

SEEING ORANGE: WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND UKRAINE'S ORANGE REVOLUTION

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In this essay I examine a puzzling feature of Ukraine's Orange Revolution: why women's organizations played a limited role in this event, even though women as activists and protesters were crucial to its success. In 1989, popular mobilization triggered a wave of protest that swept across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and initiated transitions to democracy throughout the region. At that time, it was widely noted by feminists and other observers that women played a prominent role in the movements that brought about the push for democratization (Gal and Kligman 2000). However, organized women's groups, in particular, groups that sought to raise women's status, were notably absent. Since then, transnational feminist groups and organizers of a wide range of women's rights initiatives have devoted a great deal of time and energy to mobilizing women's movements in postcommunist countries. Yet in the Colored Revolutions, once again, organized women's groups remained marginal.

Below, I explore the factors that limited the visibility of women's groups in the Orange Revolution. I then focus on a small but significant stratum of women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have sought to increase women's influence within politics (Hrycak 2005, 2006). Using personal interviews conducted in Ukraine in 2001 and 2005 with the director of a United Nations gender project, the founder of a domestic violence crisis center, and a leader of a local consortium of women's organizations, I (1) examine the localized forms of activism women activists have developed by combining Western and local organizing frames, (2) describe the experiences of the Orange Revolution of selected women activists from their own standpoint, and (3) offer explanations for how their agendas and practices during this protest were shaped by their involvement with transnational groups. In order to protect the individuals who agreed to participate in my research, throughout this essay I use pseudonyms.

THE ORANGE REVOLUTION

In the fall of 2004, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians risked their lives to protest election fraud in what came to be called the Orange Revolution. Despite widespread political disenchantment and threats of repression, more than 20 percent of Ukraine's adult population participated in this impressive display of civil disobedience (Stepanenko 2005).

The Orange Revolution resulted when authorities attempted to steal the election that was to decide who would succeed Leonid Kuchma as Ukraine's president. Kuchma was elected in 1994 to the first of two terms as president. In 2000 an opposition movement arose after tapes were made public revealing Kuchma's involvement in arms trading, massive corruption, and the grisly murder of a young journalist. This movement's goal became winning the 2004 presidential elections, when term limits would require Kuchma to leave office. Polls demonstrated that the most popular candidate for the presidency was Viktor Yushchenko, the leader of the opposition movement. Yushchenko was a former prime minister whom Kuchma dismissed for his efforts to combat high-level corruption. Kuchma's handpicked successor was Viktor Yanukovich, who was closely tied to criminal networks and had a past criminal record. To ensure Yanukovich's election, a wave of repression was unleashed. Attempts were made to assassinate Yushchenko, one of which left him near death.

When it became clear that authorities were planning to steal the election, Yushchenko's supporters called for a revolution that would make his opponents "see orange" (Yushchenko's campaign color) wherever they turned. Supporters festooned the country with orange ribbons. They mobilized a grassroots campaign based on civil disobedience that encouraged voters to resist efforts to steal their vote and asked them to respond with a peaceful "orange revolution" in the event of a dirty election.

THE TRIUMPH OF CIVIL SOCIETY?

The Orange Revolution was widely interpreted as "the triumph of civil society" over Ukraine's authoritarian regime (Diuk 2006; Kuzio 2005). Speculation soon arose over what had helped local civil society overcome its long-standing weaknesses. Observers nearly all rushed to give a great deal of credit to Western democratization programs that funded NGO networks, thereby paving the way for the Orange Revolution (Bunce and Wolchik 2006; Karatnycky 2005; Wilson 2006).

Western donors did indeed fund election monitors and other activities that enabled the extent of fraud to become clear. The centrality of groups funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) led some critics to charge that the Orange Revolution was a “high tech coup” financed by the US (Wilson 2006). But there are good reasons to believe that such pronouncements overstate, and even misrepresent, the role Western actors played in the corrupt regime that emerged in Ukraine.

First, Leonid Kuchma initially maintained good relations with the West by appointing neoliberal reformers such as Yushchenko to high positions. The country became a top recipient of United States aid during his presidency. Most was earmarked for the promotion of foreign trade and investment. Only a small share of U.S. assistance funded programs to support democracy and civil society. Furthermore, this latter type of support declined during Kuchma’s second term, to punish him for blocking foreign investment and for the series of fiascos that triggered the emergence of the opposition movement and later led to the Orange Revolution.

Second, the funding of election observation missions, the organizing of local NGOs, and other forms of democracy aid have been priorities within the international development community not only in Ukraine, but in all postcommunist countries. A veritable industry of projects arose that employed foreign experts to travel to postcommunist countries to teach fund-raising and advocacy techniques and to distribute grants. Yet these projects have not prevented most post-Soviet countries from becoming authoritarian. Indeed most studies have concluded that the effects of international democracy promotion on civic groups within post-Soviet countries have been limited and occasionally negative (Carothers 1999; Henderson 2003; Mendelson and Glenn 2002; Ottaway and Carothers 2000; Wedel 1998). Civil society projects were intended to foster dense horizontal networks of reciprocity and trust among local citizens and civic groups. It was hoped that such aid would enable local NGOs in postcommunist countries to join transnational campaigns operated by “principled issue networks” devoted to women’s rights, human rights, and environmentalism (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Instead, such efforts created what Henderson (2002) calls “principled clientelism”—a nonprofit sector dominated by vertical, unequal relationships that join Western donors and select local grant recipients.

WESTERN AID TO WOMEN

Western intervention into the local women's movement has succeeded in raising new issues such as domestic violence, but has also had unintended consequences that were negative.

Since independence, the number of registered organizations devoted to women's issues in Ukraine has increased considerably, reaching more than twelve hundred by 2001 (Sydorenko 2001). Organizations vary considerably in their scope and structure. Roughly three dozen women's associations explicitly seek to raise the status of women as a group. These include several research institutes, crisis centers, and organizations of women entrepreneurs or professionals. However, most women's associations focus mainly on the welfare of children and families. Many are mutual aid groups formed by mothers who received particular types of state aid, for example, earmarked for the care of disabled children or large families (Phillips 2005). Typically, such women's groups are local and grassroots. Several coalitions, some of which report memberships of several thousand, have formed.

One might expect that Western women's rights networks and democracy projects would have gladly worked with this diverse array of new women's organizations. Western donors all agree that women's organizations are vital to a healthy civil society. However, rather than funding a broad spectrum of groups, most Western programs work mainly with a small stratum that accepts the understanding of women's empowerment that Western aid agencies adopt. This form of feminism emphasizes a highly individualistic understanding of women's rights and views gender oppression as rooted in the power individual men have over women in families. However, this approach clashes with local understandings of women's activism. Local activists consider the main source of oppression in their lives to be the state and they view the family as the only site of resistance and source of support that is available to them. They consider women's activism to be an extension of the care work associated with traditional gender roles (Hrycak 2001, 2002, 2006).

Further complications arise because Western projects fail to recognize the differences between the post-Soviet institutional environments and the countries where aid providers had typically operated. Donors tended to place all countries along a simplistic traditional-modern continuum leading toward a Western system. This creates the misconception that traditionalism is the main factor inhibiting women's political

empowerment. Local activists were quick to point out that the Soviet state had eradicated most traditional barriers to women's employment and that women like themselves were encouraged to pursue education and a career. The real problems women face as citizens arise because the Soviet state destroyed civil society and imposed a draconian system of surveillance on its citizens. Decades of state control over public life had suppressed nonstate organizations and networks that might act as sites of resistance to the state. As a consequence, most institutions related to politics and public life function poorly or act as mechanisms of state control. According to one community advocate:

Foreigners never understand this society. . . . It is different both from the First and the Third World. You must start here: this is a post-Soviet society. There was no civil society here. The base for civic activities is poor here. Citizens were a danger to the Soviet state. All forms of civic life were liquidated. All people cared about was survival, about bare material necessities. You lost any feeling of belonging to a homeland. You had no real feeling of belonging even toward your home city. You stopped caring about or feeling responsible for even the most basic things, like cleaning up the trash in the streets. There were no areas of public life that people took responsibility for, no "one step at a time" as in the United States, where you start with the smaller things and build gradually until you take on the bigger things. (author's interview 2001)

Because Westerners misunderstand the institutional environment, foreign projects also underestimate the difficulties new local women's organizations face. For example, foreigners frequently encourage women activists to respond to their problems by turning for support to such entities as their community, the legal system, or NGO and human rights networks. As another advocate put it, first of all, "we don't have a 'community' [she used the English word to stress the foreignness of this concept], a community that supports and protects the person"; second, "our judicial system, and our system of nongovernmental organizations, our civil society, are just at the beginning of their existence"; and third, "networks of human rights protection, networks that protect the concrete person who has problems, still don't exist here."

Similar observations were made regarding the assumptions guiding democracy promotion projects that teach women “leadership skills.” These leadership projects were premised on the notion that deficits in training and professionalization deter women’s entry into the country’s political elite. As one former dissident informed me, the real issue is that state officials in Ukraine use their positions mainly to extort money and lack any meaningful qualifications for their positions: “For centuries, our elite was hunted down like animals. We still haven’t recovered. We still don’t have an elite.”

Aid providers tended to assume that the resistance they encountered would be overcome by exposing local activists to Western models of nonprofits that challenge “traditional” restrictions on women’s participation in politics and civil society (Hrycak 2006; Pishchikova 2006). As a consequence of this strategy, foreign women’s programs provided virtually no financial support to grassroots women’s voluntary associations, and instead, funded local NGOs that modeled themselves on Western NGOs (Abramson 1999; Hemment 2004; Henderson 2002). This funding bias created pressure to abandon local causes in favor of issues Western donors raised, encouraged the formation of a stratum of local women’s NGOs that viewed other local groups as their clients, and in turn deepened divisions among local organizations and prevented them from developing common agendas (Hrycak 2006, 2007). These negative effects were compounded in the years prior to the Orange Revolution as U.S. funding priorities shifted away from women’s rights. This sharply decreased the resources available to local women’s organization, further increasing interorganizational competition and weakening solidarity within the women’s movement as a whole.

LOCAL WOMEN’S ACTIVISM AND THE ORANGE REVOLUTION

The following sections illustrate why the beneficiaries of aid were prevented from participating actively in the Orange Revolution. I explore three organizations that aid providers and transnational advocates consider success stories: a nationwide network of women’s NGOs that works with international agencies and local legislators to increase women’s political influence, a nonprofit crisis center that works with victims of domestic violence, and a community action network that backs women candidates in local elections and lobbies local government for clean water and increased attention to family welfare. Like many other women

activists, the leaders of these organizations expressed great pride in the Orange Revolution. They viewed it as a historic moment for Ukraine, when citizens saved the country from losing its independence and falling under Russian rule again. Yet they did not attribute the Orange Revolution to Western aid or to the triumph of civil society. They felt instead that it resulted from the emergence of a middle class that saw Yushchenko and not Yanukovych as the embodiment of its values.

Nationwide Women's NGO Networks

The first site I explore is a nationwide league of women's groups founded in 1997. With a mission to protect women's rights, it conducts seminars and courses on women's leadership in close collaboration with United Nations agencies and Western democracy projects. "Nadia" directs its activities.

At the time of Ukraine's independence, Nadia was a lecturer in philosophy at Kyiv University. She became active in the early 1990s in a local women's organization that emerged from the independence movement. After participating in the NGO Forum at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, she grew dissatisfied with traditional women's activism. In 1997 she formed the league. That year she was hired to work for the United Nations on projects to advance equal opportunity in Ukraine. Nadia's work as an organizer is central to her work for the United Nations. Her league, which has partnered with her program at the United Nations and various other international agencies and Western donors, has developed new policies and programs and provides advice to Ukraine's policy makers on how to implement and assess government programs for the advancement of women. Several legislative reforms that promote women's equality in Ukraine are directly attributable to Nadia's projects, including the 2001 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, which was the first piece of legislation in post-Soviet countries to address domestic violence. Nadia was also centrally involved in an initiative that led to the passage of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in 2005, the first law in Ukraine to define gender equality and to ban gender discrimination.

Nadia, calls herself a feminist (*feministka*). Most feminists in Ukraine work in academic institutes. Nadia is one of the few self-described feminists who engages in policy development. At the time we first spoke in 2001, most foreign donors had concluded their programs were devoted to

raising awareness of women's rights. Yet Nadia did not believe that the foundations for a women's movement existed yet. First and foremost, the movement was held back by those in power who did not support gender equality or understand why it was necessary. She explained, "In our society, it is very hard for feminism to find a place, to legitimize itself." In order to build support for gender equality within political parties and interest groups, she believes that elite lobbying is more effective than popular protest:

I am convinced that the professional activity of some small number of women can exert greater influence on the consciousness of society and on legislators than the spontaneous contentious activity of even the greatest movement. Right now is not the time to expect results from even mass demonstrations. Those times have passed. Today you can achieve results in equality only through professional activity, providing evidence, organizing, dialogue, and discussion.

I asked Nadia why she adopted a professional style of activism and opposed popular protest. She responded that in a post-Soviet society such as Ukraine, where civic engagement is weak or nonexistent, protest is ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive to feminism and, more broadly, to democratization. Other feminists I met and interviewed in Ukraine shared this position. To begin to create legal support for women's rights, they argued, it is first necessary to persuade others that there is gender inequality in Ukraine. Most state officials (in particular, those who were women) did not believe that gender inequality was a significant problem. Both the broader public and state officials and legislators viewed "feminists" as irrational, emotional individuals who mistakenly blame men for their lack of personal fulfillment. To counter this "angry man-hater" stereotype, Nadia and her allies felt that it was first necessary to legitimate their cause using evidence, data, and reasoned argument.

By the time I had returned to Kyiv, what Nadia had considered unthinkable had happened: mass protests had been used to challenge a corrupt, autocratic state. I was eager to find out what she thought had changed. When asked what kinds of activism she engaged in around the time of the Orange Revolution, she identified two that were private and

relatively invisible but that had great personal significance. One was to care for the students and young people who were the initiators of the Orange Revolution and who came from all over Ukraine during the height of the protest:

I have a son who is an adult. He was very actively involved in the election campaign. All of his friends were active. They weren't just supporters of one side, they worked in the campaign headquarters, in the polling stations. Those children needed to be fed, they needed to be kept clean, and they needed a change of clothes. Students came here from other cities. They needed basic everyday things. And perhaps in this instance there was something maternal and protective on my part. And there were also civic feelings that probably under other conditions would not have been so acute.

In her other example, she carried the Orange Revolution abroad by distributing information about the political situation and "an entire suitcase full of orange ribbons" to fellow women's rights advocates at a UN conference she had attended before the revolution.

Rather than assuming a public role themselves, Nadia and other women activists participated in the Orange Revolution mainly through what Naples (1998) calls "activists mothering," showing support by performing care work for the activists who constitute the visible vanguard of a protest. For Nadia, it was more suitable to participate in the revolution as a voter, or what she called an "ordinary citizen," and as the mother of a political activist, than it was to participate as a feminist activist.

One might expect that Nadia would have spoken out publicly during the elections or the revolution. She explained that she could not adopt a public stance for reasons that were complicated and perhaps might not be easy for a U.S. citizen like me to understand. First, as the director of a UN program, she was prevented by the UN mandate of political neutrality from speaking out. Second, nationwide networks such as her league also had to struggle to remain politically neutral. The dominance of the state over civil society was so extensive that for months before the elections, state agencies concerned with women's issues had been carrying out informal orders to coerce local women's associations throughout the country to join coalitions supporting Yanukovych's candidacy. Nadia's

NGO federation, with difficulty, resisted such orders, although many of her local affiliates joined such coalitions. Broadly speaking, resisting these forms of state cooptation was providing tacit support for the Orange Revolution. However, because civil society was still largely under state control, independent organizations could not take a more public position.

Local Nonprofit Crisis Centers

Nonprofits that provide new kinds of services to women in crisis constitute a second main site within which new forms of local activism have emerged in response to Western feminism. One such organization, founded in 1994 by Vera, provides therapy for women and children who have suffered domestic abuse. Since the 1990s, when violence against women became the top priority for foreign donors, Vera's crisis center has worked with a series of international agencies (e.g., the United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM], and the UN Development Programme [UNDP]).

As was the case with Nadia, Vera and her staff participated in the Orange Revolution mainly through "activist mothering": the center provided food, clothing, and counseling to youthful protesters. In past elections, the center also carried out projects to train women candidates and educate women voters about their rights. But it did not do so during the 2004 election, because the projects it proposed failed to win foreign grants. Indeed, despite its high degree of professionalism and wide network of foreign and domestic partners, Vera's organization was already struggling to survive in 2001. This was because one foreign women's program after another had declared success and moved on, yet there were still no local sources of support for nonprofits, which were taxed as for-profit ventures.

Vera is in her late fifties. Like many Jews of her generation, she studied English to prepare for emigration. This skill helped her to win foreign grants and participate in international conferences, thus aiding her transition from industrial psychology to NGO development and allowing her to remain in Ukraine. Vera, like many other women activists who have received foreign training, embraces Western models to address new issues such as domestic violence. While she incorporates key elements of feminism into her own style of women's activism, she prefers not to use the term "feminism" to describe her work (Hrycak 2002, 2006). Hers is a

“maternalist” form of activism that emphasizes women’s distinctiveness as mothers and resembles what Karen Offen (2000) calls “relational feminism.”

Vera founded her organization in 1994 to provide humanitarian assistance such as medicine and clothing to families displaced by the Chernobyl nuclear power accident. She later shifted her center’s orientation to domestic violence after traveling abroad to visit nonprofits in North America. Her main inspiration was a battered women’s shelter in Canada that was funded by the state. Asking why the Canadian state supported this nonprofit, she was told it was both economically advantageous for the state and better for the recipients of its services. She attempted to establish such a partnership with the Ministry of Family and Youth in Ukraine, submitting a proposal using a similar rationale, but they rejected it. “They said it was a very good and important project, but told me ‘we don’t provide support to nongovernmental organizations.’” Although Ukrainian legislation encourages state agencies to partner with NGOs, in practice, Vera explained, “our state organizations are afraid that they will lose a way to make money.”

Vera views foreign funding as an absolute precondition for effective local women’s activism. In the past, before the arrival of foreign programs, women’s groups mainly distributed food or clothing. Foreign training has expanded the overall numbers of activists and their scope of activities: “There are now hundreds of activists who know concretely what they can do, either for children, or for invalids, or for women: employment assistance, humanitarian aid, the organization of schools of equal opportunities for girls.”

Yet women’s organizations have not developed further in recent years, “because in Kuchma’s state, the only organizations that were given encouragement in their development were organizations that were useful to him. Kuchma helped those organizations it considered useful to develop. But Kuchma’s state only tolerated the other organizations. As a result nothing was done to encourage these other organizations to develop.”

Vera strongly supports Yushchenko, whom she calls “Ukraine’s Gandhi.” Even though Yushchenko shares her values, state officials have not changed since his election. The state still does little to support nonprofits or encourage philanthropy. As a result, organizations like Vera’s have a great deal of trouble surviving: “There will come a day when the

government notices that the people exist, and when it does so, it will realize that the people have changed since the emergence of women's and children's rights organizations: they worked very actively and they promoted changes that became evident during the Orange Revolution." However, until that time, foreign aid must fill that institutional void. Yet foreign support for centers like hers has all but ceased. Donors have moved on, no longer interested in initiatives on behalf of the welfare of women, children, and families:

International funders made a huge mistake in 2003 when they decreased the funding for developing civic organizations. We would not have been able to make it without the International Monetary Fund. It was only by chance, through the intervention of the International Women's Club, that we were able to receive funding from the IMF. We barely survived. But most organizations don't have the professionalism that is needed to survive. It is a big mistake that international funders have stopped funding women's issues.

Vera is very frustrated with the sudden lack of interest among donors in women's rights. Donors arrived to "develop civil society" and "build a strong women's movement" in Ukraine, and now they have proclaimed success and have closed their doors. However, foreign initiatives, in her opinion, have not achieved their intended aims. They have only brought Ukraine to the threshold of understanding why civil society is needed. "But we still don't have a *political* women's movement," and "no party has developed a program regarding women's or gender issues. They don't see this as important." The only political parties that address women's issues were funded by power holders like Kuchma and operated by his friends. Such parties were "artificial, created just to serve Kuchma" and are "unlikely to continue to exist."

Vera and other local activists were able to perform important work raising awareness of domestic violence during the difficult Kuchma years because they were given support from donors. As a result of the external pressure donors created, the state came to recognize domestic violence as a problem that needs to be solved. Now that donors have moved along and dropped such issues, she is not certain that the local state will provide funding for centers like hers, even though the 2001 Law on Domestic

Violence recommends such support. Domestic violence has generated sustained interest among local women activists. Legislators accepted many of the solutions foreign donors offered. But implementation has not occurred: protective orders, battered women's shelters, and social workers trained to provide assistance all exist mainly on paper. The new Yushchenko government has not yet determined which types of civic and nongovernmental organizations will receive state funding. She hopes that her efforts to reform state programs will bear fruit, but is afraid that without the leverage and resources Western donors provided, the obstacles to implementing the law may remain insurmountable: "The previous government did a little, but the present government has not managed to do anything. My heart goes out to the children who are victims of domestic violence. The dominant values today are money and power. Yushchenko is trying to change this. So are we. Our center is working with the Ministry of Children, Family, and Youth on a strategic plan, and as you can see, protecting human rights is our top priority."

Local Community Action Networks

A third main site where Western feminism and democracy aid have shaped new forms of women's activism is local coalition structures that organize women around clean water and other examples of what Molyneux (1985) calls practical gender issues. One such community action network was founded by "Olena," a former dissident.

Olena was active in the independence movement and later founded a related women's union that embraces traditional women's issues. But she grew dissatisfied with traditional activism after receiving training from democracy programs, and in the late 1990s she established a local coalition that unites women's groups and women community leaders. Olena's coalition carried out projects to support women candidates running in local elections and conducted seminars to educate rural women about their voting rights. It also used lobbying techniques adapted from those in the United States to pressure local state officials to improve the water supply and address other practical issues of concern to women in their capacity as mothers. But her experience with foreign funding has left her disenchanted. She believes that foreign programs to develop civil society have encouraged dynamics that undermine civic organizations. She has noticed that the basis of participation in civic organizations has become self-interest rather than local values of maternalism that can become the

basis of sustainable activism: "The one value people here believe in is maternal sacrifice. They believe in the values associated with motherhood: nurturing, caring for the welfare of family members. Some people here also feel a strong sense of citizenship. But people who are in charge of civic organizations are motivated first and foremost by material self-interest. This is the Soviet mentality: 'What can I get out of this?'"

Olena contends that foreign grant programs encouraged a professionalized style of activism that has stunted the development of local organizations. Civic organizations should be open to new members. In her hometown, she said, on paper, there are roughly twelve civic organizations that work on women's issues. Some are traditional groups that once mainly distributed food and clothing to needy families and view activism as an extension of traditional gender roles. Others are professionalized NGOs that adopt a focus on gender equality and draw on feminism. However, neither type of group tries to expand public participation in organized women's activism: "They are closed. . . . In reality, they don't have any members. If they are teaching a seminar about defending your rights, they travel to a small town to conduct a seminar, but the people they work with there are not a real organization." Even the traditional women's organizations that emerged from the independence movement and once had thousands of members have suffered from this tendency. They now also limit their membership and have stopped reaching out for new members, focusing all their time on activities for which donors provide grants: "Women's organizations have become 'grant eaters.' None of the civic organizations I have seen treat citizens as genuine partners. Now what we have are many organizations with small numbers of members, whose leadership never changes and who live from grant to grant. But that is all they do, work on grants." For now, we have no basis for a genuine civil society. Except in the church.

Olena believes that it is important for civil society to be based in communities that share common values. The only community institution that has the possibility for providing support for altruism and charity is the church:

The only civic organization here is the church. People here go to church, attend mass, without any expectation of a grant. They gather money to build churches. As a parish, they are a community united by common ideals. They are not motivated by mate-

rial self-interest. This is the start of our civil society. This is where the Orange Revolution came from. I believe the church is the only civic organization that exists here right now. . . . The churches are the only channel through which people can act. I believe the people in the churches are the agents of our civil society.

Olena remains pessimistic about the ability of local women's groups as they currently exist to overcome negative tendencies that result from their orientation toward foreign grants. She finds that the behavior of women's organizations during the election provided a good illustration of these negative tendencies. The 2004 election was one of the first that provided women outside a narrow elite with opportunities for participating in politics. The broader public finally believed that something significant was at stake. They rushed to join political parties and volunteer as election observers. However, this dramatic increase in public involvement "was not accomplished through civic organizations or even parties," because most civic organizations still work mainly on activities for which they received grants. For instance, she notes wryly, her consortium received a grant to issue a pamphlet explaining voters' rights. She knows that this project had little impact and reached very few people.

CONCLUSION

As the first major episode of protest in Ukraine since Soviet rule, the Orange Revolution constituted a turning point in this country's democratization. The revolution showed that beliefs that are fundamental to democratization are taking root—beliefs that citizens can resist coercion to participate meaningfully in politics and, in particular, that voters (not incumbents) should decide the results of elections. Assessments of the Orange Revolution credited local NGOs and NGO networks that were funded by Western donors for this breakthrough. Like most analyses of post-Soviet democratic transitions, such explanations overstate the achievements of foreign-funded projects. A focus on women's activism provides a corrective to such "top-down" analyses and offers a better and more complete understanding of the ongoing problems such democratic breakthroughs leave unresolved for women both as activists and as "ordinary citizens."

Women's organizations—civic groups that raise issues of concern to

women—have proliferated in recent years in Ukraine and have received significant attention from Western democracy programs. This sector of civil society offers a valuable vantage point for examining the development of civic associations and the role they played in the years leading up to the Orange Revolution. Following the development of new forms of women's activism in several key organizational sites, we see that democracy assistance projects have left an ambiguous legacy. They mainly operated according to a logic of exposure to Western models: providing local women with opportunities to observe Western women's activism. Exposure led domestic activists to reject local traditional women's activism and adapt transnational feminist strategies to create localized forms of women's activism that address new issues such as gender inequality, domestic violence, and women's political empowerment. However, both traditional women's organizations and these new feminist-inspired groups are now struggling to survive. Long before transnational campaigns have had their desired effect, donors have deserted the women's movement in Ukraine. They are unlikely to return, as the Orange Revolution reinforced donors' claims that they had succeeded in strengthening the autonomy and capacity of women's NGOs in this country.

Some activists such as Nadia and Vera contend that participation in foreign programs to develop NGOs helped many groups get off to a good start. They do not think that either a strong women's movement or a healthy civil society exists in Ukraine, but they believe that women's groups that operate outside conventional political structures with donor support helped in small ways to pave the way for the Orange Revolution and for later women's activism. Others such as Olena, however, question whether the professionalized type of civic organizations and the competitive dynamics fostered by foreign programs contributed to the Orange Revolution. As these three activists' careers show, foreign assistance programs, and "civil society" programs in particular, have launched promising new groups but have provided virtually no support for their institutionalization. Ongoing resources and support are vital if these new styles of women's activism are to continue to have a political impact.

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