

**RADICAL CLAIMING WITHOUT RADICAL
CLAIMS: PROMISES AND LIMITS OF
TRANSACTIONAL ACTIVISM IN POST-
ORANGE KYIV**

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Abstract

This paper deals with contextualized radicalization of tactics within the case-study of protest initiative “Save Old Kyiv”. While having emerged in Ukrainian capital city in order to protest against illegal construction projects, the initiative operated within a particular context of scanty resources; it was trying to solve the problem of resource mobilization by using transactional activism. Referring to this example, radicalization of tactics, particular context after the Orange Revolution, and the phenomenon of transactional activism are researched in relation both to one another and to different aspects of protest activities.

This paper addresses a tendency toward more contextualized approach within the Western social movement studies, by problematizing the influence of the Orange Revolution on social activism in Kyiv. While dealing with the radicalization of tactics in the particular urban social movement, the paper explores the promising yet underresearched phenomenon of transactional activism. The case-study demonstrates both opportunities and potential limitations of transactional activism in its relation to the question of context and to other dynamics of protest activities, including that of radicalization.

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Introduction

On 10 October 2008 in Kyiv, Ukraine, there was a fight between tens of people, partly dressed in black, and tens of guards, dressed in camouflage; three were injured. This was a fight between activists of the protest initiative “Save Old Kyiv” and guards of one of the many illegal construction projects in the Ukrainian capital. When guards were pushed aside, people destroyed the fence around the territory of the construction site with the help of circular saws, ropes and their own arms. All the while they were screaming “Bust that fence!”

The activity of “Save Old Kyiv” was not always like this. The initiative, which was created by a small number of people in late 2007 in order to protest against illegal constructions in Kyiv, started its struggle with an art performance: painting fences with pictures and messages to builders, officials and common citizens. After the very first action “Save Old Kyiv” had managed to attract public attention by the means of mass media (especially the Internet). Because of this and some other aspects it also had managed to mobilize more activists, mainly through network mobilization in which three leftist networks played the most important role. Hence, mobilization was one of the most important dynamics in “Save Old Kyiv” activities; tactical dynamics was another. As I have illustrated above, in one year their tactics changed greatly and reasons for this change appear to be an interesting topic for research.

This case is the best in the Ukrainian context for research into radicalization of tactics. I do not mean by this that there were no radicalizations of protest which can be studied. There were at least two mass protest mobilizations after the Soviet Union collapsed: “Ukraine without Kuchma” (2001) and the Orange Revolution (2004). The first one was more radical and the second was accompanied by far more participants; however, both of them represent

rather short outbreaks and therefore are not appropriate enough to be an example of sustained social protest. Thus “Save Old Kyiv” represents a unique case of rather sustainable activism with tactical dynamics which I have found the best to explore factors of tactical radicalization in contemporary Kyiv. Explanation of radicalization of tactics is the first challenge of this research.

There are some relevant researches of tactical radicalization within social movement studies which deal mostly (but not only) with the Western context. These researches provide a great spectrum of explanations of why different social movements applied more or less radical tactics of protest. Some scholars construct systems of factors by using comparative and/or longitudinal methods of analysis. But the Western context is not a universal one and recently scholars have started arguing that ““mainstream” theory should continue to address a geographically and substantively broader empirical base, breaking out of a preoccupation with Anglo-America and Europe” (Oliver, Cadena-Roa and Strawn 2002:17). Hence, research of the influence of the Ukrainian context can contribute to this explanatory expansion.

What do I mean by the Ukrainian context? To start with, many scholars emphasize the general passivity and apathy of Ukrainians which they often explain in terms of the post-Soviet context (e.g., Dawson 1996; Moshes 2003) which, as some argue (Jaworsky 1995), promoted conservatism and rejection of confrontational action among common citizens. Because of this, mass mobilization of citizens against the electoral fraud in 2004, which became known as the Orange Revolution, attracted some attention from social movement scholars. They elaborate mainly on the explanation how this popular outbreak became possible and they generally reach optimistic conclusions about the future of social activism in Ukraine. However, the impact of the Orange Revolution on social activism is still scanty

researched. Because of this the question of the Ukrainian context can be put more precisely. The second challenge of this research is an attempt to explore and problematize the impact of the post-Orange context on tactics radicalization and social activism in general.

In contrast with those scholars who express optimism about the development of civil engagement in contemporary Ukraine, Tsveta Petrova and Sidney Tarrow (2007) argue that participatory activism is still weak in the new democracies of East-Central Europe. In order to explain the existing examples of protest campaigns in this region, they introduce the concept of transactional activism - the one that emerges on the basis of ties and coalitions between different actors, including non-governmental organizations, political parties and protest groups¹. Their conclusions about the development of precisely this kind of activism are rather optimistic and they argue that “nonstate actors in the region are developing a transactional capacity that seems to outstrip their capacity to mobilize larger numbers of citizens in enduring organized collective action” (Petrova and Tarrow 2007:88). The case of “Save Old Kyiv” (SOK) is precisely a case of transactional activism, and the final challenge of this research is to explore this case in order to indicate the promises and potential limitations of transactional activism.

These challenges are addressed in four chapters and concluding remarks. In chapter 1 I make a critical overview of the existing theoretical frameworks. Within this theoretical overview some problematic theoretical issues and growing tendencies are emphasized. The first issue is the widespread uncritical approach toward the concept of “radical” which does not elaborate properly on the distinction between radical tactics and radical goals. The second

¹ The concept of transactional activism is discussed in section 2.2.

concerns explanatory limitations of the existing approaches toward radicalization of tactics. The main tendency within these approaches, as the theoretical overview also demonstrates, is scholars' appeal and elaboration on more contextualized studies. On the basis of these main points I consider complex and contextualized research to be an appropriate way of explaining radicalization of tactics in my case-study. In chapter 2 and chapter 3 I elaborate on the two directions which are necessary to conduct this complex and contextualized study. The former refers to the issues of context on the levels of general urban question and the Ukrainian context. The latter proceed with the issues of complex methodology which I have used in this research. In chapter 4 I analyze the dynamics of radicalization within the case-study of the transactional activism in contemporary Kyiv. I end the paper with the concluding remarks about the factors of radicalization and the limitations of transactional mobilization in post-Orange Ukraine.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

The question of radicalization is theorized by a broad scope of literature in social movement studies. In order to approach radicalization empirically, I make a critical review of this literature in two important directions. The first direction is the issue of defining radicalization which is essential for an empirical research. I elaborate on this direction in the first section of the chapter. The second direction is the issue of explaining radicalization within social movement studies. This direction is elaborated in the second section of the chapter.

The general attempt of this review is to approach the question of radicalization on theoretical level critically. By doing this, I emphasize conceptual and methodological problems within existing scope of literature in both the questions of defining and explaining radicalization of tactics.

1.1. Conceptual and Operational Definition of the Radical and Radicalization

The question of radical protest in the contemporary academic approaches is a rather complicated and controversial one because of one major theoretical gap. This gap refers to the very conceptualization of the phenomenon: what does radical actually mean? Or, as Carol Muller puts it precisely (1999:544):

Does "radical" apply to: claims that seek to undermine existing social and political interests of people and institutions with wealth or power; to tactics that violate normative understandings on how claims are processed, including the embrace of violence; to both; or to its use as an unspecified term reflecting non-problematic understandings shared by scholars with activists and even the general public.

The last option seems to be the most widespread answer to the challenges of

conceptualization. Scholars do often use the notions of “radical” uncritically: either by applying it inseparably to both tactical and symbolic dimension (Benford 1993; Della Porta 1995; Ferro 2002; Gilmore 2003) or by accepting an indefinite cause-effect relation between the two dimensions (Balser 1997; Earl 2003; Myers 1971). This distinction matters explicitly in my case-study where the radicalization of tactics does not go parallel to radical claims. For this reason, I believe that for the empirical level, the conceptual distinction between radical goals and tactics needs to be taken into consideration; and with the help of empirical research the relation between radicalization of the two levels needs to be specified. This specification goes beyond the limits of this paper; however, an attempt to problematize the relation between the two distinct processes of radicalization more precisely is done in chapter 4 within the material of my case-study.

In order to approach radicalization of tactics empirically, one more theoretical issue should be discussed, the issue of conceptual and operational definition of the process. As far as many authors take the question of conceptualizing the radical tactics uncritically, referring to “disruptive”, “radical”, “confrontational” or “violent” action (Della Porta and Diani 2006; Kriesi 1995), they are of little help in conceptualizing radicalization of tactics. However, others try to approach this problem in a more sophisticated and precise manner. For example, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2002) propose one sample classification of protest episodes from the empirical work on Venezuelan contentions of 1983-1999 and one of their own. In Venezuelan studies by Maya Lopez protest events are classified as conventional, confrontational or violent (López-Maya 2002:203). Conventional events such as meetings and authorized demonstrations are generally known in the society and for this reason they do not evoke fear or a feeling of danger. Confrontational events such as street blockades and

occupation of public buildings are usually unknown or illegal in society. While they do not involve violence, confrontational protest events evoke some tensions and feelings of danger. And finally, violent events involve actions which cause material or human damage.

This classification looks consistent but only to some extent. The problems may appear when one starts questioning, for example, what does “material damage” mean? Della Porta and Diani (2006) consider industrial strikes to cause material damage because they lead to economic losses. Following this logic, occupation of public building can be evaluated as causing material damage and thus as violent action. Tilly and Tarrow themselves refer to two types of contention where “Contained contention occurs within the limits set by prescribed and tolerated performances. Transgressive contention breaks out of those institutional limits into forbidden or previously unknown territory” (2002:83). To my mind, the weak point of both classifications is that they are based on the external attitude toward protest action. This does make sense if one concentrates on the relation between action and reaction but this also raises the question of relatively radical action, the definition of which can vary across time and space because of such notions as “illegal” or “institutional limits”. Moreover, in some countries legal public meetings and demonstrations can be repressed. Because of all these problems with conceptual definition, I prefer to use working definition of “radical” in this paper. I refer to radical tactics as those which, no matter their tactical aims, presuppose conscious physical or material damage and confrontation in the process of their realization.

The next challenge is the challenge of operational definition or definition of the process of radicalization. I have found the solution to the challenges of theorizing radicalization in the least expected approach, namely, in an article by the follower of the rational choice theory². Mario Ferro (2002:155) writes that “a given policy can only be said to

² Criticism of this approach within the question of radicalization can be found in the next section

be more or less extreme relative to the one the organization endorsed before, not relative to the policy endorsed by some other organization in some other time or place. Thus extremism in this chapter is basically synonymous with radicalization”. While in his work he does not overcome the problem of conceptual gap I have mentioned above, while he mixes radical and radicalization, and while I do not agree that radical action can not be compared between different contexts and groups, still he makes a good starting point towards operationalizing radicalization as a process within social movement dynamics. Hence, within the mentioned working definition of radical, in this research I refer to the radicalization of tactics as using more radical tactics compared with those previously used within the social movement.

1.2. Radicalization of Tactics and the Problem of Complex Explanation

At the current stage of the development of social movement theory there are several approaches within which scholars try to research and explain different aspects of collective protest, including the factors which determine turning to a specific tactics of the collective action. Going further, there are different directions of theorizing within these approaches. Each of these directions concentrates the scholar's attention on one or several levels of social reality and structure. So, in order to systematize academic debates about the factors which influence radicalization of collective action, I critically review those factors on each level within the general development of the approaches. The review of the general development is helpful in outlining important theoretical tendencies in social movement studies. Further, I specify conceptual methodological relations between these theories and define the problematic gap in contemporary academic approaches toward the radicalization in social

protest.

In classical sociology the state is often described as a political formation with the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (e.g., Weber 1991). This can be the reason why representatives of the classical sociology paid attention to the explanations of uninstitutional collective violence by viewing it as irrational action. Another explanation for this can be the domination of the socio-psychological approach to agency at the beginning of the 20th century. That is why the majority of researches on protest activity at that time were either historical or socio-psychological.

One of the first theories which explain the radicalization of tactics on micro-level is the socio-psychological collective behavior approach toward collective action. Followers of this approach pay attention mainly to individual engagement, operating with notions of alienation, relative deprivation, authoritarian personality (Hirsch 1990; Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson 1980). The socio-psychological theory of collective behavior is heavily criticized for its assumption that “[m]ovement participants are ... nonrational actors functioning outside of normative constraints” (Morris 1981:744). From the perspective of engagement in radical action one can also argue that high-risk activism requires a high level of group integration; hence, classical socio-psychological perspective is not really adequate to explain this aspect.

Another micro-level approach in the sociology of social movements is the theory of rational choice which emerged in the middle of the previous century out of the critique of the irrational actor within the socio-psychological approach. Also dealing mainly on the individual level, followers of this theory operate with the notions of rational and calculating actor in collective action. Within these theoretical assumptions scholars build models which

try to explain individual participation in social protest (e.g., Opp, Peter and Petra 1989). On the one side, contemporary proponents of the rational choice theory use such notions like individual losses/gains and critical mass (King 2004); on the other side, they criticize emphasis on individual interest in earlier versions of rational choice approach and argue for the notion of public goods and cooperation for personal interest in individual decision (Ferrero 2005; Finkel and Muller 1998; Muller and Opp 1986; Oberschall 1994).

Rational choice theory is mainly criticized because of its rather narrow vision of the individual as a rational and calculating actor (Hirsch 1990). Within the question of radicalization there are some additional doubts about individual engagement in high-risk activity because of cost/benefits. Moreover, this theory can hardly explain spontaneous collective violence and it pays almost no attention to collective decision-making. To my mind, it is the weakest point of rational choice framework as far as one should regard tactics as collective choice – not as a sum of individual choices. In this respect, some scholars speak about collective choice of tactics from the available repertoires (Della Porta and Diani 2006, chapter 7; Derville 2005; Ennis 1987; Liepins 1998); however, they do take into consideration other factors which influence strategic choice, for example the context of protest and its broader properties such as ideology.

Popular outbreak and unrest of the 60s challenged the two mentioned approaches and gave a push toward new ways of theorizing about social movements. It was precisely that period when the resource mobilization approach emerged and became classical in the studies of social movements. Within this approach, protest activity is explained on the intersection of micro- and mezo-level where different factors can facilitate or restrict resource mobilization. On the micro-level, scholars pay attention to micro-mobilization of human resources through

individual social interaction and networks between individuals (Gilmore 2003; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Morris 1981). According to this approach, previous contacts with other activists, previous experience of activism, experience in current activism, biographical peculiarities and position in social networks influence one's engagement in protest activity. On the mezo-level, followers of the resource mobilization approach pay attention to the position of social movement in a broader context of networks of actors (Haines 1984; Meyer and Whittier 1994; Myers 1971; Williams 2004). From this perspective the collective actors can be isolated or integrated within the sector, they can compete with each other and they can have some amount of real/imaginary/potential allies which depends on many aspects of movement's activity. These factors can partly cause radicalization of tactics: for example, isolation can promote radicalization because it limits resources. At the same time, these factors can partly be the results of group's activity: for example, radicalization can promote isolation. Additionally, movement's position within the broader context of protest activity and its relations with other actors (e.g., interest groups, parties, media) influence the tactics of collective action (Kriesi 1996; Rucht 1992). Scholars argue that lack or losses of allies promote radicalization but also emphasize one more important mezo-level factor – organizational structure of the movement (Kriesi 1996). In this respect they state that the level of professionalization, the size and structure of organization, and group dynamics influence movement tactics (Balser 1997; Benford 1993; Norris and Cable 1994; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). I can add that the relation between organizational structure and protest tactics is dual: organizational structure of the movement itself can be both partly result and partly cause of the tactical choice. For example, the strong hierarchy can be the consequence of underground activity (as a result of radical tactics). At the same time, because of a leader's point of view

within strong hierarchy of the group, that group can be led by him/her toward the radical tactics of collective protest. Moreover, as Frank Myers (1971) argues, radical tactics can even explain the peculiarity of leadership: high-risk activism is usually easier accepted by younger people and vice versa.

The resource mobilization approach can be criticized for its strategic orientation and a lack of attention to a broader structural context. However, this structural context is integrated in the approach by its variation; its proponents research structures of political opportunities which can facilitate or restrict resource mobilization. Proponents of this theory pay attention to the general properties of the political structures such as strength of the state power and its inclusiveness (Kriesi 1995; Tarrow 1998; Wieviorka 2005), reaction of the state authorities on the protest activity and countermeasures (Balser 1997; Earl 2003; Kriesi 1995; Tarrow 1998). The main criticism of political opportunity theory attacks its turn toward structural overdetermination. For example, William Gamson and David Meyer (1996) argue that “[i]t threatens to become an all-encompassing fudge factor for all the conditions and circumstances that form the context for collective action. Used to explain so much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all” (p. 275). Moreover, some research in the framework of this approach challenges its theoretical assumptions while demonstrating that popular outbreak can emerge without objective structural opportunities when they are perceived as existing (Kenney 2005; Kurzman 1996). Moreover, as some scholars point out, this perception can be formed through the framing processes (Kenney 2005). Because of its macro indicators and theoretical ambiguity the structure of political opportunities can hardly be explored within the limits of this paper. However, the concept of perceived opportunities seems to be comprehensible. Moreover, I argue that the explanatory power of this concept can be extended beyond the

question of mobilization. Regarding radicalization, for example, perceived systematic limitation of the possibility to use institutionalized tactics can lead to more radical methods of contention. Some exercise on this issue on empirical level can be found in chapter 4.

The last well elaborated approach in the social movement studies develops in the early 1980s form sociological concept of frames and refers to interpretative structures and processes within social movements. Framing process in social movements is conceptualized as a strategic activity which aims to position social movements within a broader context and which includes three main elements: diagnosis, prognosis and motivation (Snow and Benford 2000). Through these elements of framing, a social movement problematizes, proposes solutions and tries to persuade identified individuals and collective actors to be engaged in protest activities. Framing process itself refers to activity or, more precisely, discursive action or communicative action (Steinberg 1998) which implies both agency and contention (Snow and Benford 2000:614). Within this approach, interpretative processes do not occur in vacuum but rather in the complex multi-organizational field which on the level of actors includes other movements, challenged authority, media, by-standers, etc. For these reasons, scholars refer to concepts of master- and cultural frames (e.g. Fisher 1997) and raise problematic issue of relation between personal narratives and collective frames in the process of micro-mobilization (e.g. Steinberg 1998). The framing studies are not unproblematic, and the main criticism can arise around their limited focus on symbolic or discursive aspects of protest activities, while those aspects are only part of far more complex processes and structures.

This brief critical overview of the development within social movement approaches shows two main points. First of all, each of the approaches has its limitations and problematic issues. Proponents of socio-psychological and rational choice theories rely too much on

atomized and ideal either irrational or rational individual, without paying sufficient attention to the complex environment in which that individual operates. Proponents of the resource mobilization approach maneuver between the two extremes of strategic agency and structural determination. Scholars of framing processes and structures limit themselves to one aspect of protest activities. Secondly, this overview shows one general tendency in the social movement studies which is the tendency toward contextualized research and theory. While the first two approaches lack any sufficient references to context, such references emerge within the latter theories. Scholars pay attention to networks and protest fields in resource mobilization theory; they elaborate on macro-level socio-political structures in political opportunity approach; they develop concepts of master- and cultural frames in framing studies.

How do these two main points matter in empirical research? While the problem of theoretical limitations puts challenges, the tendency toward contextualized studies, which is praised by many scholars (e.g., Edelman 2001; Nash 2005; Oliver et al. 2002), can be an answer to those challenges. Kitty Calavita and Carroll Seron (1992:766-768) in their reflections on contemporary sociology of social movements argue that “[t]he challenge now is to bridge the divide between structure-based and people-based analyses of social process”, but “[this] does not mean that we must search for radically new paradigms or discard the social science tradition altogether [because within] sociology there is a long tradition of inductively developed, contextualized approaches to the analysis of social life”. Not surprisingly, some scholars have added this advice to their methodological arsenal (e.g., Della Porta 1995; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Moreover, such tradition of inductively developed and contextualized approach stands at the very core of anthropological studies. Anthropological or ethnographic methodology gives precise instruments to conduct contextualized and

complex research. While the application of this methodology in my research is discussed in chapter 3, the next chapter gives an insight into the context of my case-study on two levels: the general level of urban issues and the level of social movements in the Ukrainian context.

Chapter 2: The Issues of Context

2.1. The Twofold Relations of Urban Context and Social Movements

Along with urbanization processes the question of urban issues became important in different dimensions, including that of social protests. In this respect, social scholars have been elaborating on the two main directions: how social struggle matters for cities and how cities matter for social struggle. Precisely to these two directions I pay attention here, as they are important for placing my research within urban context.

First of all, the two fundamental approaches toward the issue how social struggle matters for the cities should be distinguished. The first one is the critical theory which is elaborated within Marxist analysis of capitalist societies. The second one is the liberal approach of civil society, social capital and social inclusion. However, it should be added that this distinction is not so well-established and that different scholars often use theoretical synthesis of both approaches in their researches. The essential difference is situated rather on the level of political application where the proponents of the Marxist approach argue for more fundamental underlying mechanisms of the urban processes; hence, they argue for the need for more fundamental changes. This difference matters in my research because it is not only scholars who use one or another framework. Activists' frameworks within urban social struggle can also refer to one of these visions of the urban problems and respective solutions of them.

Critical urban theory was firstly developed by Henry Lefebvre in the 60's and 70's. In his works (Lefebvre 1991; Lefebvre 1996) the urban processes are analyzed as the processes

within the capitalist system where the production of space within the capitalist mode of production results into its fragmentation and homogenization. Within such a system, Lefebvre argues, common dwellers are partially excluded from urban reality and in order to enter that reality fully they should claim the right to the city which “legitimizes the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organizations” (Lefebvre 1996:195). He also argues that only revolutionary initiative can solve urban problems and that such an initiative is impossible without working class (e.g., Lefebvre 1996, chapter 14). This kind of radical Marxist analysis is further developed by different scholars and Lefebvre concept of the right to the city is sometimes used in the empirical analysis of contemporary urban development and social struggle around its issues (e.g., Dikec 2002; Staeheli, Mitchell and Gibson 2005).

One of the most sophisticated attempts to develop this Marxist approach is done by David Harvey in his later works (Harvey 2003a; Harvey 2003b; Harvey 2008). In those works his own Marxist approach to the urban processes (Harvey 1993) is accompanied by the emphasis on social movements and social struggle against neoliberalism and capitalist accumulation which create “a world in which the rights of private property and the profit rate trump all other notions of rights” (Harvey 2008:23). He argues that people should struggle for “control over the production and utilization of the surplus” (Harvey 2008:37) in the cities because in the neoliberal system those processes are concentrated precisely in urban context (see also Sassen 1996; Kohler and Wissen 2003).

While Harvey applies the Marxist approach toward urban struggle in the neoliberal period, an important earlier contribution by Manuel Castells should be also mentioned. Castells developed his theory of urban social movements before the neoliberal turn. In that

context he explains urban crisis as “a particular form of the more general crisis linked to the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production” (Castells 1982:5) and emphasizes the role of state intervention in the city, intervention which is an exercise of power of the dominant class. Because of the historical context of his theory the story of the urban processes looks somehow different from the one that the critical scholars observe now with the neoliberal mantra of privatization, liberalization and rule of the private interests in which the state plays only supplementary role. Still, actual contribution is done in Castells' work (1977) on precisely urban social movements: those who challenge to make a structural transformation of the urban system. In his work Castells presents urban social movements as a broad coalition of actors that can potentially promote fundamental changes not only on the urban level but also on the whole of society. He argues that it is the highest potential effect on the scale where participation, as a rather symbolic effect, corresponds to the lowest level, and protest, as a reformist effect, stands in the middle of the scale (Castells 1997:246-275).

The liberal formulation of the urban problems and its solutions was developed as a response to the shrinking role of the state within neoliberal system. While the state intervention was found inappropriate, while markets obviously failed to solve the problems without external help and even generated more challenges, a third way between the two was theoretically found. The proponents of this third way support the hope for civil society in the form of self-organization of those disadvantaged in order to overcome social exclusion (Harloe 2001; Mayer 2003). From the first sight the general vocabulary of this formulation does not differ much from some of the radical formulations except the notion of social exclusion. However, this notion creates a fundamental difference: first of all, it refers to individualistic framework which is so common in the liberal approach; secondly, it is poorly

related to the systematic causes of the problems. It frames problems of those disadvantaged as related rather to personal competitiveness, a lack of which is usually explained through the lack of social capital – one more key concept which some scholars criticize as too general, unspecified and market-oriented (e.g., Fine 2002). The notion of civil society is also ambiguous within the liberal approach as far as it refers mainly to one particular actor (Ferguson 2006) which is non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The concept of NGOs is also criticized for many reasons: starting from the same issue of generalization and a lack of specificity (Fisher 1997) and ending with their role in the displacement of social movements (Petras and Veltmeyer 2005). I should also add that such liberal approach toward urban question refers mainly to the issue of those disadvantaged and does not include other questions of precisely urban development which are included into general critical theory. For example, the issue of urban space and its construction, which is essential for this paper, cannot be approached within this framework. However, it can be approached within general liberal framework – the one which refers to law, democratic government and problems of corruption.

The question of how the urban matters for social movements is sometimes mentioned by social movement scholars (e.g., McAdam and Paulsen 1993). The most explicit contribution to this question, and the one which seems to be strongly related to the concept of transactional activism, is recently made by Walter Nicholls (2008). This scholar relates the network approach toward social movements with urban context. His main conclusion is that urban context generally facilitates mobilization because of the concentration of different groups whose interests intersect within dense physical space and social relations. In this context, strong ties develop emotional and normative resources while density and

concentration help establish weak ties which give a basis for mobilization of specialized resources and alliances. What is more important, Nicholls also points the issue of common framework which can be problematic to establish within such a heterogeneous context and which is hardly mentioned by Sidney Tarrow and Tsveta Petrova in their elaboration on transactional activism³.

2.2. Controversies of Passivity and Mobilization in the Ukrainian Context

In order to understand the Ukrainian context, I will at first make a brief historical outlook of protest activities and the general context in which they emerged since the country's independence. Further, I will make a review of existing academic debates on the issue of social movements in Ukraine.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and declaration of independence in 1991 were accompanied by popular mobilization and enthusiasm in Ukraine. However, the following years witnessed mass protests and strikes against neoliberal policy which was intensively applied in the country. Those protests were against privatization of public services and enterprises, liberalization of prices, delays in wages and pensions payment (Ishchenko 2008). By the end of the 90's protests were declining and Ukraine joined that general tendency of passivity, apathy and lack of action which the majority of scholars observe in the post-Soviet context (e.g., Dawson 1996; Moshes 2003; Petrova and Tarrow 2007).

“Ukraine without Kuchma”, the next outbreak of popular mobilization of 2001, took the form of a rather confrontational protest which was the direct reaction to the corruption scandal and a general reaction against semi-authoritarian and oligarchic regime of the

³ Discussed in the next section.

President Leonid Kuchma. This protest was suppressed by the state and its security forces. The difference between “Ukraine without Kuchma” and the protests of the early 90's is significant and should be emphasized. This difference refers to the general framework of the claims during these two periods of popular mobilization. The earlier protest mobilization took place around the reaction against neoliberal policies and their outcomes; to some extent it challenged the systematic economic foundation of the policies. In contrast with those protests, claims of “Ukraine without Kuchma” were obviously liberal claims against corruption and for democratization. This shift and, in the content of claims is post-Soviet Ukraine, its causes are not actually studied by social scholars, and explaining this issue is beyond the limits of my own research. However, some analysis of the outcomes of the liberal turn in claims of the protesters is outlined in chapter 4.

This liberal turn in the content of claims culminated in 2004 in the so-called Orange Revolution – protests against electoral fraud during presidential elections. During this protest, the particular issue of electoral fraud was strongly related with the same liberal claims against corruption and illegality as during “Ukraine without Kuchma”. The issue of corruption was particularly reinforced not only through the fact of electoral fraud. It was also reinforced by the twofold character of mobilization: part of the protesters supported one candidate and accused the other of electoral fraud; another part supported the accused candidate and denied fraud. As a result, the two sides of the protest systematically accused each other of protesting for money or, in other words, of corrupted protest. The impact of this dimension of liberal corruption issue on further protest activities in Ukraine is hardly researched by social scholars and some analysis of these issues can be also found in chapter 4.

It should be noted that academic debates on social movements in Ukraine are mainly

concentrated on two realms which are approached within liberal framework. The first one is the Orange Revolution as one of the biggest recent protest events in Ukraine which is generally praised as rather unexpected and positive outbreak of popular mobilization. The second is civil society, the level of its development in Ukraine and its role “in the process of democratic consolidation and the transition to market economy” (Bernhard 1993:326). Quite often scholars also relate those two realms while speaking about the role of civil society in the Orange Revolution and the influence of the Orange Revolution on the development of civil society.

While speaking about civil society, authors mainly refer to NGOs and voluntary associations. They sometimes do mention other types of institutionalized actors, such as trade unions (Isajw 2004) or use the definition of civil society in its classical general form which can potentially include a broader scope of actors (Kuts 2001). However, even those authors elaborate within liberal framework and almost exclusively on the analysis of NGOs while presenting it as analysis of civil society. Hence, it is not surprising, that scholars sometimes make conclusions about the civil society dynamics on the basis of statistical data about the number of NGOs in Ukraine, which is “small, although steadily growing” (Nanivska 2001:8).

However, those who try to analyze the problems with popular participation, even concentrating mainly on participation in NGOs and voluntary associations, can be very helpful in explaining the general passivity and apathy of Ukrainians which I have mentioned above. Considering this issue, there is a tendency to explain lack of participation through the Ukrainian historical context in which the USSR put structural obstacles in the way of civil society both directly through oppressions, and indirectly through a system of corruption, as well as compulsory participation in meaningless or ineffective organizations (Nanivska 2001).

Moreover, such historical context of oppression (not only during the Soviet period but even earlier history), as some scholars suggest (Jaworsky 1995), promoted conservatism and rejection of confrontational action, especially among older people. Further, lack of participation is also explained through referring to small middle-class (which is considered to be the “core” of civil society), oligarchic politics of the state, corruption (Isajw 2004), fragmentation of population through state-controlled media and rather repressive reaction of the state before the Orange Revolution (Darden 1995; Struensee 2002). In terms of social movement studies, this situation can be reformulated as a lack of political opportunities. Moreover, some authors point out that Soviet system dried almost all the available resources for popular mobilization and after independence those resources are still distributed structurally uneven (Dawson 1996). Through lack of resources and competition for them between social movements scholars explain lack of radical groups which are situated by the state in the worst position in this competition. For these reasons scholars also conclude that almost the only potential actors in the social protest field are national elite and groups sponsored by foreign resources (Dawson 1996:27).

It is not surprising that some scholars explain mass mobilization during the Orange Revolution through foreign assistance (McFaul 2007); however, others are critical about such conclusions (Kolybashkina and Temnenko 2005). They rather argue for the role of civil society (NGOs) which they consider to be relatively developed in Ukraine, Georgia and other countries where “colored revolutions” succeeded (Fairbank 2005; Kolybashkina and Temnenko 2005). However, this argument is a rather controversial one as far as other scholars produce rather critical statements about the level of its development just before the Orange Revolution (Isajw 2004). One more way to explain popular outbreaks in the post-Soviet

context after 2002 is by referring to the favorable elements in the structure of political opportunities such as strong opposition, semi-autocratic regime, division among military and police forces, etc (McFaul 2005; D'Anieri 2006). Speaking about the impact of the Orange Revolution on popular activity in Ukraine, scholars mainly indicate two positive points: impulse toward further development of civil society and the protest experience which was gained by people (Motyl 2005). However, as the analysis in chapter 4 shows, the impact of the Orange Revolution on the protest experience is rather controversial.

Some researches also demonstrate that the Orange Revolution was not the final solution to the passivity and apathy of people. Petrova and Tarrow (2007) suggest that the level of individual participation is still extremely low in East-Central Europe and Ukraine is not an exception. This does not mean that there can be no social protests in this region; however, they cannot be based on a relatively mass involvement. While analyzing the Hungarian campaign against the construction project of ring-road around Budapest, they approach the case-study through the relational dimension of protest which refers to interactions between different protest actors. This approach leads them to the potential answer to the challenges of individual passivity. They suggest that transactional activism, meaning activism based on ties between different protest actors, is one possible alternative to participatory activism in the post-Soviet context. However, being rather promising, the phenomenon of transactional activism is not substantially researched yet. And, as my case-study in chapter 4 shows, transactional activism has general and contextual limits.

Chapter 3: Discussion of Methodology

As far as I have chosen a complex theoretical explanation for this research, appropriate methodology should be directly relevant to this theoretical background. Because of the multi-level field for conducting research, methodology should be able to explore social processes, structures and actions within these different levels. Moreover, this methodology should be able to grasp dynamics of those processes, structures, and action. Additionally, it should also be able to deal with individual aspects in both retrospective and present time. I have also argued in chapter 1 that I find ethnographic methods an appropriate answer to the theoretical challenges. In this chapter, I briefly describe the methods which I have used in my research and make some reflections on problems in the field which are important to mention.

Precisely ethnographic methods are complex and flexible enough to cover the contextual complexity of the field. In this case-study, participatory observation combined with semi-structured interviews and document analysis was extremely helpful. As I was an activist of Save Old Kyiv starting from December 2007, participatory observation was both retrospective and in real time. Observatory notes were the main data for analysis within this research strategy. I refer to classical observatory notes in real time observation and to my memory in combination with unstructured notes in retrospective observation. However, some reflections on my participation in the initiative should be done. First of all, I find my participation to be a unique chance to apply classical ethnographic method in this research. Within limited time and other resources, my participation in the initiative gives the insight and material which I could not get in other circumstances. However, I should be aware of my personal attitudes and experience while analyzing this material.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were taken, mainly with informal leaders of the initiative, because of its structure. This structure can be relatively divided, on the basis of the participatory factor, into core activists and situational activists. The first group is the one that most actively deals with main organizational aspects by producing ideas for the next protest and making them technically possible. Activists of the second group participate in protests from time to time but have little to do with the shaping of its key elements. Hence, I have found it sufficient that activists from the core group have the most important impact on tactics and other key aspects of protest activity. Informal leaders of the core group were defined through participatory observation.

One key problem which should be mentioned about these semi-structured interviews is the fact that they are, to an extent, already an analysis rather than material for analysis. This problem is caused by the peculiarities of the respondents. The majority of the initiative's participants are young and highly educated people. Moreover, at least three of my respondents have higher education in social sciences, and at least two of them have social movement studies among their main academic interests. This situation is helpful but there is also a danger of overusing their reflections. However, because I study the initiative on the basis of a complex theoretical perspective and empirical material, this danger is minimized.

The data for document analysis consist of two major blocks: external documents and internal documents. The first block consists of mass-media information such as articles. The second, internal block includes the initiative's Internet blog (Save Old Kyiv 2007-2009) which includes over 1300 entries: announcements, press-releases, suggestions, reports about actions, etc. In addition to the entries themselves, comments and discussions on them are also important. The internal block also includes initiative's mailing list which consists of 81

participants and almost 1000 topics. These topics are strongly related to the blog's entries but have more informal and open format of debates on important aspects. Moreover, the organizational process is more embraced in mailing list topics and discussions than in the blog, because the blog is a public source which activists find inappropriate for such information. However, the mailing list of the initiative is a rather closed source of information. For this reason, there is no point to refer to a particular topic or email in the topic because they are not in free public access anyway. In my analysis, I refer to the material from this source as either discussions in mailing list or as private conversations.

Chapter 4: The Case of Transactional Activism in Contemporary Ukraine

There were three main episodes of radicalization within SOK's activities; three sections in this chapter are organized around them but not limited to them. Behind these episodes, there is plenty of material to analyze in order to understand the factors of radicalization in relation to the context and dynamics of other aspects of SOK's protests.

4.1. From Art-Protests to Direct Action

In this section I am going to describe and analyze the first stages of the development of the protest initiative in details. I find these stages the most crucial because precisely during the first few months of protest activity radicalization emerged in the form of turning from theatrical art-protest to the direct action, which later became the main protest tactic of SOK.

The first construction site around which the initiative was actually created was the construction project on Pejzazhna Alley. There were several peculiarities of this construction project worth mentioning in order to understand why it became the target of relatively substantial protest activity. First of all, the place itself is both of historical and recreational significance. Pejzazhna Alley and surrounding territories are under the protection of UNESCO and they are one of the favorite places for many people to spend their free time. Some activists mentioned in their interviews their special personal affiliations toward this place.

Moreover, precisely because this historical place became the first protest site of the initiative, because community blog was created firstly to spread information about this place,

the initiative received its name from the name of the community blog almost automatically. However, further protests were against not only construction projects in the places of historical significance, but also against so-called “compact building” of elite houses and office blocks which often replaced parks, playgrounds, public gardens and damaged nearby buildings.

Secondly, official builder of the construction project on Pejzazhna Alley, which was supposed to be a large elite building with swimming-pool on the roof, was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ironically, the Minister of foreign Affairs Volodymyr Ogryzko was at the same time the official representative of UNESCO in Ukraine; the fact was often emphasized in the initiative's news releases. Finally, there was a several-year-long trial organized by local tenants against this construction project. At that moment when the construction site was fenced around, a temporary court prohibition of any construction works was in force.

The first two protest events on Pejzazhna Alley were organized by up to 10 people who knew each other either personally or through Internet blogs. Those organizers, as the majority of participants in general, were young people in their twenties, with higher education. Most of them can be classified as liberal, however, there were two or three people who were leftist and had previous protest experience mainly within leftist protest campaigns. Participants (up to 100 people) were also mobilized mainly through personal networks, Internet blogs and blog community (which was created in September 2007 by the first organizers), and partly through other Internet resources. The first protest, which took place on 29 of September, was in the form of art-protest which included a concert by a popular Ukrainian band, speeches by activists, theatrical performance and the reading of an open letter to the President of Ukraine. This first and the following protests were framed in liberal

terms as protests against illegal construction projects with the major emphasis on corruption, violation of laws and norms.

After this first protest, one of the organizers wrote a posting in the community in which he stated that judicial activity is good but if the construction works would start, he questioned whether there would be “at least some people ready to take part in civil disobedience, create at least non-violent and not directed against people, yet physical resistance starting with destruction of the fence, physical blockage of the construction site, etc” (Chapeye 2007a)⁴. All comments to this posting were supportive.

On 5 of October some construction materials and machinery were brought to the construction site. The first reaction on these activities was another open letter to the President of Ukraine in which the construction of the apartment building on the historical site was called a “crime against Kyiv, Ukrainian and World communities” (Ziziboom 2007). In this letter activists also emphasized the relation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the construction project. On 30 of October “unknown persons” cut down most trees around the construction site.

On 3 of November the second protest event took place. It consisted mainly of speeches, a concert by another Ukrainian band, as well as writing messages on the construction fence; some Ukrainian artists came to support the protest. The next day, all the messages were covered with fresh paint. The same day one activist wrote a posting in which he emphasized that the construction works were going on, disregarding previous protest events (Chapeye 2007b). He stated that blockage was needed and asked for ideas and proposals. A lot of ideas were produced in the comments: from institutional methods, such as

⁴ Here and further the separate entries from the community blog are used as regular references and can be found among other sources in References in alphabetical order. Here and further translation from Ukrainian and Russian is mine.

an open letter to UNESCO and state authorities, to theatrical protest action in the form of a symbolic attack and under the title “Rebellious Carnival”.

The arguments for the Rebellious Carnival were to attract a maximum amount of public attention and to propagate “the real solution”. The announcement was posted under the title “Revolution on the next Saturday” with the message “Fight against bulldozers and fences: the action will be peaceful and jolly, yet taking into consideration Article 5 of the Constitution: power belongs to the people” (Chapeye 2007c). The event was described as a theatrical carnival-like attack with paint-bombs, toy-guns, etc. It should be added that the main mobilization tactics were characterized as “guerrilla methods...: read yourself and tell others”. It appeared that those leftist organizers, because of their previous engagement in leftist protests, had contacts with several leftist groups and, hence, three (Organization of Marxists, “New Left”⁵ and antifascist-anarchist network) became involved. Precisely in this way SOK became an example of transactional activism and the outcomes of this transactional mobilization should be considered further.

Because some journalists, including those from the leftist groups, became activists of the initiative, announcements about the forthcoming event appeared even in some external mainstream media. As a result, mobilization reached 300 people, which was the biggest in the history of SOK. There were also two more major outcomes of the leftists being involved. Firstly, leftist rhetoric appeared to be widespread both visually (e.g., banner “Down with Capitalism”) and in the form of speeches and chants. Secondly, during the protest event, while all the announced methods were also applied, a group of people, equipped with ropes, brought down several sections of the construction fence. Before the police tried to arrest them, they disappeared into the crowd.

⁵ Here “New Left” is the name of organization.

This protest action caused a broad dissemination of information into mainstream media. As monitoring showed, there were over a dozen publications, video- and photo-reports in the media (Horbal 2007). Reaction of the participants and supporters was rather ambiguous. It was positive but still included some criticism, mainly concerning the presence of leftist rhetoric during the protest. Leftist speeches and banners made some people comment that “[w]hat I don't like is that main speakers wanted to bring down capitalism more than the fence. It is strongly advisable to avoid political agitation further” (Ledilid 2007). The situation with leftist rhetoric was so important for several reasons. First of all, in the official announcements and unofficial appeal of the protest action there were such statements as “[n]o political power is connected with the action” (Cataracty 2007) and “I should remark one more time that this action in a non-party one” (Chapeye 2007d). Secondly, two main reasons why such non-party and non-ideological positioning emerged were that the protest under the flag of any party could be automatically perceived as a paid protest and that leftist rhetoric particularly are perceived negatively by the majority of people in Ukraine. Hence, in order to mobilize more people, a broad coalition which did not produce negative associations was needed, and the activists came to the consensus that no political rhetoric could be used and no single name, except SOK, could appear in the official material about their actions.

Retrospectively, all of the respondents considered that decision the correct one. However, while liberal activists stated that it was an optimal decision to “sacrifice ideological rhetoric in order to do the precise battle effectively”, leftists’ reflections were somehow different. Although leftists did agree that “sectarian rhetoric are problematic” and that on that stage the decision was a correct one because “it was needed to make a concession for the preservation of unity inside the movement”, they all also stated in some way or another that

“[on] the one hand, leftists should explain the systematical reasons which stand behind the problem of illegal constructions... If a particular slogan cannot be understood – it should be reformulated”. Their explanation of the problem was often formulated in terms of critical urban theory, such as “privatization of public space” and “accumulation of profits”. This framework was strongly linked with their anti-capitalist ideology. Moreover, leftist explanation had little to do with illegality of the construction projects because other aspects were more important for them and, as one activist explained, “[we] do not have respect for bourgeois law”. However, this explanation never replaced the initiative's external framework of “illegality” because of the reasons which are discussed in the next section.

On 6 of December despite the resistance of the local tenants, “unknown persons” cut down trees on the construction site while the temporary court prohibition of any construction works was in force. Information about the situation was relatively widely spread through mainstream media. Arsenij Jatsenjuk, the Speaker of the Parliament and ex-Minister of foreign affairs, stated that he, while being the Minister, ordered to cancel all contracts related to the construction project. He also promised to solve the problem of the construction in the near future (Supersymetriya 2007). However, a new theatrical protest action under the title “Rebellious Den” was announced on December 15. In the announcement posted in the community, activists and supporters were asked to come half an hour earlier under pretense of the action to be numerous from the very beginning (Chapeye 2007e). The prohibition of political rhetoric was emphasized one more time. Activists came half an hour earlier and destroyed the whole fence around the construction site, as well as planted some new trees on its territory. When the police arrived, organizers asked activists to leave the construction site and the action went on in the form of speeches with round dances.

Now I am going to analyze radicalization from art-protests to direct action within the different-level approaches, starting from the system of political opportunities and proceeding to micro-mobilization. It is, however, obvious that different factors on the different levels do not act in isolation. For this reason, I will try to emphasize interrelations between the factors and the role of the context in the radicalization dynamics.

System of political opportunities was perceived in this case as closed and not favorable for institutionalized tactics. Among the factors which formed this perception and indicated the real situation, several main factors can be named. First of all, the long court trial against the construction project produced no positive outcomes; all the legal reasons, such as prohibition of construction works in places of historical significance and the danger of caving-in⁶, were disregarded. Secondly, relation of the high officials to this scandalous construction project pointed out their interest in proceeding with the construction works. Empirically, these two factors produced the situation when works were going on with no regard of a temporary court prohibition. As a result, institutional forms of action were considered to be ineffective and led to uninstitutional tactics of street protest. Those tactics were not radical from the beginning, but an absence of change in the political opportunities in general and the situation with the construction project in particular contributed to their radicalization by making some core participants ready to organize physical blockage of the construction works. Closed system of political opportunities also contributed to the turn toward precisely direct action. As some of activists explained in their interviews, by destroying the fence and further planting trees, cleaning the territory of the site from construction materials and filling up the foundation pit, they were merely “enforcing the court

⁶ The construction site on Pejzazhna Alley was situated 15-20 meters from a steep slope of a hill.

decision which the builder did not wish to comply with, while state authorities did not wish or could not force him to comply”.

On the level of the general protest context in Ukraine, some direct influence on the tactics can be found. First of all, in their interviews both leftist and liberal activists of SOK expressed their strong disappointment in those tactics which became popular during and after the Orange Revolution, namely, protest camps. As one of the activists explained, “protest camps were progressive tactics once, but their value had been gradually fading away because they were used too often by political forces and became associated with them, and hence, meaningless. That is why we've chosen another principle”. They also emphasized the importance of protest without political parties because those protesters were (also after the Orange Revolution) mainly perceived as bribed in Ukraine. I should add that my personal experience and participatory observation show that very often a protest is perceived like that by the outsiders. While participating in my first post-Orange demonstration in 2007, I was asked by a passer-by: “How much do they pay you?”. In the case of SOK, local tenants sometimes tried to give money to SOK for help in organizing actions.

One more influence of this anti-politicians position on the radicalization, as one activist explained, was that “there was strong hope within SOK that it would be harder or impossible for politicians to appropriate protest with radical tactics.” However, in spring 2007, while there was the election campaign on the position of Kyivan mayor, video from one SOK's protest was broadcasted by the municipal television channel as video from the protest organized by one of the candidates. It should be also mentioned that, while the activists consciously restricted the presence of any political forces on their actions, local tenants often asked for help simultaneously from different political forces and SOK. As one activist

explained, locals just “tried to use all the possible actors they could reach” while for SOK it was both a matter of principle and reputation. The only thing they could do about presence of political flags in these relatively rare cases was trying to persuade people with flags to take them away. However, these persuasion attempts were not always successful. Secondly, some leftists were also suspicious about NGO-like institutionalized type of action because of their negative perception of NGOs in general (perceived as social activists for money which “pursue their own ends”) and Ukrainian NGOs in particular, (perceived as passive, reformists, cooperating with state authorities). Liberal activists were not so suspicious and there was even cooperation with some NGOs within SOK. Still, regarding effective protest, liberal activists expressed a need for both NGO-like and broad grass-root activities and stated that “something can be changed only when these two types of civil activists will find a common language”.

On the level of resources mobilization, the first fact which should be mentioned is that the initiative in general had not enough resources for a substantial institutionalized action. As one of the most active participants complained, “[we] did not have an opportunity [to act within institutional framework] because the whole paperwork was done by 1-2 people, because we were lacking time and human resources... and because it is only now, after more than a year that I understand how it works and even consult people about these institutional schemes”. A lack of skills and knowledge in this realm played an important role in choosing street tactics. At the same time, several core activists had previous experience of street protest; thus they had skills and knowledge to use this kind of tactics. From the very beginning, the initiative aimed to attract maximum public attention to the situation, so, attraction of media attention was essential. As one activist explained, “[the logic of attracting media attention] was one of the most powerful at that time”. To do this, they needed access to media resources

and human resources for both numerous protests and new ideas. In this respect, transactional mobilization through frontmen was relatively effective and helped to mobilize three leftist networks which supported the protest with every kind of resource: equipment, human resources, media resources, skills and knowledge.

The second important factor of resources mobilization was the peculiarity of these resources which was shaped by transactional mobilization of human resources. As far as some journalists were involved in those leftist groups, they helped to ease access to the media resources and, as one activist stated “it became easier to spread information”. Regarding skills, knowledge and ideas that were brought by leftists, they were of a particular kind. Previous protest experience and ultra-leftist position of these participants made them strongly suspicious of institutional tactics and strongly supportive of direct action. It was precisely leftist activists who organized the first attempt to destroy the fence and, as one activist explained it, “[leftists] introduced revolutionary street technologies from the outside”. There was not anything very revolutionary about those technologies but such a formulation appeared because “such tactics as direct action... were unusual and radical against a background of widespread protest camps and pickets”. Hence, radicalization during this period was strongly influenced by the post-Orange context and by the transactional resource mobilization. New ideas and skills which were brought by leftists, in addition to the lack of progress in the system of political opportunities and relative media resonance achieved during the first attempt to destroy the fence, led to the second successful attempt.

While network relations through frontmen can explain how SOK became an example of transaction activism and why the initiative had access to leftist groups, why were leftists eager to join this protest? First of all, they were interested in the protest against illegal

constructions as one of the most acute problems (for large section of the public) which they framed as a result of capitalist development in Ukraine and because they were longing for “winning trust and authority within general public” when leftists were generally marginalized in Ukraine. Paradoxically, it was rather easy to mobilize all the three networks because of rather complicated relations between them. Being suspicious about the ambitions of each other, they joined the protest almost simultaneously in order to avoid monopolization of the SOK by each other. I do not mean that the reason of simple leftist cooperation was not behind the process – it was, but it was far more complicated because of the relations between these groups. These inter-group relations and relations between leftists and others within SOK had some negative impact on the SOK's activities afterwards⁷.

Finally, destruction of the fence, within the closed system of political opportunities and with existing resources, was found an appropriate tactic to achieve some major goals of the initiative. First of all, on the level of particular construction projects it was important technically as a disturbance of the legal procedure of the construction works⁸ and as a way to make further blockage easier since absence of the fence gave visual and physical access to the whole construction site. Secondly, by disturbing the legal procedure of construction works and by attracting public attention, direct action complicated the construction process by putting obstacles and made state authorities to take the protesters relatively seriously and react. Thirdly, destruction of the fence had a symbolical aim in the dimension of reclaiming access to the privatized public space (according to leftist rhetoric) or to the place where people liked to spend their time and which was a part of historical heritage. In the interviews some activists called destruction of the fence “the most logical tactic” in the protest against

⁷ Inter-group relations are discussed in the next sections.

⁸ According to Ukrainian laws it is prohibited to continue construction works if there is no fence around the site.

construction project because “the fence cuts down the space and thus becomes the first aim of attack: destruction of the fence is simply self-evident”.

Additionally, direct action was claimed as the one that integrates people – both local tenants and activists. Traditional tactics, such as simple mass-meeting, could not involve all the people actively because, as one activist explained, “on the mass-meeting one or two persons speak and others listen passively... while direct action can actively involve everybody who wants to be actively involved”. And finally, it was considered to be an appropriate tactic to achieve the long-term goals which were widespread within leftist activists and some liberals. These goals were empowering the local communities and promoting solidarity, active position and self-organization among common people. In this respect, direct action was supposed to play the role of “propaganda through action” which was supposed to propagate that “common people can act on their own and can influence the problematic situation while the system does not work”.

4.2. From Direct Action to Direct Confrontation

The protest around the construction project on Pejzazhna Alley received some public attention, and while construction works were at least temporarily stopped, the activists switched their activity to other construction sites. Because it became relatively known to the public, SOK did not need to search for another construction project to protest against – since Pejzazhna Alley local tenants contacted activists and asked for help in organizing protest events. Since Pejzazhna Alley, direct action tactics became generally used by SOK in different forms. Destruction of fences was used most often; however, from time to time it was combined with other methods of blockage, such as planting trees, filling up the foundation

pit, blocking the construction crane by hanging oneself from it. The activists' disposition toward precisely destruction of the fences can be illustrated by the fact that in private conversations they expressed regrets and disappointment when local tenants were arguing against this type of tactics.

Direct blockage became popular and regularly used by SOK because it did attract media attention, it did help to stop construction works at least temporarily, and it did sometimes force state authorities to react but without police reaction. Lack of police reaction can be explained in the way that such tactics were at first unexpected, so that, as one activist stated, “police were not ready and therefore helpless”. Further, SOK had some social capital, and builders often were public people and did not want to attract attention by repression. On the other hand, for non-public people, as one activist stated, “SOK was probably not a serious problem”. Besides, disregarding its hopes, SOK failed to mobilize people systematically beyond transactional activism. Hence, they could not attract attention by mass-action, yet direct action attracted attention. For this type of tactic, a relatively small number of people was needed and technical resources, such as equipment and skills, were upgraded gradually. Regarding equipment, activists regularly bought special tools which neither they nor local tenants had before: wire-cutters for the metallic fences sections of which were tied by wire, mountain-climbers' equipment for hanging on the crane, and a circular saw for sawing wooden struts of fences. The majority of those tools were stored in the trunk of one activist's car; the trunk, because of this content, was named “a revolutionary's trunk”.

However, SOK went somehow further in radicalization dynamics, namely, toward direct confrontation. In this respect, two confrontations in two different places with different people should be described. On 16 of March 2008 near Zhovtneva Hospital there was a

confrontation with police which was caused rather consciously by blocking the road⁹. One journalist-activist was injured during the unsuccessful attempt by the police to arrest activists. On 2 of October 2008 on Pervomajaska Street there was a confrontation with tens of guards of the construction site in the form of a conscious counter-attack. Two journalists and one activist were injured. In both cases, activists' tactics can be evaluated, among other characteristics, as conscious provocations or provocative response to provocations; and they were successful in this sense.

The blockage of the road near Zhovtneva Hospital was the culmination of SOK's first action regarding that construction project. The situation with the construction project was rather similar to that with Pejzazhna Alley: several years were spent by local tenants on the unsuccessful court trial in the situation where violation of norms was obvious. Moreover, there were some rumors that the construction site was on the place of the old cemetery where people who had died of serious infections had been buried. The construction of the multi-storied elite building was ordered by a member of parliament from a major party. There were also some crucial differences between the situation at Zhovtneva Hospital and that on Pejzazhna Alley. First of all, local tenants had already organized some actions which attracted media attention, but it did not help to stop construction works even temporarily. Secondly, local tenants were already using the methods of blockage by putting their cars in front of the entrance to the construction site. And finally, the pressure on local tenants was obvious: they were threatened and sometimes even beaten by “unknown persons” during their struggle.

That action which led to the confrontation with police was planned as a combination of theatrical tactics and blockage of the road. The idea of blockage was introduced by an activist from Organization of Marxists who already had experience of blocking the road in

⁹ Blockage of transport communications is considered to be a criminal act according to Ukrainian law.

another protest campaign. Theatrical tactics referred to the rumors about the cemetery on the territory of the construction and took the form of a procession of activists dressed as corpses and as those who buried them. This procession was led to the road and blocked it with the line of activists who locked their arms around the rope which they planned to tie on both sides of the road. However, they simply had no time to do that: the reaction of the police was immediate and quite unexpected in the sense of its numbers. It was obvious that they were ready and waiting just around the corner in numbers which nearly exceeded that of the protesters. Firstly, police tried to break up the blockage but activists were resisting quite heavily. They started arresting people but it was also unsuccessful: activists were constantly rescued by the others and even those that were put in the police car were pulled out at some point. This rather strange situation was solved when the deputy Gennady Moskal, who was close to the Minister of Interior Affairs, was “accidentally” passing by the place of the confrontation. I put “accidentally” in quotation marks because it was the official but quite weak explanation of his sudden appearance. The election campaign on the position of Kyivan mayor was coming and the Minister was going to run for this position. The question of problematic construction projects was acute and further used by some candidates in their election campaigns. So it was more likely that Gennady Moskal went to the place of confrontation with intention to solve this potentially scandalous situation when police were trying to break up the protest in a quite rude, yet ineffective manner. Ironically, the police did not recognize the deputy at first and even tried to arrest him as he intervened. After that, he became rather mad and ordered (in a straight-out and unquotable form) the police to withdraw. After the police dismissed, the protesters partly destroyed the fence around the construction site.

The situation with Pervomajska Street emerged around the territory of the unique record firm where the construction of a multi-storied elite building was not supported by some of the needed official permissions and appeared to be dangerous to the surrounding apartment houses and to the areas of cultural and historical significance. While there was no court trial against this construction project, local tenants had been blocking the construction works for several months on their own. Among others, their argument was that they were not asked about their attitude toward the construction project and the public gathering, which is the requirement for the construction process to be legal, were forged. It should be noted that such a situation with faked public gathering is not unique in Kyiv. Local tenants were also threatened and beaten by “unknown persons” during their blockage.

Precisely on the morning before the confrontation, there was an attempt to deliver machinery and materials to the site. While local tenants were resisting, the attempt to bring in machinery was supported by dozens of private armed guards and “unknown persons” who beat people and even fired a burst. The police, who arrived after a call, were at first passive but then started to use force – against the local tenants. On the same day, SOK organized another action. It started with the activists building a barricade and burning it. Then, accompanied by the rhythmic batting of clubs, the activists started throwing stones at the guards. While the guards stepped back, the activists with circular saws attacked the wooden sections of the fence in general and the gate particularly. Further, they rearranged their lines and, shouting rhythmically, attacked the guards. The confrontation was rather serious and aggressive where both sides used clubs and other improvised weapons¹⁰. In this situation it was obvious that while guards and “unknown persons” were the first who used force against local tenants, the confrontation between activists and guards was provoked by the former.

¹⁰ Reconstructed from interviews, community blog entries and from the report of one activist (ZarazOrg 2008).

This situation could potentially lead to a negative image of the initiative in the media and could be used against the protesters. However, the activists successfully did their best to present everything as if it were the guards who started using force. As a female activist who was speaking with journalists regarding this confrontation explained, “I was just standing there with my innocent face and simply telling lies because I knew that, looking at my face, it would be easy for [journalists] to believe that we could not be that kind of people who... attack first”.

In the cases of Zhovtneva Hospital and Pervomajska Street, there are both similarities between the two and similarities between these cases and Pejzazhna Alley. The general similarity is that, according to the perception of activists and locals, the system of political opportunities was closed for the institutional tactics. First of all, in both cases it was the matter of obvious violations of norms and laws by builders. However, in the situation near Zhovtneva Hospital it was additionally the matter of ineffective court trial and politicians involved; in the situation on Pervomajska Street it was the matter of a faked public gathering. Secondly, in both struggles local tenants were repressed in a rather unofficial, hence, illegitimate way. All of these factors created the crucial difference between these cases and the construction project near Pejzazhna Alley: local tenants had already been using more radical, uninstitutional tactics. Thirdly, in both cases there had been actions which had received some media attention but did not help to stop the constant and sometimes effective attempts by the builders to break through the blockage of local tenants. And finally, reaction of the police was of a particular kind. While on Pejzazhna Alley police were mainly watching without interrupting activities of either protesters or builders, at Zhovtneva Hospital and on

Pervomajaska Street they, as the activists stated, “were on the side of the builders”. In the former case, this suggestion can be supported by the numerous and immediate reactions of the police against activists; in the latter, the police were not intervening while locals were being beaten and further they even helped guards and “unknown persons” to eliminate the resistance. According to the perception of protesters, they were bribed; and this perception was very likely to be correct. The fact that bribed police in the protests against constructions in Kyiv were not rare can be illustrated by a situation which one of the activists described in the interview. During one of relatively peaceful protests activists were rather aggressively threatened by the supposedly bribed police and they decided to call another police unit in order to be protected. Paradoxically, the called unit really did suppress the former one and considered the actions of the activists to be legal.

Regarding the resources mobilization on this stage of the development, I have already mentioned that the activists failed to achieve systematic mobilization they were hoping for. As one explained, “we were hoping for a mobilization which could bring us to the level of general systematic protest in Kyiv, we were hoping that local tenants from different problematic construction projects can understand the generality of their problem and unite”. However, instead of being a catalyst for mobilizing more people, SOK turned to be, as activists named it, “action-group” or “Chip 'n Dale team” which was called for help in organizing actions. This failure can be explained by several factors, first of all, the general passivity, apathy and individualism of Ukrainians to which, as I have mentioned in section 2.2., some scholars refer to while speaking about the post-Soviet context. Moreover, the potential of transactional activism, which was helpful during the first months of SOK's activity and which could compensate lack of participatory activism, was limited. It was

limited because of several reasons among which I have mentioned already: the post-Orange suspicious attitude toward political parties, leftists' suspicious attitude toward NGOs and leftists' principle rejection of any cooperation with far right-wing organizations. These all resulted in a situation where further sustainable transactional cooperation was established only with one NGO which was Opora. And this was done only after heavy debates within the mailing list. During these debates, leftists were arguing that “[because] Opora was created from one project within the election campaign of 2004..., [because it] uses pure liberal approach of “dialog between officials and the society” and “for transparent politics”... [and because it] is that kind of organizations which accumulate grants..., [we] think that cooperation between Opora and SOK as partner organizations does not have any sense”. Not surprisingly, liberal activists reacted to this kind of rhetoric quite negatively. They wrote that they “do not like such near-Bolshevik rhetoric as “pure liberal approach””, that “there is nothing bad in the fact that people organize and plan their work” and that “if somebody gives money..., I don't mind if somebody takes them in order to do something good for this country”. The debates became very ideological and activists accused each other of Bolshevism and liberalism – both with derogative connotations. In the middle of the debates one activist proposed to “introduce moratorium on ideological discussions”. The final decision was that people from Opora could participate but only as separate activists and not as an official organization. Further, while some other ideological discussions of this kind were emerging, informal moratorium was accepted and those discussions were restricted as much as possible.

Next factors which influenced the turn of the initiative toward “action-group” was that local tenants could hardly have the resources for organizing an effective protest and the

reputation of SOK as those who know how and can do it made the initiative in rather great demand. At the same time, as one activist explained, “we are mostly young and have some free time while local tenants usually have their institutional fight which is extremely time-consuming”. And finally, the peculiarity of the problem with illegal construction project, which is immediately the problem of the precise location and precise local tenants, was likely to cause the situation where the struggle against it was fragmented and concentrated in different locations, taking the form of “dotty” protests without any sufficient solidarity in actions. Hypothetically, the initiative could overcome this obstacle of fragmentation. But its preliminary position of “propaganda through action” and lack of resources restricted the possibility of systematic elaboration in the direction of promoting a general framework. Lack of resources, in its turn, can be explained by limited resources of the initiative and specific division of labor, which I have mentioned in the previous section, when several people did organizational work of all kinds and the majority just joined actions from time to time. Ironically, this limitation of resources was firstly overcome through transactional mobilization but was further partly caused by it and by the general post-Orange context of suspect toward political parties. SOK had limited resources; the increasing demand for SOK's help drained these resources even further, and scanty resources were left for propaganda work.

Moreover, because of the ideological heterogeneity, which was also caused by transactional mobilization on the first stages of the protest, the initiative could hardly produce a common framework. Precisely this potential effect of heterogeneous coalition is pointed by Walter Nicholls (2008) whose article on social movements in urban context I have already discussed in section 2.1. Within SOK, a general framework could be either in the form of

more extended liberal framework of illegality, corruption and lack of democratic decision-making; or in the form of leftist rhetoric of capitalism and privatization of public space. Or at least, it could be in the form of some synthesis of the two. But because leftist rhetoric were forbidden at the very beginning and ideological discussions were also prohibited further, these complicated the production of not only leftist but any general framework.

4.3. The Outcomes: Ending in Fragmentation

Because of failed systematic mobilization, SOK appeared to be an action-help group without resources to reach a higher – systematic – level of protest (on the level of the city at least). Moreover, ideological controversies between left and right wing inside the group (which became even harder when some radical right joined), reinforced by some disappointment in its potential to mobilize people and lack of protest action, the group fragmented and this led to some disintegration. There was even a situation when some leftists, mainly because of constant tension and competition between the leftist groups, started spreading rumors that SOK protested for money, and framing SOK as a “petty-bourgeois” and not “really” revolutionary initiative. Ironically, these rumors did not produce any effect on the initiative which actually ignored them. They only led to heavy debates among leftists and to the split of that leftist group: one part of the activists was suspicious about SOK, while another part expressed its strong support of the initiative and thus became disposed against the former part. One of the supportive leftists explained that “[leftists] need to pay attention to what person is doing here and now: [the liberal activists of SOK] are more leftist for me than those “leftists” [who spread rumors] because [the former] participate actively in self-organized grassroots and protests”.

Disintegration of SOK became obvious in winter 2008-2009, when there was a very heated and lasting argument inside the mailing list about a situation. That situation emerged around the concert of a Ukrainian band in support for protest against a construction project. The problem with this situation was that the name of the initiative appeared in the announcement of the event while the event itself was not even discussed in the mailing list. Moreover, within leftist groups the music band had a reputation of being fascist. When the announcement was posted in the community blog, leftist activists raised the discussion, stating that it should be deleted. The discussion lasted for several days and the number of mails in it was probably one of the highest in the mailing list. Activists accused one another of supporting “inhuman ideology” and being “peanut politicians”. As a result, the posting was deleted after a voting and organizers of the event were asked to remove the name of the initiative from the announcement. During the debates, several activists signed out of the mailing list, however, the majority of them resigned after several days.

Systemic factors, such as economic crisis, also had some influence on the decline of SOK's activities by slowing down construction works in Kyiv and by turning the majority of leftists toward more traditional and actual for them problems – such as workers' mobilization. Additionally, lack of self-engagement and self-organization inside the initiative created a situation when almost all work in the direction of organizing protest was done by only a few people. All of these factors weakened and fragmented SOK. As a result, there was almost no street activity after Pervomajska and plans of mass and radical actions were not realized. There was only a lot of paperwork (also done by only few people) with media and consultations with local tenants. As a result of SOK's inability to continue street activity, the phenomenon of *Vechirnij Kyiv* (Evening Kyiv) emerged. This nonpublic group unofficially

united some of the most tactically radical people from SOK who acted anonymously in the form of sabotage (or “hooliganism”, as some activists said of their own acts). People from Evening Kyiv themselves explained their activity as search for a “personal drive” and “psychological therapy” rather than a sensible protest.

However, it should also be added that while the initiative is disintegrated and almost inactive now, it still works as a network of activists. Information about illegal construction projects and issues related to them is still circulating within the mailing list and is spread further in all the available media resources. Moreover, activists from SOK joined other existing and created new virtual and actual protest networks either in form of mailing lists or in form of personal contacts. Hence, it can be stated that SOK enlarged the potential for further transactional activism in post-Orange Kyiv.

Concluding Remarks

This research shows that there is one general problem with transactional activism which has been overlooked by the scholars. The case of “Save Old Kyiv” in post-Orange Ukraine demonstrates that transactional mobilization can both contribute to and restrict the development of a social movement. It shows that transactional activism can have limitations which are caused by its presupposition of broad and heterogeneous coalition in the situation where the resources of participatory activism are scanty. The case demonstrates that transaction between heterogeneous groups can potentially lead to disintegrative dynamics inside the movement. I believe that emergence of those dynamics to a great extent depends on the degree of ideological polarization between different groups in a coalition. Depending on this but also on the context, transactional activism has a potential to bring the whole variety of resources into the movements, but it can also limit their further mobilization. In the case of SOK those limitations were the result of the post-Orange context, relatively polarized ideological positions of the activists and internal dynamics of the group. Partly because of transactional mobilization there was radicalization of those tactics which were used in the process of claim-making; partly because of the same reason radicalization of claims did not occur in the case of SOK.

Other factors which led to the radicalization of protest tactics were the system of political opportunities and the way it was perceived, peculiarity of resource mobilization, group dynamics and, to a great extent, peculiarity of the post-Orange context in which the initiative emerged. Moreover, the complex theoretical approach and ethnographic methodology which were used in this research allow me to make a conclusion that all of these

factors influenced the protest dynamics in relations with each other. For example, the post-Orange context had a sufficient influence on resource mobilization while the latter shaped the group dynamics through the mediation of transactional factor. These complex relations are very likely to be missed in another type of research. Here I do not mean that the chosen approach allows me to catch the whole picture of contention dynamics because, for example, it restricts the possibility to analyze the existing structure of political opportunities. However, it also gives valuable insight which can hardly be achieved through an approach which is limited either to one explanatory system or to less complex and flexible methodological strategies.

Behind the analysis there are some important points which are raised in this paper: either in the form of questions which go beyond the limits of my research or as problematized, yet underresearched issues. The question of tendency from anti-neoliberal to liberal frameworks in Ukrainian protest activities is only pointed to in this paper, but it seems to be an interesting direction for further elaboration. The conceptual gap in uncritical theorizing about the issue of radical and radicalization is indicated and approached in this case-study, but more elaboration is needed in order to make some general conclusions about the precise link between the two. And finally, while the example of SOK shows that the influence of the Orange Revolution on social activism in Ukraine is far more complicated than the one which encourages civil engagement, far more research should be done on this influence.

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