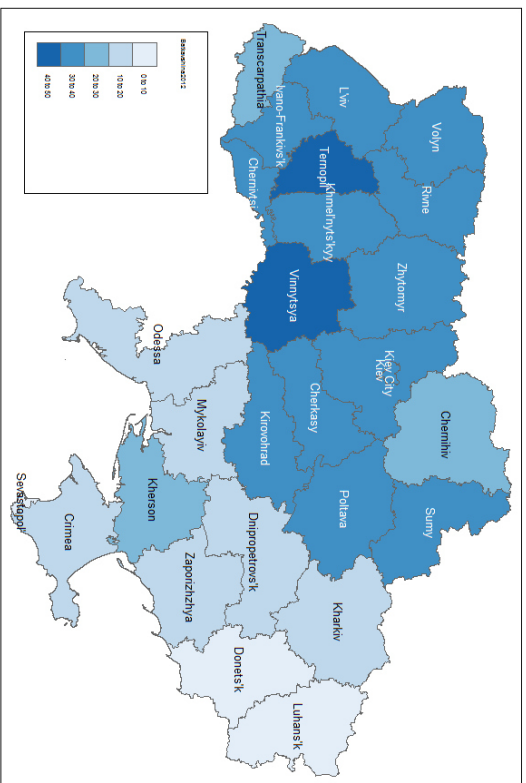Figure D19: Parliamentary Elections 2012: Turnout

Figure D21: Parliamentary Elections 2012: 'Batkivshchyna'
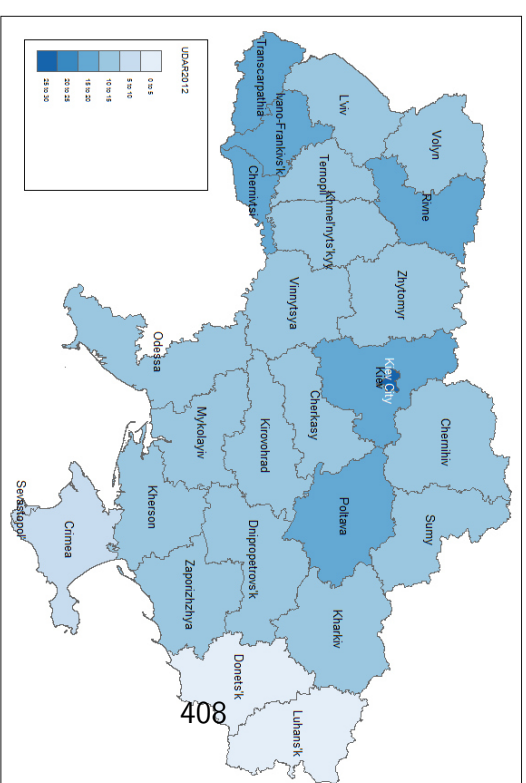
Figure D22: Parliamentary Elections 2012: 'Udar'

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