Introduction

What and Whose Reform? Civil Society and Serbia's Endless Transition

After the decade-long authoritarian rule of Slobodan Milošević had ended in 2000, the notion of 'reform' has become the buzzword of Serbian politics and domestic and foreign representations of the country. It is closely associated with so-called 'pro-European' politics and policies, which reflects the conditioning of Serbia's integration into the European Union (EU) by a myriad of reforms. The scope of the term is extremely broad. Politicians periodically promise or claim to be already delivering reforms of just about everything, echoing the calls of various experts, the EU and other international institutions. A vast majority of citizens, too, agreed in a 2011 survey that the reforms required by the EU should be carried out to create a 'better Serbia for ourselves' rather than just for the Union's sake (SEIO 2011: 5). That such reforms were something desirable, even inevitable, seemed taken for granted. And yet, during my doctoral fieldwork in 2010–11, I encountered a great deal of dissatisfaction with the achievements of the uncountable reforms. The general consensus was that poverty was pervasive, 'corruption' rampant, politicians unaccountable and public institutions ineffective. Serbians from all walks of life felt that their country was 'at the bottom', full of 'misery and sorrow' and in a state of 'ruin'. What sense can we make of this seeming paradox? How much reform was actually there, and of what scope, depth and kind?

Instead of assessing the successes and failures of reforms as if their benevolent purpose was self-evident, this book treats the very discourse and practice of reform as objects of analysis. It takes an ethnographically grounded and critical perspective on a set of internationally sponsored interventions that sought to transform the government of society and individuals in post-Milošević Serbia. By interrogating official rationales and attending to the regions of human experience ignored by much relevant scholarship and official documents,[1] it seeks to develop a richer understanding of the logic, unfolding and outcomes of reforms. Some of the discussed interven-

tions have remained visions or small-scale experiments rather than deep and extensive transformations. They were concerned with institutions at different levels: from the nation-state in the case of EU integration (Chapter 2) to local government in the case of 'public advocacy' (Chapter 7). With their varying scope and focus, these interventions offer complementary windows on broader social, political and economic transformations in Serbia in the early 2010s.

The double emic meaning of reform itself supports such extrapolations. Politicians, experts and the media often use the term to denote changes to specific institutions. But they also talk about *reforme* (always in plural) in a far more general sense of progress towards what is commonly described, vaguely but suggestively, as a 'modern' and 'normal' country (Greenberg 2011; Mikuš and Dokić 2016). The dominant image of that country includes Western European levels of prosperity, liberal democracy, developed market economy and EU membership – parameters presented as intimately related or only attainable in a single package. This totalizing meaning of reforms is practically synonymous with that of 'transition' (*tranzicija*), another common colloquialism with roots in the jargon of international, mainly Western experts. Together with their local counterparts and policy-makers, they made it the dominant, rarely challenged framing of transformations after Milošević.[2] Of course, the narrative of transition was prominent in the entire postsocialist Eastern Europe. It assumes a quick, smooth and managed passage from socialism to idealized representations of Western liberal democracy and capitalism. The language of reform(s) therefore contains an inbuilt slippage between two levels of abstraction: the one of the all-encompassing transition and the other of particular interventions conceived as its subprocesses. Accordingly, the study of specific reforms is a way of opening up the black box of transition.

The interventions discussed below also allow for generalizations because they do not make up an accidental collection. What they have in common is the involvement of so-called 'civil society'. In its dominant native sense in Serbia, civil society refers to the sector of liberal and pro-Western nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are nominally separate from the state, party politics and business. Similarly to transition, this view of civil society is an idealized feature of Western modernity believed to be recent, scarce and fragile in Serbia. In recent decades, variants of this discourse became dominant in postsocialist Eastern Europe and other parts of the world. It presented NGOs as vanguards of transitions from socialism to capitalism or from illiberal regimes to liberal democracy. They were expected to play central roles in the construction of democratic polities, modern and efficient states, and open and cohesive societies. And, indeed, the

NGO workers who I worked with had a different relation to reforms than most citizens. While agreeing with the general consensus that reforms had largely failed to deliver, NGO workers were more likely to also highlight successes, analyse causes and results closely, call for specific further interventions and, most importantly, be involved. Looking at the intersections of civil society with reforms from a viewpoint a decade after Milošević, I am asking which agendas have been pursued in its name, to what effects and in whose interests.

Revisiting Civil Society and Postsocialism in Times of Crisis

The questions posed by *Frontiers of Civil Society* engage anthropological scholarship on the contemporary discourses and practices of civil society. Important contributions in the 1990s and early 2000s were generally highly critical of its dominant Eurocentric and evolutionist view. They showed how it often justified support for bureaucratic, professionalized and project-oriented organizations that channelled foreign donors' agendas instead of addressing local concerns, and as such could hardly stand up to their grand task of social progress. This book builds on these arguments and demonstrates their ongoing relevance in the contemporary Serbian context. Yet it also argues that there are at least two good reasons why we should not accept them uncritically as anthropology's last word on the subject.

The first is historical. I am writing this book in 2016–17 on the basis of my 2010–11 fieldwork, but with an awareness of developments that have since taken place in Serbia and Eastern Europe more broadly – informed by my ongoing interest in Serbia, a new research project in Croatia, and a recent spell of working and living in my native Slovakia. This perspective, which spills over the temporal and spatial confines of the fieldwork, attempts to balance a sense of long-term path dependencies with attention to the complexities of present conjunctures. Serbian and Eastern European contexts of the early to mid 2010s call for a revisiting of the established anthropological knowledge about civil society and transition in the region. On the one hand, the political economy of the NGO sector has changed such as to push it towards new, mutually complementary/contradictory strategies: an increasing orientation to the state (Chapters 2 and 4) and attempts to 'indigenize' this kind of civil society by embedding it in the national society (Chapter 6). On the other hand, after the 2008 global financial crisis, countries in this region experienced particularly severe and protracted economic crises of their own. This broader

setting inspired Igor Štiks and Srećko Horvat (2015: 1) to ask whether the narrative of the 'seemingly endless transition' had not been exhausted to the point where it could be finally buried. Their argument emphasizes the ideological bankruptcy of transition and the rise of a new radical left in former Yugoslavia. Indeed, while I will show that the time in which my fieldwork was undertaken was the peak of 'Europeanization' in Serbia, most of Eastern Europe has recently seen a rapid unravelling of the liberal 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1992) and a surge of illiberal and 'anti-systemic' politics. From Poland to Bulgaria, not to mention Russia, the key tenets of the apparent liberal consensus came under attack: pro-EU and Western loyalties, the 'rule of law', human and minority rights (Kalb and Halmai 2011). Popular mobilizations have become more common and more radical, including in some post-Yugoslav countries. Despite the official assurances that economies are again 'growing', many 'ordinary people' feel that the prosperity promised by the transition narrative is now permanently out of their reach. Whether this really means that transition is dead is a question that this book asks for the case of Serbia. As a specific focus within this consideration, it takes stock of how the current dynamics brings about new tendencies or renews old ones, each of which challenge the anthropological stereotype of NGO-ized civil society: the experiments with indigenization (Chapter 6); the orientation to political rather than technocratic agendas (Chapter 7); and the resurgence of more radical mobilizations (Epilogue).

Building on these historical points, I also seek to contribute to the anthropological theory of civil society. Anthropologists tend to regard the concept with deep suspicion, and not for a lack of good reasons: its promiscuity and vagueness; Eurocentrism; triumphalist liberalism; conflation of the normative and the empirical; the frequent reduction of its content to NGOs in practice; and association with the rather different registers of practitioners and political scientists. They see civil society as either an irrevocably ideological idea, which might be an object of analysis but never its tool, or as a concept that is a property of other disciplines with which we should have as little business as possible. I have received many hints that the contamination of my writing with civil society has made it unanthropological and that the quality of my fieldwork must have been compromised by my involvement with NGOs – detached from the wider society, depoliticized, boring and irrelevant as they were. There have also been more explicit suggestions that I should not give a semblance of scholarly status to civil society and that I should always use it in quotation marks. Many anthropologists further believe that civil society might have been a hype of the 1990s, but is now completely *démodé.*

I believe that these views are largely based on stereotypes. To start with the last, probably least substantial point, the fact that civil society is no longer peddled as a paradigm change in political philosophy or panacea in development practice does not mean that it has gone away. Far from it – it has become normalized and is set to stay. A search in Scopus, 'the world's largest abstract and citation database', reveals that the number of documents with the phrase 'civil society' continued to grow steadily from practically zero per year in the late 1980s to more than 1,500 in 2012, only after which it declined slightly. The growth was particularly fast in the 2000s.

The discourse of civil society is not only alive and well but also more dynamic and self-reflexive than anthropologists often imagine. For instance, the introduction to the tenth *Global Civil Society* yearbook, which epitomizes the mainstream perspective on the subject, claims that the meaning of (a global) civil society has shifted from parochial Eurocentrism and emphasis on international NGOs towards more culturally varied ideas that encompass a broader range of political practices (Anheier, Kaldor and Glasius 2012). Elissa Helms (2014) recently turned the conventional argument about the NGO-ization and depoliticization of social movements on its head, arguing that in Bosnia and Herzegovina one can rather observe a 'movementization' of feminist NGOs. In international development, too, there is a growing recognition that 'NGOs constitute only one part of civil society' (Banks and Hulme 2012: 5). Anthropologists certainly need to continue to problematize what civil society in these contexts means. However, our disregard for the idea as such might prevent us from appreciating all the claims, strategies and connections that it enables, and those that it could enable.

In addition to its practical relevance, I contend that civil society may be a useful concept of anthropological enquiry. By ignoring its potential, anthropologists risk excluding themselves from the ongoing conversation and reinforcing the impression that civil society may be only evoked in ways that they oppose. The main theoretical objective of this book is to rethink civil society in a way that incorporates the anthropological critiques while also helping to address some of the gaps in the anthropology of postsocialist transformation. I rush to stress that I am aware of the longstanding doubts about the continued relevance and usefulness of the category 'postsocialist' for anthropological analysis (Buyandelgeriyn 2008; Humphrey 2002; Sampson 2002a). Nor do I believe that Serbia should be forever, and primarily, considered as postsocialist. Yet postsocialism does remain a pertinent concept in a context in which transition lives on as an unfinished business. The continued interconnections between postsocialist states, especially their peripheral integration into the European and global political economy, also

caution against dropping the concept from our vocabularies just because people no longer mention socialism very often and the sped-up cycle of academic fads pushes towards new buzzwords.

The abundant anthropological literature on postsocialism challenged the simplistic and voluntaristic narrative of transition by documenting diverse, uneven and often unintended national and local transformations, as well as the adaptation of socialist concepts, institutions and practices to new contexts (Bridger and Pine 1998; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Buyandelgeriyn 2008; Hann 2002b; Makovicky 2014b; Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Thelen 2011; West and Raman 2009). Anthropologists also developed a powerful critique of the teleological underpinnings of transition – its grounding in a pregiven end-point that served as the exclusive standard for assessing actually existing changes. However, this work left some issues underdeveloped. Initially, there was a lack of interest in the transformation of the state (Hann 2002a: 5). Often, '[t]he notion of state withdrawal . . . was adopted without question despite its one-dimensionality' (Thelen 2011: 50). In recent decades, the anthropology of the state in general has been dominated by poststructuralist and phenomenological approaches, which led to a focus on the cultural and discursive construction of the state and micro-level 'encounters' with it (Sharma and Gupta 2006; see also Gupta 2012; Trouillot 2001). In its rush to deconstruct the state as a monolithic entity, the discipline became averse to its systemic and materialist consideration, now close to a positivist anachronism, and the issue of integration of distinct state agencies was approached only as an ideological 'state effect' (Mitchell 1999). In the anthropology of postsocialism specifically, poststructuralist frameworks resulted in engagements with the state – limited as they were – mostly in relation to subjectivity, representation, morality and so forth (Phillips 2005; Ssorin-Chaikov 2003). These studies had less to say about changing forms and functions of actual state apparatuses and their interrelationships with wider social transformations. More recently, Stephen Collier (2011) examined reforms of specific state functions in post-Soviet Russia, but his focus was overwhelmingly on models and intentions rather than practices and outcomes in a context of broader social struggles.

Robert M. Hayden, Jessica Greenberg and Stef Jansen have corrected some of these inadequacies in their work on post-Yugoslav states. Hayden (1992, 1999, 2013), whose perspective reflects his dual anthropological and legal training, offered refreshingly critical dissections of the constitutional and legal changes in post-Yugoslav states and their links to foreign interventions. While Greenberg and Jansen tended to adopt the usual anthropological focus on the experiences and discourses of the state, they also drew connections with

transformations in the international status of post-Yugoslav states (Greenberg 2011; Jansen 2009a). In addition, Jansen (2009b, 2014a, 2015) has become increasingly interested in the materiality of the state as reflected in infrastructures or housing. His recent monograph makes important advances in the anthropological analysis of the social implications of the key properties of the post-Dayton Agreement state in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as limited sovereignty, fragmentation and ethnocratic and particratic state capture (Jansen 2015).

While I share Jansen's concern with an ethnographic grounding of these and similar abstractions in everyday popular discourses and interactions with the state, I focus more closely than he does on reforms of specific state apparatuses. And while I take on board the anthropological deconstruction and enculturation of the state, I suggest that anthropology needs to do more to account for its relationships with changing social formations. To do so, and to compensate for the relative silence of anthropologists of postsocialism on class (cf. Kalb 2009a, 2009b, 2014; Kalb and Halmai 2011; Kideckel 2002, 2007), I will seek to capture the articulations of class relations with the competing hegemonic projects while also bringing into focus other intersecting social distinctions and relations of inequality, such as gender, generation or disability. Further, I agree with Don Kalb (2002: 323) that the anthropology of postsocialism was more successful in documenting 'paths through time', or how prior conditions shaped postsocialist everyday life and emergent futures, than 'paths through space' – the 'spatial inter-linkages and social relationships that define territories and communities'. My argument therefore lifts Serbia from its supposed exceptionalism and, through a focus on international interventions, European integration and new kinds of links within postsocialist Europe, puts it in its place in webs of wider spatial relations.

In what follows, I propose to reconsider civil society in a manner that incorporates the anthropological critiques of its dominant contemporary model while situating the latter within a broader analytical concept of civil society as a field of practices that generate, reproduce and transform the distinctions and relations of the state, society and economy/market. Such an idea of civil society provides a dynamic and relational bridge between these frequently reified domains as well as between governmental 'reforms' and far-reaching transformations of social relations ('transition'). Reconstituted along these lines, civil society is the conceptual tool that I use to address the guiding question from the title of this chapter: What and whose reform was there in Serbia in the early 2010s? The first part of the question enquires about the stated and implicit objectives of reform(s) in their double emic sense,

the forms of rationality on which they were based, and the scope, depth and particular forms of their actualization. The second part asks who controlled the reforms and who was subjected to them, whose interests they served and whose they undermined. Bringing these analytical themes together, this book develops what I will define as a 'historical anthropological' perspective on the temporal and spatial dynamics, political rationality, social purpose and actual achievements of Serbian reforms in their complex relationship with civil society.

Civil Society Mainstream and Anthropological Critique

I do not aim to provide a comprehensive review of the intellectual history of civil society – a task performed with admirable erudition by others (Chandhoke 1995; Cohen and Arato 1994; Wagner 2006). My much more modest intention is to point out the main issues with the contemporary dominant idea of civil society and to formulate an alternative approach that serves my objectives better. I find it useful to distinguish, undoubtedly with some simplification, two classical traditions of thinking about civil society: the liberal tradition and the line of Hegel–Marx–Gramsci, which might be called 'radical' (Lewis 2004: 303). While the contemporary discourse of civil society combines various theoretical traditions, there can be little doubt that its mainstream is largely a reworking of classical liberal concepts.

The modern concept of civil society has been shaped by the consolidation of capitalism, the rise of the absolutist state and the liberal problematic of limiting its power. It was liberal political economists and moral philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, who started to elaborate the distinction between the state and civil society. They understood civil society, which they identified with the capitalist Western societies of their time, as the most advanced stage of the natural evolution of society and its economic organization in particular. Its attributes were a complex division of labour, free competition, peaceable interaction and the 'rule of law', all of which were seen as the aggregate outcomes of the actions of individuals governed by the 'laws' of self-interest and competition. An emphasis on the autonomy of the market and the natural liberty of the individual engendered the desirability of limiting government intervention.[3]

Nineteenth-century liberals, such as John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville, introduced the focus on associations as the principal actors of civil society, thus distinguishing it more clearly from the market. Comparing American democracy to the despotism of

the postrevolutionary French state, de Tocqueville famously argued that American associations kept state power in check and served as schools of democratic participation. Moreover, he resolved the potential conflict between the liberal concern with the freedom of the individual and civil society's need for activism by basing associations on the principle of free will (Chandhoke 1995: 107–12; Terrier and Wagner 2006: 21–23). To sum up, this classical liberal idea of civil society is: individualist, in being concerned with the relations of individuals rather than social groups; normative, in assuming the capitalist and liberal-democratic social order as natural and benevolent; and positivist, in modelling civil society as a kind of natural realm that functioned and evolved according to its general laws.

The idea of civil society fell into near-oblivion in the twentieth century. However, it has returned as a kind of master concept for interpreting various 'bottom-up' political processes since the 1960s: feminist, student, pacifist and environmentalist movements in the West; dissent in Eastern Europe; and prodemocracy mobilizations, especially in Latin America and South Asia (Mercer 2002). Most relevantly for my focus, Western and Eastern European intellectuals interpreted the rise of dissident publics and movements in socialist Eastern Europe in the 1980s as a rebirth of 'civil society', which would be subsequently celebrated as the crucial factor in the overthrow of communist regimes.[4] While the discourse and practice of civil society in this period is usually associated with countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland (the region later rebranded as 'Central and Eastern' or 'East-Central Europe'), similar processes were under way in Yugoslavia, too. In the next chapter, I sketch this less-known part of the genealogy of the term and the subsequent narrowing of its initially relatively open meaning.

Despite their variations, late socialist perspectives on civil society shared the dichotomous 'viewpoint of civil society against the state' (Arato 1981: 24).[5] They posited civil society as inherently good, the sphere of freedom, autonomy and civic self-government, and the socialist state as bad, always scheming to repress civil society and advance its totalitarian designs. This normative dichotomy set the scene for the practice of 'civil society building' after socialism. The latter was an apparently technical item on the agenda of various international organizations working in the region, paralleled by similar programmes in other settings of political and economic 'transition'. Anthropologists demasked these interventions as a Eurocentric and evolutionist export of idealized Western models of civil society to societies with their own traditions of association, public sphere and moral community (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999a; Hann and Dunn 1996). Civil society became something that appropriate technical interventions could, and should,

'build' or 'strengthen' wherever it was deemed to be absent or immature (Blair 1997; Howell and Pearce 2000). Quantifiable characteristics of NGOs in a given country were now taken as the indicator of the level of development of its civil society (Fisher 1998; Fukuyama 2001). At the same time, the immense variation between actually existing organizations in terms of capacity, constituency, mission, politics or relationship to the state was poorly understood.

The model of civil society thus reproduced was clearly some way from the classical liberal concept. However, the continuities are obvious. The dominant contemporary discourse could be described as a neoliberal instrumentalization of the classical liberals, especially de Tocqueville. It equates civil society to (nominally) nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, and characterizes it as a plural, tolerant and self-organized public that is autonomous from the state or, particularly in undemocratic settings, even 'opposed' to it (Diamond 1994; Harbeson, Rothchild and Chazan 1994). A strong civil society was defined as the virtuous counterpart of the liberal-democratic state that supports its accountability and shelters individual liberty and rights from its excessive intrusion (Baker 1999). Political scientists and practitioners emphasized the importance of civil society for democratization in postsocialist and postauthoritarian settings (Brown 2006; Li 2007: 236; Linz and Stepan 1996; cf. Mercer 2002). It would provide an open and bottom-up platform for citizens to organize around their common interests and values. It would increase the responsiveness, accountability and transparency of the state by activities such as monitoring, interest representation and civic participation in decision-making. Robert D. Putnam's (1993, 2000) work on 'social capital', which proved extremely influential with policymakers and development professionals, connected the strength of civic associations in a given society to its levels of interpersonal trust, viability of institutions, rule of law and, ultimately, economic development. The world of international development further discovered NGOs as a superior alternative – more flexible, grassroots and efficient – to the compromised statist development. An unprecedented amount of resources was channelled to NGOs to provide health, welfare, education and other services instead of states hollowed out by neoliberal restructuring.[6] NGOs were expected to reduce poverty by running microcredit, food-for-work and other economic development schemes.[7] Even political and emancipatory agendas, such as subaltern 'empowerment' or gender equality, became resignified as within the remit of standard NGO practice.[8]

Substantial anthropological scholarship documented how civil society building in postsocialist countries resulted in the rise of

donor-driven NGO sectors (Hemment 2007; Mandel 2002; Wedel 2001: 85–122). Conditions for participating in what Steven Sampson (2002b) dubbed 'project society' and accessing its resources favoured well-connected elite and middle-class individuals who lived in big cities and possessed the required forms of social and cultural capital (Kalb 2002). Civil society building in Serbia and the rest of the post-socialist Balkans unfolded along these broad lines (Sampson 1996, 2002b, 2004; Stubbs 1996, 2001, 2007a, 2007b; Vetta 2009, 2012, 2013). The resulting NGO sectors were one of the main channels through which countries like Serbia became the target of one-size-fits-all development agendas, even though they were quite different from so-called 'developing' countries. At times, NGOs also played significant political roles. Particularly important and publicly visible was their involvement in the wave of so-called 'electoral revolutions' that ended several postcommunist authoritarian or hybrid regimes, including the 2000 'October Revolution' in Serbia.[9] In the aftermath of such regime changes, donor-driven civil society blossomed and, relying on its generous foreign support and reputation for reformism and cutting-edge expertise, lubricated the unblocked wheels of transition. Working with or even joining the new governments, these actors supported, participated and often laid down the basic parameters of the dominant model of transition to liberal democracy and internationalized free-market capitalism (Anguelova-Lavergne 2012).

The Frontiers of Civil Society

The anthropological scrutiny of civil society building enabled a much-needed questioning of the common assumptions about virtuous relationships between civil society (aka NGO sectors), democracy and development. It challenged the simplistic view of civil society, the state and the market as separate and clearly distinguished institutional 'sectors' by documenting the circulation of personnel and emergence of hybrid organizational forms (Ferguson 2004; Mandel 2002; Vetta 2012; Wedel 2011: 85–112). This book stands in the line of this scholarship and much of what it does is developing, qualifying and updating its core findings. However, it goes beyond what has sometimes been a purely negative critique to point towards the possibility of reclaiming civil society as a concept of social analysis and political practice. Anthropologists seemed to have been led by their findings to treat civil society merely as a native, normative and ideological concept that obscures more complex and ambiguous practices. As such, it was to be deconstructed, not reconstructed. Another liabil-

ity for the concept was its oft-noted 'polyvalence, incoherence and promiscuity [that] may leave its status as an *analytical* concept fatally compromised' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999b: 8, emphasis in original). Such a promiscuity reflects not only the fuzzy and diverse ways in which it was recently reinvented but also its complex genealogy in political philosophy. Finally, the apparently exclusively Western provenance of the idea – an assumption itself in need of questioning – clashed with the relativism and anti-Eurocentrism of anthropology.

This last issue has framed most of the more visible attempts by anthropologists to directly engage with the concept theoretically (Coombe 1997; Jung 2012: 23; Rutherford 2004: 127–28). Chris Hann (1996) argued that the obvious agenda for anthropologists was to particularize the Western notion of civil society and trace its transformations when exported to non-Western settings. He advocated a middle path between universalism and relativism that would acknowledge the global spread of Western models without assuming either that they completely displaced non-Western meanings and practices or that the latter were necessarily radically different (Hann 1996: 17–22). John L. and Jean Comaroff (1999: 4) similarly attacked the 'neomodern myth' that locates the origins of civil society exclusively in the West. They further stressed how the 'Eurocentric tendency to limit civil society to a narrowly defined institutional arena' excluded many African counterparts to the Western idea of civil society, for example, kinship with public functions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 22; see also Karlström 1999; Lewis 2002, 2004). They concluded that civil society was an aspirational idea and 'placeholder' rather than 'analytical construct', and in effect replaced it with a battery of other, presumably more robust concepts, such as 'publics', 'modes of association', 'media of expression', 'moral community' and 'politics' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 33). Hann (1996: 20) proposed a different alternative – an inclusive idea of civil society that would refer 'more loosely to the moral community, to the problems of accountability, trust and cooperation that all groups face'. A number of anthropological studies followed these relativizing guidelines and extended the term 'civil society' to a range of non-Western analogues, including, for example, Mormon community life (Dunn 1996), reformist Islam in Niger (Masquelier 1999), traditions of interconfessional tolerance in Poland and Bosnia (Hann 2003) or community reconstruction initiatives in post-disaster Taiwan (Jung 2012). In some cases, anthropologists showed how local actors themselves appropriated the emblem of 'civility' for practices unlikely to be recognized as such according to the dominant liberal model, such as state veneration rituals in Turkey (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 117–54), government-run volunteering programmes in

Putin's Russia (Hemment 2009: 45) or party-sponsored right-wing activism in Hungary (Halmai 2011).

However, this position is not flawless. The Comaroffs essentially conclude that civil society is beyond hope as an instrument of social analysis. Bojan Bilić (2011), who has studied post-Yugoslav peace activism, also dismissed it as a 'concept that means everything and nothing' and praised the 'social movements' paradigm as the superior alternative. While the concerns are legitimate, the suggested solution has real costs – the particular analytical links of the concept of civil society are lost. Its ghettoization is, to some extent, arbitrary. Many key concepts of social enquiry, including those that the Comaroffs or Bilić perceive as less problematic, suffer from similar indeterminacies and yet are far from being abandoned by social scientists. Hann's (1996) approach poses a different issue – it effectively expands the idea of civil society, already seen as promiscuous, to the even broader issues of social cohesion and moral community. It is also worth noting that the concern about the Eurocentrism of civil society has its limits in the Eastern European context with its own traditions of civil society thought, which I discuss more extensively in the next chapter.

A more substantial anthropological literature – though still quite marginal in the wider discipline – focuses on 'NGOs' or, less commonly, 'third sector' rather than civil society (Bernal and Grewal 2014b; Bornstein 2003; Fisher 1997; Hemment 2007; Leve and Karim 2001; Mertz and Timmer 2010; Sharma 2006; Schuller 2009, 2012). If these works mention civil society at all, then it is typically only as an ideological signifier that framed and legitimated the promotion of NGO sectors (Elyachar 2005; Ferguson 2004; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Green 2012; Hemment 2007). However, the drawbacks of this conceptual choice might easily outweigh its benefits. While the rich referentiality and productive tensions of civil society are lost, the NGO concept does not compensate for this by introducing greater clarity. In fact, it suffers from many of the same problems associated with civil society. Already William F. Fisher (1997: 447) described in his landmark review article both the NGO sector and civil society as 'black box' categories that obscure a 'tremendous diversity' of organizations. More recently, Victoria Bernal and Inderpal Grewal (2014a: 7) argued that the very residual character of the term (its definition by something that it is not, i.e. as 'non-state') makes it sufficiently flexible to encompass all kinds of organizations. However, this analysis is only partly applicable to the Serbian terms for 'nongovernmental organization' (*nevladina organizacija*) or 'NGO' (*NVO*). While they do efface differences between various organizations, their meaning is actually much narrower than Bernal and Grewal assume. It is largely co-extensive with the emic category of

'civil society' (*građansko/civilno društvo*)[10] that, as already noted, usually refers to particular kind of postsocialist, project-oriented and professionalized NGO. In other words, 'NGO' is in Serbia no more neutral and inclusive a category than 'civil society'. In addition, the concept implicitly focuses attention on formal organizations at the expense of informal relations and processes that extend beyond their boundaries and yet arguably also make up civil society.

I turn to the work of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist best known for the notes he wrote as Mussolini's political prisoner in 1926–37, to develop an alternative concept of civil society for the purposes of my analysis. Unlike today's civil society builders, Gramsci (1971) did not formulate prescriptive models to be replicated around the world. And unlike liberal thinkers, he did not start from a legal, formal, functional or normative definition of civil society and its boundaries with other domains of the sociopolitical order. Instead, creatively reworking Hegel's and Marx's ideas, he developed a relational, constructivist and historically and geographically sensitive concept of civil society embedded in his analyses of social domination and class relations in modern Italy.[11] He distinguished:

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

This passage associates civil society with 'hegemony', defined elsewhere as rule by 'consent' and political, intellectual and moral 'leadership', and the state with 'direct domination' – rule by 'coercion'. Other notes, however, seem to include civil society in the state (Gramsci 1971: 261) and the production of hegemony among the functions of the state (Gramsci 1971: 244). The key to this paradox is Gramsci's (1971: 56, 257–63, 267) distinction between the state in a narrow sense, i.e. the government, coercive apparatuses etc., and the 'integral state' – the total political organization of a society, which also includes the 'organisms commonly called "private"', such as associations, political parties, trade unions or churches. The distinctions of the state/civil society and hegemony/coercion are therefore methodological. Rather than 'two bounded universes, always and for ever separate', the state and civil society are to be seen as a 'knot of tangled power relations which, depending on the questions we are interested in, can be disentangled into different assemblages of threads' (Crehan 2002: 103). In addition, Gramsci (1971: 208–9) oscillates between seeing civil society

as part of the 'superstructure' and as a 'mode of economic behaviour'. Civil society should therefore be understood relationally: as mechanisms and practices that mediate between, and thereby reconstitute, the structures of the economy and the superstructures of ideology and the state. It is not a 'sector' naturally and clearly distinct from the state and the economy, but the field of practices that generate, reproduce and transform those distinctions.

This further implies that civil society plays an ambivalent role in reproducing domination – it is a space where hegemony is continually re-enacted, but also one where subaltern classes may launch a counterhegemonic strategy. For Gramsci (1971: 52), the form of the state was a reflection of the resources and will to power of the 'ruling' classes. But he did not consider their 'historical unity . . . realised in the State' as unproblematic – it is a political and juridical challenge and an issue of hegemony to be won in civil society. Achieving hegemony entails surmounting the challenge of building a sufficiently broad coalition of social forces ('power bloc'), in which antagonisms are provisionally neutralized through the articulation of a single hegemonic worldview ('common sense') and narratives of 'common interest'. As William Roseberry (1994: 361) underscored, hegemony is to be seen as a project (process) rather than an achievement (condition), and what it constructs is 'not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterised by domination'. Such an understanding is particularly acutely present in Sangeeta Kamat's (2002) Gramscian analysis of the 'NGO-ization of grassroots politics' in India. Kamat performs the familiar dissection of the ways in which development discourse constitutes 'civil society' as nonpolitical, which echoes the typical anthropological critique of development (Ferguson 1990; Li 2007). But situating grassroots NGOs in a civil society reconceptualized as a dynamic field of hegemonic struggles ultimately enables her to offer a more nuanced and dialectical account of their relationship to development hegemony and leftist politics.

I would like to visualize the Gramscian idea of civil society as delineated by multiple 'frontiers'. In contemporary English, the word 'frontier' is rarely used to describe a simple 'border' between two countries. Rather, it is used in one of its more specific meanings listed by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary: 'a region that forms the margin of settled or developed territory', 'the farthermost limits of knowledge or achievement in a particular subject' or 'a new field of exploitative or development activity'. 'Frontier' is an unsettled, shifting kind of border that moves along with the advance of some kind of human activity, such as agriculture, capitalism or science. It has also military

connotations arising from its etymological connection with 'front' – 'a line of battle', 'a zone of conflict between armies'.

The metaphor of 'frontier' has something useful to tell us about the dynamic, contested and porous boundaries of civil society with the state, the economy and wider society. These are continually reproduced and subverted through a variety of representations and practices, including network-like, 'informal' relations that extend across formal institutions and organizational domains – which is why I combine the hegemony perspective with a focus on relationships, practices and trajectories of individuals, taking inspiration from the 'actor-oriented' approach to development (Long 2001; Mosse 2005a; Mosse and Lewis 2005, 2006). This book shows that a major concern of the Serbian NGO sector was problematizing and modifying its own frontiers with other 'sectors'. This includes the advocacy for reforms of the ways in which the state funds and cooperates with 'civil society' (Part III), as well as efforts to embed the latter more closely in the economy and wider society at both the national and the local scale (Part IV). But the state also attempted to transform its relations with civil society, for instance by promoting state–civil society 'partnerships' and transferring some of its welfare roles to NGOs. These are often two-way processes: similarly to armed conflicts, there is an agreement over the momentary line of battle, but the particular stakes of its movement – and of the war itself – may differ according to the perspective taken. And while one of the parties often takes the initiative and attacks the frontier, this does not mean that the enemy is defenceless and unable to make incursions into its territory in response.

The contestations over frontiers were themselves embedded in broader hegemonic struggles in post-Milošević Serbia. My key empirical argument about the liberal NGO sector is that it was enrolled in a hegemonic project of transnational integration and neoliberalization, which was the actual social content of 'transition'. The 'project society' and other actors reproduced the hegemony of this project by representing it as being in the society's 'common interest' and the only possible route to modernization. In this context, the figure of the frontier also expresses the developmentalist and evolutionary underpinnings of the ideologies of 'Europeanization' and transition. Going beyond this, the NGO-ized civil society is itself part of a civil society understood analytically as a field of hegemonic struggles. Defining civil society in ways that exclude particular actors is itself a 'fundamental hegemonic operation' that sets limits on what may be recognized as such and what kinds of struggles it may accommodate (Miorelli 2008: 20; Munck 2002: 357). Accordingly, but without pretending to being exhaustive, I will contrast the liberal civil society to two other forms of civil society that

the former excludes and that pursue different counterhegemonic and subhegemonic projects. I call them nationalist civil society and post-Yugoslav civil society, respectively.[12] The idea of the frontier will help me transpose Gramsci's (1971: 106–14, 206–7, 229–39) military distinction between different modes of contesting and maintaining hegemony – 'war of manoeuvre' and 'war of position', respectively – into my own analysis of the strategies of these three 'civil societies' vis-à-vis each other and the state. In sum, then, I talk about three interrelated kinds of frontiers: first, the boundaries of civil society with the state, economy and wider society; second, the boundaries between the different kinds of civil society and their power projects; and, third, the temporal logic of the hegemonic ideology of transition.

Reforms, Governmentality and Hegemony

Gramscian ideas about civil society and hegemony also inform my thinking about 'reforms'. However, I begin their analysis in a more low-flying mode. I take seriously the 'will to improve' of those who plan and conduct reforms (Li 2007) so that I can, at one level, understand their intentions on their own terms. In general, I found that the dominant mode in which reforms in Serbia tended to be conceived, conducted and assessed was similar to planned interventions in international development – as an 'execution of an already-specified plan with expected behavioural incomes' (Long 2001: 24). Their endpoints were fixed as clear, rational, benevolent and uncontroversial, and the focus was on the technicalities of getting there.

Many anthropologists found the idea of governmentality useful for conceptualizing such planned interventions. Foucault (1991: 102) defined governmentality, his own neologism for 'governmental mentality', as 'the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics' that target the population as the key object of government invented under Western modernity. He contrasted it with 'discipline', a form of power that isolates deviations such as madmen or criminals in specially designated spaces and normalizes them through close surveillance and enforced modifications of behaviour. Instead of supervision and coercion, governmentality 'operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs' (Li 2007: 5). It is a 'conduct of conduct': it treats its subjects as formally free individuals whom it encourages, stimulates and persuades to act in the desirable manner, so that this appears as an outcome of their own voluntary choices. It is an 'environmental type of intervention' (Foucault 2008: 160) that manipulates structures of constraints and possibilities within which subjects act.

Foucault theorized governmentality as inseparable from the rise of liberalism in Western Europe. He understood liberalism 'technically' – not as a theory or ideology, but as a critique of 'too much government' and a method of rationalizing government according to the 'internal rule of maximum economy', which dictates to minimize costs and maximize profits (Foucault 2007: 29–54, 2008: 317–19). As I already hinted in the discussion of the liberal concept of civil society, liberalism conceives the individual as *homo oeconomicus*: an egoistic, economically rational subject who always seeks to maximize his own utility. The inability of the sovereign to ever know the totality of economic life, which makes her interventions always suboptimal to the 'invisible hand' of the market, constituted *homo oeconomicus* as the natural limit of government. According to Foucault, twentieth-century neoliberalism retains the assumption of the utility-maximizing subject, but approaches him not as nature, but a product of governmental interventions. These rearrange the entire social fabric in ways that 'make [the subject] into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise' (Foucault 2008: 241). So-called British governmentality scholars, whose work was a major source of governmentality theory for anthropologists, specified the actuarial, managerial, pedagogic and psychiatric techniques through which neoliberal governmentality produces the 'active, choosing, responsible, autonomous individual obliged to be free, and to live life as if it were an outcome of choice' (Miller and Rose 2008: 18). In Foucaultian anthropology and sociology, neoliberal governmentality refers to two types of 'optimisation technology' (Hilgers 2011: 358). Techniques of the self produce enterprising and 'responsibilized' subjects who optimize their individual choices through knowledge and perceive the world through the prism of competition. Techniques of subjection regulate populations to optimize productivity. Anthropologists working in this vein emphasized the mobility and flexibility of neoliberal technologies that coexist and develop 'parasitical' relationships with different governmental regimes and social formations (Collier 2005, 2011, 2012; Ong 2006, 2007).

It is much less frequently noted that Foucault (2008: 291–316) also theorized civil society. Complicating views of the liberal concept of civil society as purely economistic, he argued that civil society had emerged in response to the need for a concept that would envelop the individual subjects of liberal government on their two mutually irreducible planes of existence: as economic men and as bearers of rights. Not all interests in civil society are thus economic. Nonegoistic interests enable the creation of bonds based on sentiment, sympathy and benevolence, though egoistic interests constantly threaten to

weaken them. Unlike the market, which theoretically encompasses the entirety of humanity, civil society is always a particular and localized ensemble. As such, it is easily substituted by the 'nation' or (national) 'society'. Relations of power and subordination in civil society are believed to emerge spontaneously, ensuing from the individuals' different talents and roles they play in relation to each other. Civil society therefore appears as prior to the state, so that the latter is only concerned with 'how to regulate and limit power within a society in which subordination is already at work' (Foucault 2008: 309). While civil society in classical liberalism is a quasi-nature that the government must govern as well as produce, Graham Burchell (1993) followed the spirit of Foucault's notes on neoliberalism by arguing that the latter takes a more interventionist stance towards civil society. Gil Eyal (2000) extended these ideas, whose point of reference was the historical experience of North Atlantic states, to 'transitional' Eastern Europe. He showed that Czech dissidents understood civil society as a technology of an essentially *moral* self-government of individuals and society that had to be re-created after its destruction by the amoral state-socialist paternalism, and once in power after the fall of socialism they identified market mechanisms as the means of its recreation (Eyal 2000: 52, 67–71). Civil society building in Serbia was to a great extent such a purposeful effort to create a self-managing, market-conforming and depoliticized version of civil society. However, this book shows that the emergent liberal civil society was also influenced by more radical, egalitarian and rights-oriented strands of liberalism, giving rise to a more layered and conflicted set of orientations than Eyal's argument implies.

A burgeoning anthropological literature uses the concept of (neoliberal) governmentality to analyse the contemporary expansion and support for the 'nongovernmental' sector (Fisher 1997; Hemment 2009, 2012; Jackson 2005; Medina 2010; Sharma 2006). James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) laid out the underlying theme in a programmatic article: in an era of globalization and neoliberalism, the functions of government are increasingly transferred from the state to a range of (quasi-)nongovernmental and often transnational actors. This 'transnational governmentality' blurs the state/society and public/private distinctions, and undermines the spatial assumptions about the boundedness and 'vertical encompassment' of the nation-state (see also Clarke 2004b; Deacon 2000; Ferguson 2004). Foucault's pervasive influence in this field of study is well illustrated by the way in which Bernal and Grewal (2014: 4–5) present the existing theorizations of NGOs as falling into two camps: the 'classical liberal theory'

and a 'poststructuralist approach to the state' based on the concept of governmentality, which implies that the latter furnishes the only relevant critique of the former. In addition to the work on NGOs and neoliberalism, the governmentality framework informed other poststructuralist anthropological literatures that are relevant to my concerns, such as those on postsocialist transformation (Collier 2011; Dunn 2004; Kipnis 2008; Makovicky 2014a; Phillips 2005), the state (Gupta 2012; Sharma and Gupta 2006; Trouillot 2001) and development (Ferguson 1990; Li 2007; Magrath 2010; Mitchell 2002; Mosse 2005b). This multiple pertinence of the concept of governmentality, and more generally the immense influence of Foucaultian approaches in anthropology and other social sciences, make it crucial to consider its potential as well as its limits.

The tendencies noted by the governmentality literature, which could be summed up as a 'denationalization of the state' and 'destatization of politics' (Jessop 1999), come to the surface time and again in this book in the form of the increasing governmental role of NGOs and thereby often transnational networks. In particular, Chapters 2 and 4 discuss the transfer of policy- and law-making functions to NGOs, while Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the growing involvement of NGOs in the provision of welfare. The idea of neoliberal governmentality will be particularly useful for an analysis of government and NGO activities that deployed the norm of cost-efficiency to critique the extant relationships of the Serbian state and 'civil society', and reform them through the technologies of competition and 'transparency' (Chapters 4 and 5). In this latter case, the idea of 'conduct of conduct' captures how reformers devised methods based on assumptions about human nature in an effort to shape behaviour. I therefore make judicious use of the governmentality framework to study the minutiae of legal and administrative technologies and unearth the rationalities and intellectual genealogies that inform them.

Nevertheless, Foucault's theory is insufficient for my purposes for several reasons. To begin with, the dominance of the governmentality framework has contributed to the noted anthropological neglect of material and systemic aspects of states and their relations with societies. This seems related to what Foucault (2007: 116) explicitly described as his purpose of devising the concept of governmentality: 'to tackle the problem of the state and population'. He ultimately reduced the state to an ideational and ideological epiphenomenon of governmentality: the 'regulatory idea of governmental reason', a 'schema of intelligibility for a whole set of already established institutions' and an 'objective in this political reason in the sense that it is that which must result from

the active interventions of this reason' (Foucault 2007: 286–87). This argument easily leads to an idealist obfuscation of the fact that state apparatuses are also material. It further becomes impossible to ask how they are related to the agencies and interests of particular social groups and how a measure of their integration in objective rather than merely ideological terms is achieved. The Serbian state is certainly subject to discursive construction, but the organizations hiding in this black box still have some very real effects – even if, as Gupta (2012) argues for the Indian state's failure to eradicate extreme poverty, these might be largely due to their arbitrariness and lack of coordination. And although I highlight the governmental roles of NGOs, I do not want to lose sight of the fact that Serbian state organizations remain far more powerful than NGOs, as well as primarily oriented to other state agencies, even in the case of 'projectified' state organizations discussed in Chapter 2. In other words, I believe there is a need for a critical materialist and social-relational concept of the state that would nevertheless take on board the insights generated by its enculturation and deconstruction. I offer one such concept in the next chapter and then use it for a historical discussion of the changing relationships of the state and civil society in late socialist and postsocialist Serbia. With that concept, I will be in a better position to draw on work in anthropology and critical geography to introduce a different, more political, historical and spatial approach to neoliberalism that is based on the concept of neoliberal*ization* understood as a hegemonic state-based project of social transformation. In Part III, I will proceed to show how the highly specific reforms amenable to analysis in terms of neoliberal governmentality were not isolated or one-off processes, but on the contrary part of the broader project of neoliberalization.

In addition to his unsatisfying treatment of the state, Foucault wrote a lot more about how power is conceptualized and expressed in discourse than about 'power as a social reality in action' – about how discourses inform practice (Callewaert 2006: 91). Studies of governmentality therefore often focus on the models and technologies of government and the intentions of those who use them, treating this in separation from 'sociologies of rule' that study how rule is actually accomplished in practice (Rose 1999: 19; cf. Kipnis 2008; Li 2007: 27). Governmentality provides an 'empirically weak and suspiciously functionalist' framework for an anthropological analysis of planned interventions – it is too vague about the social location of ordering power while being too certain about its supposed effects (Mosse 2005b: 14; see also Gould 2005). Anthropologists of development in particular became increasingly aware that in the nitty-gritty of their

'implementation', planned interventions rarely have the kind of single, unchanging purpose assumed by the figure of governmentality. Rather, several ends are combined to strike an uneasy and messy balance between various interests and are constantly re-adjusted according to shifting social relationships (Li 2007: 9; Mosse 2005a). As I will start to argue in broad terms in the next chapter, this point is particularly pertinent in a setting of complex, volatile and often obscure power arrangements in post-Milošević Serbia.

Finally, Foucault's and his followers' focus on subjectless and discursive forms of rule, which supposedly operate 'behind people's backs' (Ferguson 1990: 18), also evades questions about why and how particular groups or individuals benefit or lose from particular governmental interventions (Cheater 1999). To define their field, method and purpose of intervention as technical, governmental schemes consistently exclude 'political-economic questions – questions about control over the means of production and the structures of law and force that support systemic inequalities' (Li 2007: 11). However, the limit of this strategy of depoliticization is politics itself – the ever-present possibility of a critical challenge to the governmental power/knowledge nexus from those being governed (Li 2007: 7–12). Although Foucault did acknowledge the fact of resistance, he largely conceived it as dispersed and paired with power in a kind of universal dialectic, an almost mechanical relationship (Abu-Lughod 1990; Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 6, 32). This offers little guidance on why and how situated subjects become conscious of being dominated and get organized in response.

To address these issues, I follow anthropologists and other scholars who rejected the rigid opposition between the Foucaultian and Gramscian approaches and attempted their crossfertilization (Hansen 1999; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Jessop 2008; Li 2007; G. Smith 2011). I use the Gramscian concept of hegemony to understand why particular individual and collective actors support or resist the reforms of government that I study, and more broadly to account for how state forms reflect the ongoing articulation and politicization of class relations in civil society. Refusing economic determinism, Gramsci (1971: 238) emphasized the centrality of ideology for defining the terms of political struggles, organizing people into groups and constructing their sense of shared interests. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985: 11, 93–148) developed this point by arguing that discursive articulation is needed to translate individuals' structural positions in systems of domination into 'subject positions', i.e. political identities identified with certain interests, which may become a basis for political mobilization. Subjects positions are also defined as 'points of antagonism' since they are constituted through

differential and equivalential relations with other subject positions (Hansen 1999: 22–29; Smith 1998: 55–63). Discourse and ideologies too are essential for the formation of hegemonic projects – the interests of multiple subject positions must be articulated in a manner that neutralizes their mutual antagonisms and assimilates them into a 'common interest' of the power bloc. Since the state is the authority that legitimately acts in the name of the common interest, hegemonic worldviews inevitably articulate visions of the state. It is in this sense that I talk about hegemonic struggles over state power and hegemonic projects of state transformation. I understand the various kinds of civil society as points of antagonism that are individually and collectively performed through practices, thereby becoming social forces involved in hegemonic struggles. Discursive subject positions cannot be derived from or equated with structural positions in systems of inequality. But neither does their articulation occur in an unstructured and limitless space of possibilities. As we will see, the subject positions as well as forms of organization and collective action characteristic for the various forms of civil society in Serbia made the participation of individuals belonging to various social groups and categories more or less likely.

Research Methods and Settings

From the start, the questions that I set out to explore in Serbia over some sixteen months in the early 2010s concerned relations and processes well beyond the spatial and temporal radius of my fieldwork. When I came to Serbia in the summer of 2010, my plan was to follow as closely as possible two NGO projects that were each implemented by a consortium of one Belgrade NGO and one partner from either the Czech Republic or Slovakia. My direct motive for doing so was to learn about the emerging and little-studied practice of official development assistance (ODA) between postsocialist countries. The Czech Republic and Slovakia, which funded the two projects, were relevant and comparable as donors because both their ODA policies prioritized Serbia as a beneficiary and constructed it in similar ways. Their selection also had a personal subtext: being born and raised in Slovakia and having earned my first degree in the Czech Republic, I was interested how the ODA practices of the two new EU member states reflected and consolidated their supposed advanced position on (or even beyond) the teleological pathway of 'transition' (see Chapters 2 and 6). My native knowledge of Slovak and near-native proficiency in Czech aided me in communicating with NGO workers and govern-

ment officials, analysing relevant documents, and learning Serbian, another Slavic language, more quickly. In addition, my Slavic and Eastern European identity marked me as an ambiguous outsider/insider with whom some of my research participants presumed to share more cultural intimacy than with a stereotypical Westerner, which gave interactions extra flow and depth. Equally from the outset, however, I have approached postsocialist-to-postsocialist development cooperation itself as a way of getting a grasp on a set of broader processes and issues that it brought together, such as 'civil society building', the 'reform' of the state and 'Europeanization'. As my data analysis and theorization advanced, I gradually translated these original concerns into the conceptual terms sketched above.

Some of these issues have been developed relatively late and unevenly in anthropology, which is further compounded by the still somewhat marginal status of research on the former Yugoslavia in the wider discipline. This has led me to engage with relevant theoretical and empirical contributions in other disciplines, including sociology, history, heterodox economics and political science. Despite the interdisciplinarity of some of my discussion, I approached this as a primarily anthropological project. Instead of accepting the concepts and analyses of other disciplines as they are, I strove to read them through the prism of our anthropological commitment to sustained cultural (self-)critique, which necessarily includes a critique of dominant scientific paradigms, and in a constant dialogue with relevant anthropological theory. Broadly speaking, I sought to contribute to the anthropological literatures on civil society, the state, governmentality, development, and postsocialist (South) East Europe by developing a relational and critical materialist kind of 'historical anthropological' approach to these issues (Kalb and Tak 2005). Most of all, this means reaffirming the anthropological commitment to the study of localized social practices (and hence human agency and indeterminacy of social life), but always in their relationships with wider social forces; relationships that are power-laden and systemic as well as dynamic, contested and historically and geographically varied.[13]

My research objectives had important methodological implications. Clearly, I needed to go beyond the model of temporal fieldwork in small-scale communities, with participant observation as the main method and thick cultural description as the main product, which continues to be privileged (and taught to doctoral students) as the quintessential anthropological research design. While I retained an important role for participant observation and, more broadly, ethnography, I defined its primary object not as particular places, groups or organizations, but dynamically as processes ('projects', 'reforms' etc.) that unfold through

time, in space, and potentially also across various institutional settings and social domains. I combined two different temporal modes in their study: 'retrospective microhistory', which reconstructs past that has led to the present (e.g. going back to the origins of a particular 'reform' I studied), with 'prospective microhistory', which is concerned with the 'emergence and development – unfolding, reproductive, haphazard, chaotic – of social practices in the present as these become futurities' (Handelman 2005: 41). Tracking these processes in space, I engaged in a multi-sited ethnography in a host of field sites in and outside Serbia. This entailed a combination of vertical, horizontal and transversal manoeuvres, such as scaling down to a local subproject of a national-level programme, scaling up to EU institutions to which my research participants sought to address the products of their efforts, or 'studying through' (Shore and Wright 1997: 14) the various domains and settings that the particular process connected. As this led me to study 'upwards and outwards', my general method was quite along the lines of the extended case method – from the localized, real-time processes that I observed most closely (i.e. the 'cases'), I 'extended out' by means of other techniques such as interviewing and the collection and analysis of a large corpus of textual, visual and audiovisual artefacts,[14] to larger social relations and dynamics that variously enabled, constrained and shaped the former (Burawoy 1998).

While I did follow the postsocialist-to-postsocialist development projects as originally planned, the gaps in their cycles left me with abundant time for developing other lines of investigation. From the very beginning, I also studied other activities of the two Belgrade NGOs that implemented them: the Centre for Democracy Foundation (CDF) and Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF).[15] In these *primary field sites,* which I will discuss in more detail shortly, I volunteered and conducted participant observation, typically several days a week, from September 2010 until June 2011 (CDF) and December 2011 (BCIF). Beyond BCIF and the CDF, I chose a purposive sample of other field sites in Serbia proper[16] and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (see Figure 0.1). BCIF, a foundation providing funding and services to NGOs across the country, proved particularly useful as a gateway to a broad range of organizations. In *secondary sites,* participant observation and interviews were carried out during shorter stays or repeated visits. I further accompanied BCIF workers on a number of so-called *'monitoring' trips* – visits at grantee organizations. Finally, *interview sites* were those where I did formal interviews. (See Figure 0.1 for the number of interviews in each research site.) I also conducted participant observation and interviews during several short trips outside Serbia: in Bratislava, Brussels and Prague. Overall, I recorded and

transcribed ninety-three semistructured interviews with NGO workers, nationalist leaders, government officials, politicians, civil servants and others, with an average duration of about seventy minutes.

During my first monitoring trip, I learned about a BCIF-funded 'public advocacy' project in Vršac, which I then continued to follow as a localized instance of BCIF's national advocacy programme and the broader development agenda of 'democratization' of which it was part (Chapter 7). Two more BCIF-funded advocacy campaigns became my secondary sites. These were concerned with the accessibility of public spaces for people with disabilities and led by the Centre for the Development of Civil Society in Zrenjanin and the Niš Committee for Human Rights. Through these projects, I became aware of so-called 'traditional' associations of disabled people with roots going back to socialist Yugoslavia and decided to study this post-Yugoslav kind of civil society in relation to the transformation of the welfare state (Chapter 5). In Niš, the third-largest city in Serbia, I spent a month volunteering for ProAktiv, BCIF's friendly and grantee organization. This enabled me to follow the Niš advocacy more closely, interview members of local 'traditional' associations and somewhat balance my mostly Belgrade-centred experience.

My engagement with the nationalist civil society (Chapter 3) was mostly through the topical prism of its mobilizations against the (LGBT) Pride Parade in Belgrade. Its resistance emphasized a concern for cultural autonomy and political sovereignty of the Serb nation, suggesting that the struggle over LGBT rights came to stand for broader issues of globalization. Similar themes were articulated by the crowd of various nationalist and right-wing organizations that I observed at the celebrations of the Statehood Day in Orašac in February 2011. The same month, I attended a press conference at which Dveri, one of the leading nationalist organizations, unveiled its plans to become a political party. I interviewed leaders of the best-known and most influential organizations as well as several nationalist and conservative intellectuals, and attended a number of nationalist protests and semipublic meetings in Belgrade.

My final secondary site was the government's Office for Cooperation with Civil Society in Belgrade established in January 2011. The Office was important for my research because of its mandate to regulate the relationship of the state and civil society, as is discussed especially in Chapter 4. I was able to occasionally visit its premises and attend semipublic and internal meetings from September to December 2011, when it was still hiring staff and defining its agenda. However, I got some insight into the Office's discourse and activities even before then, for instance at a conference co-organized by the Office and BCIF.

Figure 0.1. Map of research sites in Serbia (created by Martin Falc).

The CDF

The CDF was one of the oldest liberal NGOs in Serbia. In the 1990s, it typified the first wave of NGOs in at least two major respects: it was funded by foreign bilateral, multilateral and private agencies (CDF 1999), and it was openly allied and closely linked to the anti-Milošević opposition. Its history is entangled with the biography of Dragoljub 'Mićun' Mićunović, its president from the start and a veteran of Serbian politics.[17] Born in 1930, Mićunović had already got into conflict with the Communist regime in the late 1940s and was sentenced to 20 months of forced labour in the infamous gulag of Goli otok (Mićunović 2000). He completed a philosophy degree in Belgrade in 1954. As one of the members of Praxis, the Yugoslav dissident school of humanist Marxism, he was expelled from Belgrade University in 1975 and left for Germany. He returned in the 1980s, joined the dissident intellectual circles and became one of the founders of the Democratic Party (DP) and its first president in 1990. By 1993, he and Zoran Đinđić, who would become the first prime minister after Milošević, were publicly accusing each other of cooperating with the regime and arguing over the proper way of building the party (Dokumentacioni centar 'Vreme' 2012). In the end, Mićunović resigned and Đinđić took over in January 1994.

Months later, in July 1994, the Democratic Centre Foundation was registered with Mićunović as president (SBRA n.d.).[18] Its founders included other prominent intellectuals and/or members of 'Mićunović's current' within the DP, including the lawyer Slobodan Vučković (CDF 1999). His daughter Nataša Vučković became the foundation's general secretary, a position she still held at the time of my fieldwork. In September 1994, Mićunović commented on the establishment of the CDF (which he described simply as 'the Democratic Centre' rather than an NGO): 'The initial idea was that people would gather around certain ideas and act as a political movement . . . We'll see from the reactions whether all of this will grow into something more' (Bjekic 1994). It did – after Mićunović had left the DP in 1995, he founded a new party called the Democratic Centre in 1996. It stayed an elite party with limited constituency[19] until it merged into the DP in 2004.[20] However, it always succeeded in getting a handful of its candidates elected, including Mićunović, by joining broad electoral coalitions (in 1996 and 2000) or having them run on the candidate list of the DP (in 2003). The Democratic Centre MPs were recruited from among the founders of the CDF. Given this personal and nominal union, it is unsurprising that the media argued that the foundation 'grew into' the party (Dokumentacioni centar 'Vreme' 2012) or that Mićunović 'transformed' one into the other (Vulić 2000), but the two actually

existed simultaneously. Despite being registered as a foundation, the CDF was and remained a typical project-implementing NGO. Most of its activities – debates, roundtables, educational programmes, networking, research and publishing – were elitist in the sense of targeting politicians, civil servants, intellectuals and experts, and focusing on abstract and/or state-level issues (CDF 2004).

The CDF became especially important in the run-up to the regime change in 2000. By the late 1990s, the chronically fragmented opposition came to understand that it could only defeat Milošević united. As the next chapter discusses in more detail, the liberal civil society was instrumental in mediating this unification and preparing the strategy for the 2000 elections that led to Milošević's fall. In September 1999, Mićunović initiated a series of opposition roundtables that contributed to the formation of the united Democratic Opposition of Serbia in July 2000 (Dokumentacioni centar 'Vreme' 2012; Spoerri 2014: 61). As he told me in an interview, he used the CDF as a 'link' between the emerging oppositional bloc and the NGO scene. The CDF founders were leading opposition politicians and the CDF itself had been playing, in his own words, the role of the 'coordinator of the nongovernmental sector' by helping to establish the Forum of Yugoslav Nongovernmental Organizations, a network of Serbian and Montenegrin NGOs (CDF 2004: 34–35). In February 2000, the Forum organized a meeting between thirty NGOs and twelve opposition parties that were also attending Mićunović's roundtables. The attendees adopted a joint statement in which they agreed to improve their cooperation and recognized their respective roles in the preparations for the elections (Paunović 2001: 14). The NGOs were tasked with organizing the 'get out and vote' campaign to mobilize voters, and the CDF was one of the NGOs that directed the campaign (Paunović 2001).

After the regime change, the CDF continued to implement similar kinds of projects as it had in the 1990s, funded by the EU, the Fund for an Open Society, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency, the Olof Palme International Centre, Freedom House, the National Endowment for Democracy and others. Mićunović remained the organization's president and Nataša Vučković its general secretary while also pursuing a high-profile career in politics.[21] There were six workers (all but one female) plus Vučković as the de facto boss. Mićunović had his own office on the premises and his personal assistant sat with the CDF staff, but neither was involved in the NGO's work. The management board still included a number of former or current Democrat figures. It is therefore unsurprising that those with insider knowledge of the NGO scene associated the CDF

with the party. The occasional phone calls to the CDF office from people who believed they were calling the party were another vivid illustration of the close association between the two.

The CDF has not been using public funds – possibly in recognition that this might be perceived as problematic due to its partisan links. When I asked the executive director Svetlana Vukomanović about cooperation with the state and parties, she said that the CDF was a 'bit specific because of Mićun and Nataša'. However, she insisted the two did not influence any of the projects, except the Democratic Political Forum, for which they chose keynote speakers and invitees. Vukomanović further pointed out that none of the projects (except perhaps the Forum) resulted in the 'promotion' of the party, that none of the staff were party members and that most did not even vote for it. However, given the historical and personal connections, the perception of the CDF's partisanship was inescapable, and one cannot exclude the possibility that it influenced funding decisions by donors keen to assist Serbia's 'democratic forces'. Such considerations seemed to have influenced the decision of the Slovak NGO Pontis Foundation to approach the CDF to become a partner in the project that I followed (Chapter 2).

BCIF

Unusually for a Serbian NGO, BCIF was a 'grant-making foundation' that provided project grants and other forms of support to other NGOs, with a preference for smaller organizations unlikely to obtain assistance from other donors. BCIF was also, as its workers would say, a 'domestic foundation' (*domaća fondacija*) rather than a chapter of an international organization, and the only such private foundation focusing on civil society development. It was a large NGO by Serbian standards, with an average of fourteen full-time and two part-time workers throughout my fieldwork. In 2011, 34 per cent of associations of citizens had five or fewer workers and another 37 per cent had between six and ten workers (Civic Initiatives 2011: 46).[22] BCIF's 2010 budget of €1.35 million was huge, considering that only 5 per cent of associations reported budgets in excess of €100,000 for the same year (Civic Initiatives 2011: 102).

The history of BCIF began in the United Kingdom in 1999. According to the short account that BCIF reproduced in its annual reports and website:

> [A] peace meeting was held at the Central Hall Westminster where Jenny Hyatt, consultant of social practice [*sic*] from Great Britain, spoke against the NATO bombing [of Serbia]. Thanks to her speech, more than £2,000 was collected in less than five minutes to support small local initiatives in Serbia

> and Montenegro. Jenny and her colleagues – experts on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) from Great Britain – used these funds to establish the charity BCIF UK so as to secure small donations for local communities in our country. (BCIF 2005: 2)

As this shows, BCIF's focus on 'local communities' (see below) originated in this formative period. The London-based BCIF UK cooperated with advisors in Serbia and Montenegro who assessed funding applications from NGOs. It ceased to work in 2005 after the Serbian BCIF had been registered – a process that its first annual report described as 'indigenization' (*indigenizacija*) (BCIF 2005: 19). It has experienced a quick and sustained expansion since then; its budget, about a half of which was disbursed in grants, grew more than fivefold in 2005–10 (BCIF 2012: 8, 10). The team grew from five permanent employees in 2004 to sixteen people in 2010, which remained the status quo during my fieldwork. They were all Serbian citizens mostly in their thirties, with a few people in their twenties or forties. About two-thirds were women and although the executive director in 2009–11 was male, his predecessor and successor as well as the two second-tier managers and most management board members were female. Many workers were born or raised in Belgrade, but a group of six originally came from western Serbia; a pair had known each other since their early childhood. Nearly everyone finished or at least started university (usually social science or humanities degrees) and had a working knowledge of English. While some people kept their private lives separate, there was a 'social core' of five to seven workers who shared two adjacent offices and spent a lot of their leisure together and with common friends, some of whom worked in the organization earlier or cooperated with it on a contract basis. Considering the intensity of Belgrade social (and night) life, for me this meant invaluable opportunities to join the social circle for drinks, gigs and private parties.

BCIF has had the same three 'Programmes' since 2004. The Philanthropy Programme focused on the development of corporate and individual philanthropy (Chapter 6). The Donations Programme encompassed BCIF's core business of grant making through several thematic programmes. The Developmental Programme, which had no staff of its own unlike the other two programmes, helped NGOs build their capacities through education, networking and exchange of experiences. The line between the latter two programmes was blurred in practice since Donations Programme grantees also received education. Among BCIF's most generous and loyal donors were foreign private foundations, especially the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which it 'inherited' from BCIF UK (BCIF

2005: 1). It also had a particularly good relationship with the Co-operating Netherlands Foundations for Central and Eastern Europe and the Serbian branch of the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), which managed the entire USAID funding for Serbian 'civil society'. BCIF was supported by a number of other official donors, private foundations, corporations and, to a lesser extent, state bodies.

If I described the CDF as elitist, BCIF's consciously built image and self-understanding was 'populist'. As I will show more closely in Chapter 7, its mission was understood in terms of developing (local) 'communities'. On my pre-fieldwork visit, Snežana-Andreja Arambašić, the administration and finance director, told me that BCIF wanted to reach out to organizations 'in the regions', unlike other donors who focused on the capital. It was different from 'cold' and 'bureaucratic' donors who only 'look at numbers' and expect grantees to just submit paperwork and 'tick the boxes' on forms. Rather, BCIF 'works with the people'. This was not just rhetoric but ideas that BCIF workers tried to put into practice. When decisions on grants were being made, care was taken to achieve a balanced geographical representation. Applicants from rural or poor areas, or ones with few NGOs, could get extra points. Down-to-earth, clear applications that demonstrated the practical importance of the project idea for locals fared better than those written in the technocratic or obscure NGO-speak. Although the workers felt that they could not communicate with applicants and grantees as much as earlier when they received fewer applications, they still endeavoured to visit each grantee NGO in person. The purpose of these monitoring trips was to assess the grantees but also to simply get to know them better. BCIF tried to keep its procedures simple, answer all questions, allow extra time for paperwork if necessary and motivate grantees with humane, informal communication rather than just money and 'technical support'. Many grantees I interviewed appreciated this approach. Some became friends with individuals in BCIF. The foundation's efforts to develop local fundraising (Chapter 6) and public advocacy (Chapter 7) were guided by the idea that NGOs should become more embedded in their 'communities' and oriented to their needs.

Notwithstanding BCIF's community focus, one comparatively small segment of its activities focused on the state with the aim of reforming the legal and institutional 'framework' for the activities of the NGO sector. As I will show, BCIF was part of the group of 'frontier masters' – NGOs and individuals with a privileged access to and influence over the post-2000 reforms of the frontier of the central state and civil society. However, unlike the CDF, BCIF had no recognizable partisan links; the nature of these social relationships will have to be interpreted in a different manner.

Outline of the Book

Chapter 1 can be read as an extension of this Introduction that historicizes the discourse and practice of 'civil society' in Serbia in relation to major political, economic and social transformations. After an ethnographic account of the practices through which the dominant model of 'project society' was reproduced, a 'strategic relational' concept of the state is introduced to develop the Gramscian theorization of civil society as a terrain on which social forces develop political strategies oriented to the state. The chapter then discusses, in chronological order, the diverse ways in which civil society was conceived in the late socialist period, the consolidation of its dominant liberal form in an opposition to the Milošević regime, and finally in broad strokes its role in the hegemonic project of transnationalization and neoliberalization after 2000. Overall, the chapter shows that the dominant model of civil society was only one possible articulation, which reflected particular historically and socially situated political agendas rather than any transhistorical and politically neutral reality. It also documents the mobile and often ambiguous frontiers of civil society with the state, institutional politics and the economy, which problematize the liberal norms of their clear mutual separation.

Part II examines the contrasting engagements of the nationalist and liberal civil societies in hegemonic struggles over transnational integration. It reveals that transnationalization was the more explicitly narrated and contested of the two central tendencies of the post-2000 hegemonic project, but also that this politicization occurred in specific selective terms. Chapter 1 shows how the NGO sector helped build the hegemony of EU integration by either actively reproducing or failing to challenge the government's narrative about 'Europeanization' as the only possible path to modernity. One of the reasons for this was that the same ideological frameworks of Balkanism and transition underpinned both this modernization myth and the subject position of the liberal civil society. The latter has also become increasingly materially dependent on the EU, which imposed further constraints on the possibility of its autonomy vis-à-vis integration. Finally, the growing availability of EU funding and the expanding scope of EU-related reforms stimulated demand for NGO workers in public administration and promoted their pragmatic involvement in the hegemonic project.

Chapter 2 shifts from Europeanization to a competing kind of mythology articulated by nationalist organizations and movements. It shows how the attempts to hold the Belgrade LGBT Pride Parade occasioned material and symbolic struggles over public space between the nationalists and their supporters (including the Church), on the

one hand, and the alliance of the liberal civil society with the Europeanizing state, on the other. It was also an attempt to mobilize popular support through a populist articulation of the universal suffering of the 'nation' caused by post-Milošević restructuring. Also offering an ethnographic account of the efforts of the nationalists to hijack the celebrations of the Statehood Day, I argue that they used these practices to promote their own counterhegemonic project vision of a centralized, sovereign and neotraditionalist nation-state. At the same time, the overlaps between this vision and the supportive nationalist elements of the hegemonic project, as well as the nationalists' own orientation to party politics, marked their project as subhegemonic rather than counterhegemonic. Their populist strategy has so far failed to articulate the 'common interest' of Serbian society and assemble a new power bloc, but there are signs of a broadening support. Understanding the anatomy of the Serbian nationalists' constituency necessitates attending to complex intersections between class, gender and generation, as well as mobilizations of particular forms of affect.

Part III focuses on specific reforms at the state–civil society frontier as a facet of neoliberalization, the second main tendency of the post-2000 hegemonic project. Chapter 4 shows that this included, first, efforts to transfer state functions to NGOs under the rubric of 'state–civil society partnerships' and, second, reforms establishing a regime of regulation of the frontier that was expected to make such partnerships cost-efficient and 'transparent'. I trace the forms of critical reasoning, institutional frameworks and technological devices used to optimize to particular traditions of neoliberal and neoclassical thought. Documenting the ways in which this agenda was embedded in the transformations of the state driven by transnational, especially EU, integration, I further confirm the mutually reinforcing relationship between the two hegemonic tendencies. Nevertheless, the NGOs that shaped these reforms also pursued political agendas related not to neoliberalism, but competition over state resources with nationalist and 'particratic' networks, which was itself embedded in broader post-2000 hegemonic struggles. A relatively closed and stable informal network of NGOs and NGO-affiliated individuals has dominated these reforms and national civil society policy-making more broadly, thus itself subverting the norms of market-like competition and transparency being introduced.

Chapter 5 examines the reforms at the frontier with a focus on welfare state transformation and so-called 'traditional' organizations of people with disabilities whose continuities with associational practices in socialist Yugoslavia mark them as a post-Yugoslav kind of civil society. The partnerships agenda sought to involve them in the performance of state functions, especially provision of social services

in the context of a neoliberalizing welfare system. However, their practices were considered to be insufficiently efficient and transparent, and as such were subjected to the same kind of reforms of state funding as in Chapter 4. Disability NGOs joined reformist state bodies in the critique of 'traditional' organizations and stereotyped them as obsolete and unprofessional in their practices, corrupt and opposed to the new state policies towards persons with disabilities. These stereotypes served as an instrument in a political struggle between the two kinds of organizations and glossed over more complex articulations between the historical legacies of 'traditional' organizations' and the current exigencies. These included adaptations to welfare restructuring, subhegemonic efforts to maintain their established roles and counterhegemonic mobilizations for the preservation of established forms of welfare provisioning.

Part IV turns from the transformations of the state and its frontier with civil society to the efforts of the liberal civil society to reconfigure a broader set of social relations at both the national and subnational ('local') levels, including its own frontiers with the economy, institutional politics and wider society. Chapter 6 focuses on the activities of BCIF and its foreign partners oriented to the development of corporate and individual philanthropy and the capacity of NGOs for 'fundraising from local sources'. This reflected the declining availability of foreign funding as well as a wish to avoid dependence on state funding rooted in the liberal norm of a civil society autonomous from the state. However, the turn to businesses and individual citizens as new funding sources had to address the existing popular suspicions towards both philanthropic giving and NGOs. BCIF saw a solution in a shift from 'traditional' philanthropic practices, based on affective appeals and fleeting engagements, to a more modern brand of 'rational philanthropy' conceived as a long-term investment. The norms of cost-efficiency, accountability and transparency, and the particular techniques for putting them in practice connect this model to the neoliberal reforms of the state funding of 'civil society' and social service provision. Another continuity with Part III is the way in which this agenda pushed for a tendential privatization of the public realm in the sense of its decollectivization and quasi-marketization. The chapter further shows that fundraising NGOs tended to combine modern and traditional philanthropic models in practice and devise their own hands-on ways of addressing the social gap separating them from popular masses. These strategies reveal the precise nature of that gap, as well as the possibilities and limits of philanthropy development as a strategy of indigenizing the liberal civil society and building a new kind of public realm.

Chapter 7 examines the discourse and practice of 'public advocacy' – a kind of NGO intervention sponsored by foreign donors that aimed at achieving policy changes in the public interest and, in the longer term, democratizing local governance by establishing NGO-centred mechanisms of public interest representation and the mobilization of community. This amounted to an effort to establish the liberal civil society as an institutional domain capable of mediating between the society, on the one hand, and the state and institutional politics, on the other. Nevertheless, in practice, the advice given to advocating NGOs as well as the realities of local politics did not lead them to prioritize community involvement. Rather, they focused on different ways of mediating between their own interests and objectives and those of local 'decision makers', other NGOs and donors. The practice of advocacy thus combined the neoliberal 'government through community' with a multilevel, crossdomain and transnational NGO brokerage. An advocacy project in Vršac is closely analysed to show how NGO workers activated their own networks of personalistic and partisan relationships, many of which extended well beyond the 'local', to engage with the resilient clientelistic and cliquish alliances that dominated local politics. While this was a pragmatic strategy of accommodation, it also enabled the advocacy actors to pursue their own deeply political and in some respects counterhegemonic project of resistance to the local power bloc.

Notes

1. Notably, the European Commission releases annual 'progress reports' on the reforms required by Serbia's EU integration, which is thus represented as a comprehensive modernization process. Various international organizations, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and Transparency International, publish more specific annual or ad hoc reports. Serbian media frequently report on these assessments, with a special penchant for highlighting Serbia's ranking below African or Asian countries in some of these reports.
2. In several Serbian-language edited collections with titles like *Four Years of Transition in Serbia* (Begović and Mijatović 2005), *Five Years of Transition in Serbia I* and *II* (Mihailović 2005, 2006), *Reforms in Serbia: Achievements and Challenges* (Mijatović 2008), *The Results of Transition from Socialism to Capitalism* (Mihailović 2011) or *Labyrinths of Transition* (Stojiljković 2012), leading Serbian economists, political scientists, sociologists and other academics and experts reviewed both the specific 'reforms' and the overall post-2000 'transition'. See Uvalic (2010) for an English-language monograph reviewing economic reforms.

3. This discussion draws on Chandhoke 1995: 88–107; Keane 1988b; Terrier and Wagner 2006: 11–17.
4. See Arato 1981; Havel 1989; Ivancheva 2011; Keane 1988a; Konrád 1984; Michnik 1985; Pelczynski 1988; Rupnik 1979.
5. See also Cohen and Arato 1992: 31–36; Keane 1988b.
6. See Alcock and Scott 2002; Banks and Hulme 2012; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Leve and Karim 2001; Miorelli 2008: 111–23; Robinson 1993, 1997; Schuller 2009, 2012.
7. See Bornstein 2003; Elyachar 2005; Gill 2000: 135–54; Karim 2008; Rankin 2001; Rankin and Shakya 2007.
8. See Bernal and Grewal 2014b; Hemment 2007; Kamat 2002; Rutherford 2004; Sharma 2006.
9. See Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Fisher 2006; Forbrig and Demeš 2006; Spoerri 2014.
10. The adjective *građanski* means 'civil' or 'civic' as well as 'bourgeois' and, similarly to its equivalents in other European languages, derives from the word for 'city' (*grad*). As such, *građansko društvo* has somewhat wider semantic field and different (especially historical) connotations than *civilno društvo,* which seems to have come into common use only in the postsocialist period and is normally used in the narrow sense of the sector of 'nongovernmental organizations' or 'organizations of civil society' (always *organizacije civilnog društva,* never *organizacije građanskog društva*).
11. The ensuing discussion draws on Buttigieg 1995; Chandhoke 1995: 116–56; Crehan 2002: 102–4; Gramsci 1971; Kumar 1993: 378–80; Smith 2004.
12. Another specific and lively kind of civil society in Serbia, which is nevertheless rarely if ever discussed under that rubric, is constituted by the many organizations of war veterans of the Second World War and 1990s wars (Dokić 2017; Mikuš and Dokić 2016: 271–74). These organizations have some ideological and social links with the nationalist civil society and more recently there were also instances of cooperation with the liberal civil society (Dokić 2017: 98). Because of their continuities with the Yugoslav period (most pronounced in the case of the organizations of Second World War veterans, but less directly present also in those of the veterans of the 1990s wars), they could also be considered a part of what I called the post-Yugoslav civil society. Nevertheless, as Goran Dokić's work shows, they are distinguished by the specific social interests and constituencies that they seek to represent, which also inform the political agendas that they pursue in relation to the state.
13. See also Narotzky and Smith (2006: 2–4) for their related 'historical realist' perspective and the recent calls for a greater engagement with global history and economics in economic anthropology (Hann and Hart 2011; Hart and Ortiz 2014).
14. These included: various NGO documents related to the studied projects (concept papers, application forms, assessment sheets, reports, budgets, training agendas and handouts, and PowerPoint presentations); other NGO documents (strategic plans, annual reports, press releases, organograms, leaflets, booklets, publications, newsletters and websites); government documents (strategies, policy papers, action plans, statistical, analytical and other reports, budgets, guidelines for NGOs applying for funding and attendance lists); laws and other norms; newspaper, magazine and online articles; nationalist leaflets, websites, social media contents, newsletters and magazines; similar materials produced by associations of disabled people; graffiti, billboards, posters and stickers; TV news, advertisements and shows; online videos; documentary and feature films.
15. BCIF changed its name to the Trag ('Trace') Foundation in 2013. I use the old name as I deal with the pre-2013 incarnation of the organization. Also, I write the word 'BCIF' without the definite article since those working in or familiar with BCIF used it as an acronym (pronounced approximately as /b'tsi:f/) rather than an initialism.

16. This term refers to the part of Serbia outside of the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. It is not an administrative entity.
17. Mićunović has been a member (and at times the president) of the parliament, either of the rump Yugoslavia or Serbia as its constituent part, from 1990 up to the time of my fieldwork.
18. The name changed to its present form in 1997 (CDF 1999).
19. Mićunović received only 87,000 votes when he ran as the Democratic Centre candidate for the president of Serbia in 1997. When he tried again in 2003 as the candidate of the united Democratic Opposition of Serbia (with the DP as its backbone), he received almost 900,000 votes.
20. Mićunović then became the President of the Political Committee of the DP – an office he still holds at the time of writing.
21. After advising Mićunović while he served as the president of the federal parliament in 2000–03, Vučković became a DP member of the Belgrade city parliament in 2004 and a member of the national parliament in 2007. She has also held various party offices and was elected as the party's vice president in 2011.
22. This comparison is not ideal, as BCIF was legally not an association of citizens, but rather a foundation, which is a rarer legal form of NGOs in Serbia. However, I am not aware of a representative survey on Serbian foundations comparable with the 2011 Civic Initiatives survey on associations (Civic Initiatives 2011).