

RUSSIAN STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN INTERACTION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

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This article discusses civil society in Russia—a central topic of interest for many social scientists since the collapse of the Soviet Union. More precisely, I investigate civil society organizations in interaction with the state in the 2000s in order to test state–society models prevailing in the scholarly literature (see e.g. Hale 2002; Janoski 1998; Salamon and Anheier 1998).

In most studies, Russian civil society has been discussed from the viewpoint of the liberal model of state-society relations, according to which civil society is characteristically understood as a counterweight to the state. In this article, I will argue that the situation in Russia is too often analyzed in terms of either a liberal or a statist model, both of which present the state and civil society as distinct, opposing entities. While these models are not without merit, over-reliance on them has precluded contributions from alternative theoretical models. For instance, the social-democratic model has been relevant to my research in Russian Karelia, where multiple Finnish-Russian joint projects in the spheres of civil society and social welfare have fostered cooperation between state authorities and civil society. Furthermore, the Soviet legacy of heavy state involvement in the sphere of “voluntary organizations” prompts the question of whether a model of closer relations between state and civil society might be adequate for the study of contemporary Russia (see also Kulmala 2010a; 2011; Henry 2006; 2010; Sundstrom 2006).

Each theoretical model frames our understanding of a distinct societal sector; however, my study shows that in practice, the boundaries of these sectors blur and intersect, while relations between the (local) state and civil society organizations take many forms. Moreover, I critique the commonly-presented theoretical division of civil society organizations into two separate categories—policy-advocacy organizations and service-provision organizations (e.g. Kaldor 2003; Val Til 2000:23; Young 2006:39–47; in the Russian context, see Sundstrom 2006)—as overly reductionist, insofar as one organization can exhibit both of these functions (also see Kulmala 2011). I return to

both of these points—theoretical state–society models and functions of civil society organizations—throughout my analysis.

Furthermore, inherent in my perspective is a critical stance against looking at Russia's civil society and its relationship with the state only at the federal level or concerning federal policies. By investigating regional and local practices of interaction, it is possible to show that the reality is much more complex than the statist interpretations of the federal-level analyses would suggest. I also show that there is room for regional variation and local solutions. By conducting an ethnographic case study at the local level, I aim to understand Russian civil society organizations' relationship with the state within their daily routines and practices and in their own context (see Verdery 1996:209). With this ethnographic approach, the article also makes a methodological contribution to the debates on theories of civil society. My local and regional data comes from the Sortavala municipal district in the Republic of Karelia, where I conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork for my ongoing doctoral research in 2007–2009.¹

I begin by introducing and discussing theoretical definitions of civil society and state–society models, followed by an overview of Russian federal-level policies concerning civil society organizations and a comparison with my findings on local/regional-level practices in Russian Karelia. Next, I illustrate the complexity of interrelations between the local state and civil society organizations and the functions of the organizations studied through four empirical cases. Finally, I provide theoretical and methodological conclusions and consider whether Karelia is a special case compared to other regions of Russia.

WESTERN MODELS OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE–SOCIETY RELATIONS

The available literature—above all, U.S.-led political science literature—on post-Soviet civil society makes several central claims (see Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Sundstrom and Henry 2006). My aim here is not to discuss all those claims in detail; rather, I concentrate on two that are relevant to my argument. Observers attribute the weakness of Russian civil society to its fragmentation and dependence on foreign funds, its reliance on key figures' personal networks, and its perceived detachment from ordinary Russians, pointing to reasons such as the small number of Russian civil society organizations² and Russian citizens' reluctance to participate in them (see more about

¹ My ethnographic data includes more than 150 thematic and ethnographic interviews with multiple local actors, participant observation in numerous local, regional, and transnational events, and over 300 pages of field notes. In addition, I have collected normative and other documents relevant to the topic.

² In fact, according to the federal registration office, by the end of 2008, approximately 655,000 civil society organizations were registered in Russia, a country with a total population of 142 million people. To put Russia in comparative context, the United States has around 1.5 million civil society organizations and a population of 300 million—roughly the same proportion of organizations as in Russia. In Finland the proportion is much higher: approximately 117,000 registered civil society organizations for five million inhabitants.

these reasons in e.g. Evans 2002; Howard 2003; McFaul 2002). While many Russian civil society organizations are founded to provide services for vulnerable groups of Russian society, their capacity to influence politics, i.e. the policy-advocacy function, is seen as low; in other words, the majority of these organizations are considered to be auxiliaries of the state, taking responsibility for improving citizens' welfare when the state is either incapable or unwilling to do so itself. This often leads to the conclusion that these organizations have been co-opted by the Russian state. In this article, I focus on the two latter points—the functions of civil society organizations and their relations with the state structures, as well as the associated theoretical debates. My aim is not to disprove the findings of previous studies. However, in light of my own case study, I do suggest that the picture of Russian civil society is more complex than has been posited by studies that have used the narrow theoretical categories in question.

Usually, civil society is defined as an arena of activity outside the private, the state, and the economic spheres—thus, civil society is seen as a separate societal sector from those others. In my study, rather than defining civil society in sectoral terms, I rely on activities-based criteria, which include the following principles: first, civil society activities are citizens' activities based on volunteer work, not on natural membership of a group (e.g. family or kinship) or on any kind of coerced participation; second, those activities are self-governed and to some extent organized (but not necessarily formally registered); third, civil society activities take a collective form and are value-driven (i.e., participants have a certain mission); fourth, these activities are not motivated by any commercial gain (i.e., they are non-profit). Thus, I base my definition of civil society activities on the nature of the activities rather than on a sectoral location for those activities or the people involved. I return to this subject in my theoretically-oriented conclusions.

All of the organizations included in the analysis in this article are registered as *obschestvennyye organizatsii*, which I render in English using the umbrella concept of civil society organizations.³ I divide civil society organizations into the categories of social organizations and membership organizations. By "social organization" I refer to a registered, mission-driven organization whose active participants—paid staff and volunteers—do not belong to a group on behalf of whom the organization works and to whom its activities are addressed; beneficiaries are external to the organization, which often exhibits a solidaristic character. On the other hand, a membership organization is organized around a classic representative structure, with a clear constituency to which both paid staff and volunteers belong; the organization is run by its members (with a delegation of power) and serves the interests of these members, based on principles of mutual aid and self-help (Cook and Vinogradova; Ebrahim 2007:202–204; Peruzzotti 2006:50–51).

The Western scholarly literature frequently divides civil society organizations into two separate categories: 1) policy-advocacy organizations and 2) social-service

³ I have decided to use the concept of civil society in order to avoid defining the studied activities in negative terms, such as non-state or non-market activities, or non-governmental or non-profit organizations (cf. Deakin 2001:9; Dekker 2009:226; Kaldor 2003:15; Martens 2002).

organizations. The first category emphasizes the political role or function of civil society, while the second stresses its economic role, i.e. the function of providing (welfare) services (see also Kaldor 2003; Van Til 2000:23; Young 2006:39–47; in the Russian context, see e.g. Sundstrom 2006). Most often these functions and roles are seen as separate from each other, with an explicit distinction drawn between political and nonprofit service-provision activities. As Elisabeth S. Clemens (2006:213) has argued, research has become somewhat bifurcated, with charities, foundations, and philanthropies generally recognized as core concerns for non-profit (i.e. third sector) research, and more politically-engaged voluntary associations treated more frequently in other (i.e. political civil society) research.

In this article, I will depart from using civil organizations' functions as a starting point for analysis. Instead, I will explore the daily routines of these organizations in order to find out what kinds of functions they perform. In the Russian context, most civil society organizations are characterized by their involvement in social welfare and service provision for many vulnerable groups of Russian society (e.g. Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Kulmala 2008a). Thus, it seems that Russian civil society is oriented toward social services; however, does this social welfare- and service-oriented activism generate any political elements? Looking at empirical cases, I suggest that this division into two separate categories is too reductive, insofar as one organization can perform both of these functions.

The debates about civil society's roles and functions are also related to different theoretical state-society models. The scholarly literature usually distinguishes between four models: liberal, corporatist, social-democratic, and statist (see e.g. Hale 2002; Janoski 1998; Salamon and Anheier 1998). American and British political scientists usually examine Russian civil society and state-society relations from the standpoint of the liberal tradition. In this model, civil society is seen a set of associations independent of the state; civil society represents a critical counterweight to the state, and a realm independent from the state (e.g. Hale 2002). Thus, the state and non-state agents are considered separate from each other. Even so, a question often arises concerning the extent to which the state should be involved or can interfere in the sphere of civil society (Sundstrom 2006). From the liberal perspective, the predominant conclusion is that only a marginal part of Russian civil society organizations function according to these liberal principles. Furthermore, the Russian state-society model, in contrast to the liberal model, is often interpreted as statist, i.e., Russian civil society organizations are seen as lacking in independence and as co-opted by the authorities (e.g. Evans 2006b; Hale 2002; see also Kulmala 2010a; 2011).

Recently, however, several scholars have illustrated more complex patterns concerning cooperative relations between the authorities and civil society organizations (e.g. Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Johnson 2006; Sundstrom 2006; Thomson 2006). Nevertheless, the social-democratic model prevalent e.g. in the Nordic countries is either absent from discussions or interpreted as corporatist, associated with continental Europe, or as statist.⁴ In my opinion, the Nordic model cannot be com-

⁴ Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (2006) speaks about the corporatist model in the Swedish context,

pletely excluded from the analysis of the emerging Russian model—particularly with regard to Russian Karelia, where Finnish-Russian joint projects have fostered a strong emphasis on cooperative relations between state authorities and civil society. Under this Nordic model, close collaboration between the state and civil society without destroying the autonomy of civil society is achievable. In the Nordic countries, civil society organizations are often supported by full or partial state subsidies; compared with other models, the Nordic social-democratic model features the largest partite intersection of state, public, and market spheres. By contrast, the liberal model nearly avoids overlap of these spheres, and the state refrains from permanently supporting civil society organizations (Janoski 1998).⁵ Moreover, overlap between the roles of activists, administrators, and politicians is a common practice within the Nordic regime (Alapuro 2005a; 2005b). For example, Nordic “state feminism” is based on the idea of activists being politicians and civil servants, and vice versa (Jäppinen, Kulmala, and Saarinen 2011), an example relevant to my analysis, as my findings show that a majority of people active in the civil society organizations analyzed are women employed in public-sector institutions (see also Kulmala 2010a; 2011).

For its part, the Soviet model was undoubtedly statist. The Soviet “voluntary” organizations were state-controlled, and all positions from the highest leadership down to schools and neighborhood associations were filled by Communist Party members. Membership and participation in those organizations were generally mandatory and coerced (Evans 2006a; Howard 2003). Interestingly, in my study, most people who are currently active in civil society organizations were also active in those Soviet organizations. Moreover, many of their practices and resources draw on this experience (cf. Henry 2006; 2010), which challenges the well-known argument by Marc Morjé Howard (2003) about the legacy of the communist experience of mandatory participation in the state-controlled organizations having left most post-communist citizens with a lasting aversion to public activities (see also McFaul 2002).

Thus, the Soviet legacy of heavy state involvement as well as the Finnish influence in Karelia raise the question of whether a model of a close relationship between the state and civil society would be better suited to contemporary Russia than a more liberal model (cf. Henry 2006; 2010; Sundstrom 2006).⁶ Naturally, under this regime there is a risk that civil society will be co-opted by the state for its own purposes. Nevertheless, I argue that cooperation as such does not necessarily

for example. However, in most of the literature on European regimes, the Nordic social-democratic model is considered distinct from the corporatist model. See also the previous footnote.

⁵ Interestingly, unlike those in liberal regimes, civil society organizations in social-democratic regimes are free from the demands of fundraising, allowing them to be more independent and engaged in critical discourse (Janoski 1998).

⁶ Laura Henry (2006:219, 224) has observed similar favorable effects of the Soviet legacy as a “usable past,” especially among grassroots environmental activists at the community level (also Henry 2010). Also, as Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (2006:27) points out: “the break with the communist past, both in terms of ideas and the specific individuals inhabiting governmental and non-governmental institutions, was much less clean and more complicated than most analysts admit.”

lead to co-optation. My study shows that relations between the Russian authorities and civil society organizations exhibit many forms and that, at least at the local level, the state and civil society seem to be interdependent (cf. Thomson 2006).

Moreover, my study shows that in many places, the roles of the representatives of the local state structures overlap with the roles of civil society activists and officials; the blurred boundary between these two societal sectors is ignored by the models mentioned above, based as they are on a mistaken conceptual separation between state and society (also see Kulmala 2011; Kay 2011). In the context of contemporary Russia, boundaries between the state and non-state agents and activities must be reconsidered. Following Gianpaolo Baiocchi et al. (2008), I treat civil society in relational terms rather than as unitary or completely separate from those other sectors, an approach that requires unpacking the sometimes contradictory relationships between the state and civil society. As Jon Van Til (2000) has suggested, rather than as sectors, a society can be understood as a set of interdependent spaces. These spaces do not coincide with any particular sectors or locations within them. I will return to these conceptualizations in my conclusions.

Moving away from “sectoral thinking” makes it possible to focus on activities and relationships in a specific local space, while not excluding from analysis active agents who belong to a predetermined social sector. Likewise, this approach situates local practices in their own context, rather than imposing theoretical models developed in the historical context of Western countries (Alapuro 2008).⁷ To analyze the functions of agents I studied during my fieldwork, I will use the “ethnography of state” methodology developed by Katherine Verdery (1996:209), which investigates the state at close range in terms of its everyday routines and practices. I suggest that a systematic focus on local practices of interaction between the state and civil society organizations can provide a more nuanced picture of Russian civil society than does a study at the “mass” or societal level (cf. Howard 2003).

However, I am not arguing that only the micro level matters; rather, I am emphasizing the importance of combining micro-level analysis with an understanding of macro-level processes (see also Jäppinen, Kulmala, and Saarinen 2011).⁸ In order to

⁷ After the collapse of the socialist regime, it was generally assumed that Russia would follow the Western path toward democracy with a liberal civil society. However, studies on Russian civil society have shown that the Western models have been followed unevenly or partially, or even reluctantly; Russia has developed hybrid models, mixing and taking elements from several models (Alapuro, Liikanen, and Lonkila 2004). Russia’s peculiarity has led to discussions about the adequacy of applying Western concepts and models to Russia (see e.g. Alapuro, Liikanen, and Lonkila 2004; Hann 1996; Henry and Sundstrom 2006a; 2006b; Howard 2003; Salmenniemi 2008b). For instance, Chris Hann (1996) advocates broadening the conception of civil society to understand present realities; Marc Morjé Howard (2003), by contrast, argues that in order to be able to make comparisons, the same conceptual apparatus must be adopted for every context (see also Alapuro 2005b).

⁸ Methodologically I rely on a Burawoy-style extended case study method (1998), which seeks to understand macro-level processes from the viewpoint of how they shape and are shaped by everyday practices at the micro-level.

situate my micro-level case study in a wider Russian context, I now turn to a short overview of related federal-level developments.

TOWARD A RUSSIAN MODEL—VIEWS FROM THE FEDERAL LEVEL

From a historical perspective, the common argument is that due to the state's pervasive control mechanisms, there was no independent civil society in the Soviet Union (Evans 2006a). Apart from the small anti-Soviet, pro-democratic dissident movement, Soviet voluntary organizations, such as women's councils, youth and disability organizations, trade unions, and numerous hobby clubs, were controlled by the Communist Party. Certainly, these organizations were not autonomous. However, some recent debates indicate that compared with dissident organizations, the voluntary organizations had a more significant impact on daily life in terms of providing necessary services and representation of interests. In this sense, to some extent, they served the needs and interests of citizens, and not only the interests of the state. Thus, perhaps, suppression of civil society under the Soviet regime was not as uniform as it appears at first glance. Citizens' activities, however, were heavily guided by the centralized state (Evans 2006a; Sundstrom 2006); in other words, the Soviet regime was undoubtedly a statist model of state–society relations.

By the late 1980s, a precursor to civil society was taking shape in Russia (Evans 2006b). Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and ultimately the collapse of the Soviet Union, removed party control and permitted independent civic activism. In this period of optimism and euphoria, civil society organizations grew exponentially in their number and in their fields of activities.⁹ Western funding played a major role in the development of Russian civil society at this time; naturally, Western models and thus Western standards were imported alongside these funds and projects. In particular, the United States has been the largest donor, in absolute terms, to civil society in Russia (Sundstrom 2006).¹⁰ Many organizations created and developed with Western aid were modeled according to liberal standards of civil society. Thus, in the early post-Soviet years, the emerging Russian model of state–society relations aimed for the liberal ideal. However, the picture is not this simple. For instance, many already existing organizations continued to perform their activities according to "Soviet-type" principles. It is also likely that newly created organizations operated with some degree of continuity with the Soviet period rather than according to "purely liberal" principles. Interestingly, in the early 1990s Russian civil society organizations already showed a tendency to seek collaboration with the authorities, mainly at the local-regional level of government (e.g. Brygalina and Temkina 2004; Sevortyan and Barchukova 2002; Weigle 2002)—behavior not charac-

⁹ See more about the developments during this period in e.g. Brygalina and Temkina (2004); McFaul (2002); Squier (2002); Sundstrom (2006); Weigle (2002).

¹⁰ See more about the criticisms of Western funding in e.g. Johnson (2009); Hemment (2007); Henderson (2002); Richter (2002); Sperling (1999); Sundstrom (2006); Wedel (1998); Weigle (2002).

teristic of “liberally-oriented” civil society organizations. By the 2000s, the euphoria and optimism of the first post-Soviet decade gave way to disappointment, and analyses of independent civil society activism have tended to be rather pessimistic. It may well be that the “Westernized” (i.e., resembling the liberal model) state of affairs of the 1990s was in part an illusion, and that the change during the Putin period has not been as dramatic as many assessments have suggested.¹¹

From the early 2000s, under President Putin’s regime there has been a shift toward a statist model—at least at the federal level (e.g. Evans 2006b; Richter 2009). In the 2000s, civil society also emerged as a federal, national concern. Within the growing discourse on the importance of civil society, however, it appears to be envisioned more as a helper of the state than as an agent independent of the state. The state’s attitude toward civil society is dualistic: the state has officially acknowledged a need for certain types of civil society organizations, such as social service providers, that serve state interests, while the activities of others, such as human rights organizations, are being disrupted. Thus, there is a trend of simultaneous support and disruption, cooperation and control; new mechanisms for cooperation are constantly being introduced, but at the same time control is increased (see also Evans 2006b; 2008a; 2008b; Dzhibladze 2006; Richter 2009; Zdravomyslova 2003). New NGO legislation, the establishment of the federal Public Chamber, *Obschestvennaia palata*, and state subsidies for civil society organizations are prime examples of this dualism. The 2006 legislation created mechanisms for control and disruption (more e.g. in Richter 2009), but does not *per se* curtail civil society.¹² The creation of the Public Chamber in 2005 demonstrates the federal-level emphasis on a top-down organization of civil society and is perceived to be the state’s mechanism for the control of civil society (see also Evans 2008a; 2008b; Richter).¹³ State grants to Russian civil society organizations, introduced in 2006, have mostly supported work with vulnerable groups of Russian society and the promotion of healthy lifestyles—in other words, support goes to civil society organizations whose work in the social and health sector is in line with what the state considers national priorities (see also Richter 2009).¹⁴

¹¹ Thanks to Mischa Gabowitsch for this point.

¹² An issue worth mentioning is that the new registration body created by this law is a regional-level agency, not a Kremlin-based organization. Thus, there might be regional variation in how Russian NGOs are treated and in interpretations by the regional administrators of how the Kremlin would wish the law to be implemented.

¹³ However, Evans (2008a; 2008b) showed that the Chamber proved to be bolder and more critical than many critics expected.

¹⁴ In the first year, the overall amount of grants was about 15 million euros. In the following year, 2007, the amount was increased to 36 million euros. In 2008, the amount was again higher, 45 million euros, but it decreased to some extent in 2009. Actually, the overall amount decreased from 1.5 billion roubles in 2008 to 1.2 billion roubles in 2009, but due to a notable fall of the rouble’s value along with the global economic crisis, in practice, the drop is rather significant. In 2007–2008 the grants were distributed by six umbrella organizations: 1) *Institut obschestvennogo proektirovaniia*; 2) *Znanie*; 3) *Nezavisimaia zashchita prav i svobod cheloveka*; 4) *Liga zdorov’ia natsii*; 5) *Natsional’nyi blagotvoritel’nyi fond*; 6) *Gosudarstvennyi klub*. In 2009, they were distributed by five organizations, including numbers 1, 5, and 6

However, in 2008, well-known human rights organizations such as the Moscow Helsinki Committee and Memorial were among the recipients of such state funding. This may well have something to do with the new president Medvedev's more pluralistic views on civil society. The president has put much emphasis on civil society in his public appearances: on the one hand, by stressing the role of civil society in building democracy and rule of law and, on the other hand, by continuing his predecessor's emphasis on civil society's role for improving welfare. However, there seems to be a shift toward a more pluralistic view of the role of civil society that has steadily gained more attention in Medvedev's statements. Thus, at the very least we can observe a change of rhetoric.¹⁵ (See also Kulmala 2008a.) At the local level, I witnessed positive expectations from Medvedev concerning civil society policies.

To sum up: at the federal level, it seems that civil society's role is to mobilize people to help the state in its social responsibilities. Thus, the model seems to be

above and two new organizations: *Institut problem grazhdanskogo obschestva* and *Soprotivlenie*.

¹⁵ In his early appearances, Medvedev spoke about a need for civil society in pursuing national interests, but subsequently the benefits of civil society for democracy, rule of law, and human rights have steadily gained more attention in his statements. For instance, while still a presidential candidate of the United Russia, Medvedev addressed the Second Civic Forum, organized by the Public Chamber in January 2008. He stated that there were two possible paths for Russian civil society: one of them bumpy if these organizations are in opposition to the state; the other one consisting in actual work with people to defend their rights and strengthen their liberties. He favoured the latter path. (See the speech at www.medvedev2008.ru/live_press01.htm). After winning the elections, Medvedev met with representatives of the Public Chamber and stressed the role of civil society for Russia's stable development, including the fight against corruption and the protection of vulnerable groups (see the notes of the meeting at www.rost.ru/medvedev/report-19-03.html). However, in his later appearances a shift toward civil society's role as a counterweight to the state and, thus, the possibility of civil society being in opposition to the state can be heard. In April 2009, Medvedev distanced himself from Putin and gave a striking interview to *Novaya Gazeta*, in which he stressed the counterbalancing function of civil society. Furthermore, unlike Putin, he stated that democracy and civil society were universal values and there was no need for any Russian interpretations of these concepts. The day after the interview, Medvedev held a session with the Presidential Council on Promoting Development of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights, which brings together many representatives of civil society organizations, including famous human rights activists. At this meeting, he heard many critical voices. He acknowledged the tremendous difficulties of civil society organizations and mentioned human rights' organizations, in particular. He also mentioned the need for changes in legislation regulating civil society organizations. Less emphasis was put on civil society's "helping the state" function, although, referring to the world's economic crisis, Medvedev asked the organizations to share the state's concerns in the field of education and health care. He also asked the Council to work on protecting citizens' social and labor rights during these hard times. Interestingly enough, for the first time, a complete version of the meeting notes was published on the Kremlin's website (see www.kremlin.ru/appears/2009/04/15/1547_type63378type63381_215116.shtml), whereas during Putin's administration only the speeches of the president and of the person chairing the council were published. In this respect, Medvedev has kept his promise of transparency and dialog between the state and civil society. However, in his annual address to the nation on November 12, 2009, the part concerning civil society discussed only organizations involved in charity and working for vulnerable groups. To those organizations, which he considered useful for Russian society, he promised tax breaks among other things.

statist—even though more liberal elements have appeared during Medvedev's rule. Yet it seems when looking at the federal policies and practices that there is no "real" civil society according to the liberal understanding. I argue that this view is unsatisfactory. My aim is not to disavow the existing elements of state control, but relying on my case study in Russian Karelia, I suggest that the picture is not that simple. Relations between civil society organizations and the local authorities take many forms. In addition, socially oriented activism can also exhibit so-called political elements. To illustrate these arguments, which are somewhat critical of previous studies, I now turn to empirical examples from my ethnographic research.

LOCAL PRACTICES OF STATE-SOCIETY INTERACTION: THE CASE OF SORTAVALA MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

The site of my primary ethnographic field is the Sortavala municipal district, located on the border of Finland and Russia, in the Republic of Karelia, one of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation. Sortavala district is a small municipality with a population of 34,000, including five urban and rural settlements.¹⁶ The district, in fact, was a part of Finland until the end of World War II. The district's poor financial standing is seen as one of its most serious problems. Like most other Russian municipalities, it suffers from insufficient resources to provide for its citizens' welfare. There are many pressing social problems.¹⁷ However, these problems are a matter of common concern among the locals, and draw people together in a search for solutions. These solutions are often sought in mixing state and non-state efforts (see also Kulmala 2010a; 2011).

AN OVERVIEW OF SORTAVALA'S CIVIL SOCIETY

Altogether some seventy civil society organizations are registered in the Sortavala District.¹⁸ Most of these organizations are concerned with local welfare. Firstly, there are specific social and health sector organizations, such as a Diabetes Association and several disability organizations. Secondly, there are civil society organizations that are not purely social-sector groups, such as a women's organization and a veteran's organization. However, the focus of the latter organizations is also on local welfare. This social orientation is explained by their representatives as a result of the huge number of social problems in the area. However, some of them state their

¹⁶ These municipal units include the town of Sortavala and the settlements of Khaapalampi, Kheuliulia, Khaalamo and Viartsilia) (see more in Kulmala 2010a). The Russian system of local self-governance was recently reformed. The new law (FZ-131) "On the General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Governance in the Russian Federation" came into being January 1, 2006. One of the most concrete innovations of this reform was the creation of a two-level system of municipalities: urban and rural settlements that are subordinated to municipal districts. In addition, there are urban districts, which are not in a hierarchical relationship with these two other types of municipalities. All of the municipalities have their own responsibilities defined by the law. (See more in e.g. Gel'man 2007; Kulmala and Tekoniemi 2007; Lankina 2002.)

¹⁷ See a more detailed description of the district in e.g. Kulmala 2010a.

¹⁸ <http://rosreg.karelia.ru/data/>

hope that in the future, assuming the social situation improves, these organizations might also concentrate on other kinds of issues. Much of their attention is given to families, young people, and children, all of whom are also given prominence on the Russian national agenda.¹⁹ There are no active environmental or human rights organizations. (See Also Kulmala 2008a.)

As indicated in numerous studies (Jalusic 2002; Johnson 2006; Kukarenko forthcoming; Kulmala 2008a; Salmenniemi 2008a; Sperling 2006), the sphere of civil society in Russia is gendered. This is also the case in Sortavala: most of the activists are women. A typical activist is a middle-aged woman with higher education who has a good position in some municipal institution. As my empirical cases below show, those who work on issues relevant to the activities of a civil society organization and who have decision-making power concerning those issues are actively canvassed as potential members.²⁰ This is in contrast to the findings of previous studies (e.g. Howard 2003; Salmenniemi 2008a), which describe active members being recruited mostly from the personal networks of the activists. (See also Kulmala 2010a; 2011.)

Sortavala civil society organizations can be categorized into two groups: 1) membership organizations working toward improving their members' quality of life and directing their activities toward solving the problems and defending the rights of their members (e.g. the disability organization in my fourth case, see next section); and 2) social organizations addressing their activities to some vulnerable groups or toward the resolution of a certain social problem (e.g. the child protection organization of the second case or the association supporting the mentally disabled of the first case, see next section). (Cf. Cook and Vinogradova 2006.) Like most Russian civil society organizations, these Sortavala organizations provide services for many (vulnerable) groups. However, I argue that both membership and social organizations have more than one function. In each case, they engage in parallel advocacy and service provision functions (also see Kulmala 2009; 2010).

Most of the Sortavala civil society organizations were established after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, they carry elements of the Soviet tradition of voluntary organizations. The continuity is unsurprising; most of the people who are active now were also active in Soviet organizations. Indeed, many of their resources, organizational skills, networks and authority—all of which facilitate current activism—derive from their Soviet activities. (See Henry 2006; 2010; also Sundstrom 2006.) Studies of Russian civil society have often seen the Soviet legacy as a burden, as one of the reasons why Russians are so passive in civil society activities. For instance, Howard (2003) argues that the communist experience of mandatory participation in those organizations has led to a lasting aversion to and mistrust of voluntary organizations, and thus this legacy prevents the development of civic skills (also

¹⁹ For instance, a federal project supporting young families was launched in 2005. The years 2007 and 2008 were proclaimed years of the young family. The emphasis on families is related to the current demographic crisis in Russia, which is largely caused by the low life expectancy of Russian men due to unhealthy lifestyles as well as low birth rates. The state's responses to this crisis have been pro-natalist (Cook 2011).

²⁰ This resembles Finnish practice.

McFaul 2002).²¹ My findings on the positive effects of participation in these Soviet organizations contradict these arguments.

In the Sortavala district, Finnish influence is very visible and the impact of numerous Finnish-Russian joint projects on the development of civil society cannot be ignored or underestimated. Many of the local organizations are initiated by Finns or their activities started in the framework of a joint project. According to members of the Sortavala civil society organizations, one of the most significant benefits of transnational cooperation has been their training in social issues and organizational skills (also e.g. Henderson 2002; Kulmala 2008a; Salmenniemi 2008a).²² The Finnish-funded projects strongly emphasize cooperation between the local authorities and civil society organizations (cf. Belokurova and Iargomskaia 2005; Sundstrom 2006). Similar emphasis on collaboration occurs in the local projects, which is unsurprising given their experience and training in joint projects with Finns (Kulmala 2008a; 2011).

PLURALITY OF INTERRELATIONS AND FUNCTIONS

Interaction between civil society organizations and local authorities presents a more complex picture than the statist image at the federal level would suggest. I claim that at the local level, one can see a complex set of interrelations between civil society and the local state as well as a variety of functions carried out by civil society organizations. I illustrate this complexity briefly by describing four empirical cases²³. The first case is a municipal social service center that operates by combining public and civic efforts. The second example is a case of an independent organization that purposefully collaborates with the authorities that are relevant to its field of activity. The third case is very peculiar: a network of Karelian women's organizations that can be considered a small-scale women's movement and is also a policy initiator at the regional level. The fourth case is a local membership organization that is marginal and in confrontation with the local authorities.

Public-Civic Combination as Logic for More Complex Provision of Welfare Services

The first of my illustrative cases is a Municipal Social Service Center of the Sortavala District (referred to below simply as the Center), which is a municipal institution responsible for providing services to several categories of people. The Center is also part of the federal state-provided social-service system, and national and re-

²¹ Howard's (2003) argument is somewhat ambiguous: he also found that people who had positive experiences with communist organizations are more active participants today.

²² Only a few of the participants benefit financially from these joint projects; when they do, salaries are modest in comparison with the U.S.-funded projects. It is commonly argued, particularly by U.S. scholars (see e.g. Hemment 2007; Henderson 2002; Richter 2002; Wedel 1998), that foreign funding for Russian civil society has created an "NGO elite" in Russia. This does not seem to apply in Sortavala, though the financial benefits of the projects are not meaningless (also see Kulmala 2010a).

²³ The very same cases—as well as some others—will serve as empirical material for my forthcoming doctoral dissertation. The sources and my analysis of the first case have been published as Kulmala 2011, and a part of the third case as Kulmala 2008b. The fourth case has been presented as part of a conference paper (Kulmala 2009).

gional legislation sets minimum requirements as to what services are to be provided to whom.²⁴ However, as I have shown elsewhere (Kulmala 2011), local civil society organizations and their volunteers complement and broaden the official services provided by the Center. The Center's case also shows that there is room for local innovations.

The Sortavala Center has nine departments and 120 employees. The leadership and staff of the Center are closely involved in two local civil society organizations—Lifeline and Mental Health, which take part in the work of the Center and most members of which belong to the staff of the Center.²⁵ Thus, the roles of municipal workers and civil society activists overlap and blur—the very same people work for the Center and volunteer in its activities through their membership in the above-mentioned civil society organizations. In fact, both of the civil society organizations are chaired by women who hold leading positions at the Center. These female leaders are well-connected with some Finnish civil society organizations, and a few Finnish-Russian joint projects have been implemented within the Center. In these projects that involve the public service structures (the Center) and civil society organizations, new services for new client categories have been initiated: for instance, a crisis department for women suffering from domestic violence and workshops for mentally disabled adults.

The crisis department was opened as part of the Center as a result of a joint Finnish-Russian project, which involved local actors—the district administration, the Center, and local civil society organizations—as well as three Finnish civil society organizations. From the very beginning, the crisis department—initiated by civil society organizations—has been a part of the Center, i.e. a public municipal service.²⁶ The municipal budget covers the maintenance of the department, i.e. the salaries of the staff and the premises. The department has five hired female employees; its director also heads the Center's Department for the Disabled (see below), chairs Mental Health, and is an active member of Lifeline. A large amount of the work

²⁴ In Russia, the federal government defines the general principles for social services; for instance, it enacts the federal laws and standards concerning social services. The federal subjects, for their part, are responsible for implementing these federal laws, i.e. for the organization, management, and financing of the social services. In the Republic of Karelia, the organization of specific social services is delegated by regional law to the Karelian municipalities, and more precisely to the municipal districts (law N899-ZRK). The Sortavala Center is financed from the municipal budget, to which the Republic allocates earmarked funding for organizing these services. The planning and administration of the Center's work are the responsibility of the district administration and the Center itself, but they need to comply with national and regional norms. (More in Kulmala 2011.)

²⁵ These two are not the only civil society organizations involved in the Center's work, but the relationship between the other civil society organizations and the Center is different (more details in Kulmala 2011).

²⁶ Interestingly, the Finnish civil society organizations purposefully aimed to establish this service within the public sector, not within civil society. A similar tendency can be seen in the efforts of the other Nordic actors in the Russian North (Saarinen et al. 2003; Liapounova and Dračova 2004). This, in my opinion, reflects not only Finnish practices, but more generally the Nordic state-society model in which the state is responsible for social services. Furthermore, the state is not seen as an enemy but expected to collaborate with civil society and support citizens with their needs. (Kulmala 2011; also Jäppinen, Kulmala, and Saarinen 2011.)

of the crisis department is carried out by volunteers who mainly come from the two mentioned civil society organizations. The volunteers are seen as “work resource,” and the department constantly trains and recruits such volunteers. The crisis department and its services have proved their usefulness and become well-known among the locals. At present, domestic violence is a publicly acknowledged social problem, and the Center’s work is highly appreciated and serves as a model for other districts of the Republic. (More details in Kulmala 2011.)

Workshops for mentally disabled adults were also initiated by civil society, specifically by Mental Health in cooperation with its Finnish partners. As part of their project, premises for the workshops were renovated in a building provided by the district administration for this purpose. The idea was to create a place to spend time and provide rehabilitation services to the mentally disabled. The project was short-term, and soon there was no more funding for running the workshops or maintaining the premises. However, the chair of Mental Health who also heads the Center’s crisis department and Department for the Disabled negotiated the maintenance of the workshops at the Center’s expense with the municipal administration and with the Center’s director, who also is active in the those two civil society organizations. The Department for the Disabled, headed by Mental Health’s chair, took responsibility for the workshops—although the mentally disabled did not officially belong to the clientele of her department, or of the Center. Currently, handicraft workshops for the mentally disabled are offered daily by the volunteers of Mental Health and Lifeline, a majority of whom belong to the Center’s staff. The agreement between the Center and Mental Health includes the right for the other categories of the disabled officially served by the Center to participate in the workshops, and for the mentally disabled, in turn, to access the Center’s rehabilitation services. Hence, the Center offers new services for its “old clients,” and, additionally, “new clients” obtained access to the Center’s services. (More details in Kulmala 2011.)

In both of the above-presented cases a group of people earlier ignored by the public structures were included in services provided by combined public and voluntary efforts. Both these groups also represent sensitive issues: domestic violence was a completely hidden and neglected social problem in the Soviet Union and Russia until recent years (e.g. Johnson 2006; Jäppinen 2011), and the mentally disabled have traditionally been completely ignored by the state (Kulmala 2011; Rasell 2009). At present, these new categories only come under the official local service system thanks to initiatives from civil society. The municipality has shouldered the maintenance costs, but the work is carried out by individuals who are often both permanent staff members of the Center and volunteers from the local civil society organizations. These new services rely on a mixture of public and voluntary services, i.e. on a combination of actions taken by the state and civil society organizations. I consider publicizing sensitive and new issues and initiating new services in itself to be a political activity.

Thus, the roles of municipal workers and civil society activists overlap and blur—as do the public and voluntary activities within the Center. The case of the Center shows that the public and voluntary sectors are not mutually exclusive, and in many places it is impossible to draw clear boundaries between these two sectors. Thus, the

conceptual separation between state and society as distinct and opposing entities becomes inappropriate (see Kay 2011). The overlapping roles of the activists, the Center's staff and other civil servants naturally facilitate cooperative relations instead of the confrontation that is characteristic of the liberal approach based upon seeing the state and civil society each as separate actors. This kind of conflict orientation becomes pointless in a situation where the very same people are active in both sectors; naturally they cannot—nor are they willing to—confront themselves. Nor do they co-opt themselves, which, as noted, has often been the conclusion of statist interpretations of Russian civil society. The Center and civil society organizations serve as a resource for each other: due to these civil society organizations, the Center is able to provide a more complex and flexible set of services for a broader clientele. As I have argued (Kulmala 2011), these strategic overlaps between public and voluntary efforts within the Center not only show interdependence (Thomson 2006) but also serve as the main ideology for such activities. This idea rests on a mixture of the public service and voluntary activities and the overlapping roles of the agents involved. I would call this structure a public-civic combination. It is one of the forms of interaction between the state and society. Using the concept of the civic, I give weight to the advocacy work carried out by the civil society organizations. I suggest that these organizations exhibit a parallel advocacy function in addition to their contribution to services—which, nevertheless, is their primary function. In the Center's case, this advocacy work manifests itself in civil society organizations' ability to negotiate and create new identities and to publicize and politicize sensitive issues. (See more details in Kulmala 2011.)

An Autonomous Social Organization in a Close Dialog with the Relevant Authorities

My second case is a local child protection organization that, concerning its relationship with the local state institutions, represents an independent and autonomous civil society organization, which, however, closely and purposefully collaborates with several (local) state institutions. Nevertheless, the organization's independence cannot be treated as self-evident, since it was established by the local administration and a Finnish sister organization: it has transformed from a Finnish-Russian joint initiative to a highly respected and autonomous organization. The organization provides a large amount of support, services and concrete help to children and their families. However, my earlier criticism of separating social-service organizations and policy-advocacy organizations into distinct categories also applies in this case, since the organization also serves as an advocate of children's rights.

The initiative to establish such an organization came from discussions between a then-vice mayor responsible for social policy from the Russian side and a Finnish Minister for Social Affairs and Health, a member of parliament who was involved in a Finnish child protection organization. In other words, the initiative to establish an organization in the sphere of civil society came from administrative or governmental structures on both sides of the border. Active members of the organization were originally recruited from the local administrative branches, but currently a clear division between the civil society organization and the local administration prevails.

In the beginning, the largest share of the organization's finances came from its Finnish sister organization. Though the organization is still dependent on foreign funding, it no longer relies solely on joint projects with one main Finnish partner. Over the course of time it has succeeded in converting its competence and experience from this partnership into other domestic and foreign contributions and partnerships as well.²⁷ The organization is obviously rather stable in financial terms, but it also seems to have asserted its position in symbolic terms. Its skills and efforts in attracting extra-local resources are useful to the whole municipality, which increases its symbolic power—not least in the eyes of the local administration, which provides no financial support to the organization. So-called moral support from the administration is high, and contacts are close. In principle, financial support from the state or municipal government would be regarded as a positive factor by members of the organization, who hope that in future municipal grants might supplement federal and regional state subsidies.²⁸ Thus, state support is not seen as a case of the state controlling civil society activities, but as improving civil society's financial operating basis. This kind of view of state subsidies is close to the Nordic state-society model described earlier, while it challenges the liberal model.

The organization has several paid staff members. Yet many of its activities are carried out by volunteers. The executive board is the highest decision-making body and responsible for defining priorities for the organization's work. The members of this board are institutionally selected: they all work professionally on issues that concern children.²⁹ In addition to the local administration, these are mostly officials working at state social and health care service institutions—i.e. they come from the public sector. They have been recruited on the basis of their principal jobs and professions; all the relevant officials and offices that work with children are included "for the good of the children." Usually these board members have a high-level position at their institution; they are understood to have decision-making power concerning issues relevant to the child protection organization's activities. Expertise and information on issues concerning children flow in two ways. If a board member occupies a relevant position from the viewpoint of the organization's field of activity, that is considered advantageous for the organization's work, but the officials involved in the organization also see their membership as supporting their work in their permanent position: they gain professional and material resources to solve problems concerning children in their work through the civil society organization.

These links between public institutions and civil society are purposefully built and both parties are seen to benefit from this collaboration. Interrelations and intersections are highlighted and sought after, which is in sharp contrast to the liberal design of the state and civil society as separate and opposing sectors. The

²⁷ The organization operates almost purely on a grant basis; these grants' share in its budget is a multiple of other types of income, e.g. from sponsorship and membership fees.

²⁸ The organization has received project-based grants from the regional government, as discussed below.

²⁹ Being a member of the board is an honorary position, and members do not derive any financial benefits from their participation.

organization's and local state's activities concerning children are considered parallel and complementary to one another. Despite the intersecting work and close collaboration, both parties are seen as separate and independent entities. Their collaboration does not seem to take co-optive forms, as the child protection organization is strong enough in terms of resources and decision-making power to remain independent from the administration or other public structures. If the membership organization of my fourth case is dependent on which individuals are members of the administration, the organization described here can keep going no matter who holds the reins of municipal government.

Disagreement does surface, but it is argued by both sides that those situations can be resolved in a peaceful manner. Criticism of federal-level policies in the field of children's rights can be articulated. The organization's readiness to resort to conflict if needed "for the good of the children" indicates that the organization has enough authority to challenge the state. Nevertheless, criticism and conflict play a minor role. The issues dealt with by the organization do not seem to be controversial from the point of view of municipal authorities—on the contrary, children's well-being seems to be of many agents' concern. Naturally, these common concerns facilitate collaboration instead of conflict.

The organization was established "with the goal of providing help to children who need social and legal support." This formulation, in fact, excludes neither the service-provision nor the policy-advocacy function of the organization. However, to achieve its goals, the organization maintains a large set of service and support activities. All in all, the majority of the organization's activities are socially oriented small-scale services or other kinds of social support for its target group. This type of activity can be categorized as a kind of social work or as a service-provision function. However, in the course of time, questions concerning children's rights have gained more prominence on the organization's agenda. These questions are mainly approached through a framework of social rights. Recently, however, the organization initiated a children's parliament that would serve as a "democratic children's body"; its functions would include defending children's rights and providing a forum for children's voices to be heard in the local community. This initiative involves a more diverse understanding of children's rights, and the topic is no longer approached exclusively from a social angle. Yet it is still largely about awareness-raising. As the leader of the organization frequently states: "We hardly know what the rights of children are, let alone how to protect them." However, the organization is taking first important steps in this direction, and thus trying to change the current situation. In this respect, this shift in its agenda can be considered a new, more political function.

I consider the organization a development story in several respects. Firstly, in terms of gaining a strong and independent status within the local community: a Finnish-Russian initiative that was started by administrative bodies has transformed into an autonomous, self-governing, and self-funded social organization. Secondly, in terms of a shift in the agenda and activities of the organization: one can witness a turn from pure social work and toward a rhetoric of civic rights defence and advocacy work.

Karelian Women's Organizations: A Movement of Social Motherhood

My third case, a women's organization from Sortavala, is probably the best-known and most appreciated civil society organization in the Sortavala district—and also more widely in the Republic of Karelia.

Unlike most of the other civil society organizations that I have studied—as well as more generally Russian civil society organizations (cf. e.g. Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Henderson 2002; Hemment 2007; McFaul 2002; Richter 2002; Sperling 1999; Sundstrom 2006)—Karelian women's organizations are networked throughout the region. Among participants of my study, women's organizations are often portrayed as the most active part of Karelian civil society (also see Belokurova and Iargom-skaia 2005), and their network draws together a variety of Karelian women's organizations that operate in nearly every Karelian village, town, and district. These organizations are particularly interested in improving the well-being of their local communities: they provide a variety of social support services and run multiple activities for women as well as other (vulnerable) groups. (More in Kulmala 2008b; forthcoming; cf. Kay 2000; Sperling 1999). However, at the level of the Karelian Republic, they are also active in proposing policy initiatives (see more below).

The women's organizations that participate in the network draw together a diverse set of women. However, there are several overarching abilities the participating women share. As I described earlier, typically women who participate in these organizations—as in other civil society organizations—are middle-aged and well-educated and in good standing in their communities, most often working in public-sector institutions, including municipal governments (Kulmala 2010a; forthcoming). In addition to powerful women at the municipal level, regional and federal level politicians are also members of the Karelian women's organizations and their network. Thus, in this case too, the roles of activists, civil servants, and politicians overlap. In fact, questions of women's involvement in politics, governments, and other leading positions are given much attention within the network's agenda and activities. According to the network's activists, the importance of having female representatives in government is something that has been learnt from their "Finnish sisters." (More in Kulmala forthcoming.) As mentioned, Nordic state feminism is based upon the idea of activists being politicians and civil servants, and vice versa. In addition to the female administrators and politicians who are active participants, the network also invites male power-holders to collaborate. These "elite allies" (Sperling 1999), whether female or male, are important for women in their attempts to achieve their goals.

As described, the network brings together women from the smallest Karelian villages to federal-level politicians. These women and their organizations constitute a dense network, whose construction has been a purposeful and conscious process (more in Kulmala forthcoming). The members of the network meet on a regular basis in Karelian women's forums. In the first forum in 2000, participating women's organizations decided to organize formally, and as a result the Association of the Karelian Women's forums was established in 2001. This Association coordinates the organization of the forums and other activities of the network. It also acts as an official link of the women's organizations to the legislative and executive branches of the Kareli-

an government. For instance, policy recommendations made by the forums (see below) are channeled through the Association to government bodies.

Each of the annual forums has a set theme that is considered relevant to women. Importantly, the forums make (policy) recommendations according to these themes. Thus, the often stated reluctance of Russian civil society to participate in politics and the consequent marginal policy impact of those organizations (e.g. Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Kukarenko forthcoming) does not apply to the Karelian women's network. Participating women-activists underline that most of their work takes place daily at the local level, but at the same time they emphasize that the network is about making initiatives and aiming for new policies. The network has successfully initiated several regional-level political target programs, such as "Karelian Women," "Karelian Families," "Healthy Ways of Living," and "Rural Women" (more in Kulmala forthcoming). Most of these programs are in the field of social policies, i.e. in the "feminine field of politics."

Generally, the emphasis of the network's agenda and activities lies in welfare-related questions. These women are fighting not only for the welfare of women and mothers, but also for other (vulnerable) societal groups. Locally, most of the participating organizations do not strive for a structural change of women's position in Russian society, but focus on welfare-related practical help and support for various groups. Interestingly, the agenda becomes more feminist—or more precisely, more emphasis is put on problems concerning women—when the participating organizations come together in the forums. They express basic feminist principles while denying that they are feminist (more in Kulmala 2008b; 2010b; forthcoming)—similarly to the majority of Russian women's organizations (e.g. Kay 2000; Richter 2002; Sperling 1999; Sperling et al. 2001; Sundstrom 2006). However, according to my observations, these women understand feminism rather differently from many Western scholars or activists (more in Kulmala 2010b; forthcoming).

Women's voluntary participation in civil society is seen as an essentially female responsibility. The participating women share a strong common identification of being women. Their perceptions of womanhood are strongly associated with motherhood. (More in Kulmala 2008b; 2010a; forthcoming; also Kay 2000; Sperling 1999; Salmenniemi 2008a). Women's potential for motherhood makes them specific (compared to men) and, as Kay (2000) argues, more finely tuned to questions of morality and justice (also Sperling 1999). Consequently, women as mothers have a specific role and tasks that are needed by all of society (also see Kay 2000), and women serving as powerful and influential agents in different spheres of society is seen as a prerequisite for improving society and politics. Interestingly, these women make use of the culturally strong position of mothers in Russian society: the motherist framings of the issues they advocate can be seen as a powerful strategy to achieve their goals. (More in Kulmala 2008b; forthcoming.)

All in all, the Karelian women's organizations cannot be considered as isolated or sporadic agents. They are a systematically built and actively operating network that also serves as a policy initiator at the level of the Karelian Republic. This is in contrast to the oft-presented picture of Russian civil society as fragmented and disinte-

grated with no policy impact (e.g. Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Hemment 2007; Richter 2002; Sundstrom 2006³⁰; Sperling 1999).³¹ As I have argued elsewhere (Kulmala 2008b), the network of women's organizations can be considered a small-scale Karelian-wide women's movement, and this type of women's activism labeled as social motherhood (also see Kulmala forthcoming). I claim that because of the dense network and common maternalist identity, which resonates in Russian society, these women have been successful in many of their aims. Moreover, as described, the network has numerous connections with the authorities, including both representative and executive bodies. My argument is that the overlaps between the activists, politicians, and civil servants, as well as close collaboration with government bodies in general, have made it easier for women's demands to make themselves heard. Importantly, these findings challenge the predominant conflict-orientation of the liberal design of state-society relations. Moreover, Finnish practices reflecting the Nordic model are purposefully brought in through transnational contacts.

Confrontation from the Margins

While the groups described in my previous cases belong to the category of social organizations³², my fourth case presents a local membership organization, the Association of the Disabled. While previous cases served as examples of close collaboration or overlap between the local state institutions and civil society, this membership organization seems to be in the margins in its relations with the local authorities. Indeed, it even entered into open conflict with the mayor.

The Association of the Disabled is a case of a grass-roots organization "with activities directly related to solving problems or to satisfying needs of members" (Cook and Vinogradova 2006). It is a self-help or mutual aid organization dealing with physical or medical problems that their members experience. The Association is a mass-membership organization that has 1,680 members, a very large number. All of the members, including the paid staff and the members of the executive committee, are themselves disabled, i.e. they belong to the group of people that the organization represents. Due to this demarcated membership profile, there are no overlaps between activists and civil servants similar to those described in the previous cases.

The main source of the Association's income are membership fees, which, however, are far from sufficient to maintain all of its activities. Local businessmen allocate some material or financial support to organize activities for the members. The Association has some experience in trans-national projects with Finnish civil society organizations, but it has not been involved in any of those projects for several years.

³⁰ Sundstrom (2002) has argued that women's organizations have a better network than many other Russian civil society organizations. Yet, according to her, links and networks even among women's organizations remain sporadic and weak.

³¹ Women's organizations serve as pioneers of networking in Karelia. Other Karelian civil society organizations have only recently (from 2005) begun to meet annually at the Karelian Festivals of Non-Profit Organizations (see below) that were initiated by these women's organizations. This shows that these women seek to promote networking among civil society organizations in general.

³² In fact, the women's organization in my study can be treated as a social organization as well as a membership organization.

(See details in Kulmala 2009.) Nor does it receive any of the relatively numerous domestic grants for civil society offered by the Karelian government (see below). The Association has an office that is subsidized by the local administration; it pays a rather low and marginal rent for this office, which is in a very central location. This office space became a bone of contention between the organization and the local administration (more below).

The main functions of the association include a variety of services and the defense of its members' interests on a small scale. The help function may be seen as corresponding to the service provision function of civil society. It can be divided into three forms. Firstly, the Association helps provide access to relevant information, for instance about the members' disabilities, about legislation concerning the disabled and changes in it, and about the services and subsidies their members are entitled to. Secondly, it helps with concrete access to services and subsidies, for example by contacting the social service providers or by writing applications to get into rehabilitation. Thirdly, the Association provides services of its own, which are often medical, i.e. directly related to the disabilities of its members. In addition, the Association also serves to provide help with daily routines. Another support-oriented function of the Association is to provide emotional and peer support for its members, bringing them together with people who face similar problems or illnesses. Various kinds of events—such as excursions and cultural programs—play a major role in its activities. These events provide an opportunity for the members to get out of their homes to meet people in similar life situations and talk to them. A great deal of emphasis is put on socializing, on *obshchenie*.

In addition to the functions of help and support, the Association has a more political function in defending interests and rights. This defense function is based on a shared "disabled" identity. This group of people is considered to suffer from inequalities and oppression, and in some cases to be ignored by the authorities. The organization, for instance, points out gaps in official policies that obstruct its members' lives. Thus, these problems are considered more than just personal: structural explanations are referred to (Taylor 1996). Thus, the Association serves more or less as an interest group vis-à-vis the state and service institutions. Its political function manifests itself in the representation of the shared "oppressed" identities of their constituents, and further in politicizing these identities by challenging the current system—in more or less active and explicit ways. Interestingly enough, these political elements have been strengthened and given more room as these organizations confronted the local administration (see below).

The Association closely cooperates with public social and health care service institutions: it communicates about the needs of the members concerning such services and, as noted, helps its members gain access to these services. For example, the Association had a lot of say in the process of opening a rehabilitation department for the disabled within the municipal social service center (see the first of my cases). At that time, the Association also closely cooperated with the local administration, and its representatives felt that they were listened to by the administration regarding issues of concern to their members. Politically, the Association seems to be marginal

(Cook and Vinogradova 2006), although it has connections with local and regional-level politicians. This connection seems, nonetheless, to be a channel for discussion rather than for concrete policy initiatives (more in Kulmala 2009). Interestingly, these contacts between politicians increased during the conflict with the local administration described below. Evidently, the Association was able to use these contacts against the local administration, which, among other factors, might have had an effect on the favorable outcome of the conflict.

In fact, the Association had good relations with the local administration until the municipal elections of 2006. The new municipal leadership considered the group unnecessary, because their members were assisted by official municipal services. The Association was illegally evicted from its premises, which had been subsidized by the previous administrations for almost twenty years.³³ (More details in Kulmala 2009.)

As a response to this new attitude, the chairperson of the Association simply refused to move and went to war with the new administration. She tried to get the issue publicized in the local media, but no-one wrote about it; according to her, this was because the mayor had forbidden anyone to publish anything about the issue. However, she managed to publicize the Association's problems in the regional media as well as among members of the national and regional parliaments and regional-level bodies promoting dialog between civil society and the state (see more later). The letters and media attention resulted in several visits of the Head of the Karelian Republic's representative for civil society issues to the area (see more later). The official heard both sides of the conflict. As a result, the local administration cancelled the eviction; thus, the Association of the Disabled won the war.

What was interesting during this conflict was the stepping-up of rhetoric stressing the importance of civil society in general, and of defending the rights of the groups it represents in particular. During the conflict, rather harsh accusations were leveled against the administration. These accusations began as a critique of the new mayor's personality and extended into a defense not only of the rights of the Association's own constituency, but of the entire existence of civil society. First of all, the human dignity of the disabled was considered to have been offended by the administration and defended by the Association. Secondly, the administration was accused of questioning the importance of civil society, which was upheld by this membership organization. (More details in Kulmala 2009.) I claim that during this conflict, in addition to politicizing the issue of the eviction itself, the vulnerable and offended identities of the disabled, as well as the need for civil society organizations to defend these identities, were also politicized.

Importantly, the case shows that the Karelian bodies for collaboration between the state and civil society are functioning, and they favor the interests of civil society. This is in contrast to some earlier studies, which indicated that similar bodies

³³ The local administration did not plan to abandon the organization entirely, but the alternative premises that it offered were inconvenient, to put it mildly: the new office space offered by the administration had no furniture or even toilet. It was located on the second floor, with no elevator, in a remote building: in other words, it was a place that would be well-nigh impossible for disabled people to reach.

established throughout Russia serve as mechanisms for the state to control and co-opt civil society (see e.g. Evans 2008; Richter 2009). Thus, the Karelian civil society organizations can use these bodies and the emphasis on the importance of civil society as a resource for their work (see also Kulmala 2008a). Evidently, the Association strategically used the above-mentioned emphasis on civil society in Karelia and the existing collaboration bodies against the local authorities. Furthermore, as the case evidences, the relationship between civil society and the state might vary at different levels of government.

To summarize: without doubt, the orientation of Sortavala's civil society organizations is social, focused on local welfare. Moreover, all of them provide some kind of service; the focus of their work is on concrete and practical help (also Cook and Vinogradova 2006; Kukarenko forthcoming). The help, support, and services that these organizations provide are highly significant for various groups of local residents. In fact, this service orientation gives them a close link to ordinary people, to local communities, and therefore broadens their constituency (Kulmala 2010a). Many common concerns—such as support to children, youngsters, and young families—are in line with Russian national priorities. Thus, the issues taken up by these organizations are not too controversial in relation to the state's interests, which can lead to the conclusion that the civil society organizations are mainly helpers of the state. On the other hand, the agenda of these organizations is broader than the national priorities; they respond to people's concerns beyond those of the state. Importantly, these organizations respond to citizens' expectations of care, which date back to the Soviet social contract: under the previous regime of state paternalism, care of Soviet citizens was an obligation sealed by a state-provided promise. Although this former contract is not valid anymore, at present the emphasis of the Russian population is on social rights instead of civil or political rights (Henry 2007), implying certain expectations of the state.³⁴ In this respect, current civil society organizations articulate citizens' expectations of care from the state, which fails to respond to these needs (Kulmala 2010a; Phillips 2008).

Even more importantly, new identities and issues can be articulated within the scope of the organizations' activities. Therefore, in addition to providing services, my study shows that these organizations have a more political function as well. They are not politically active in the traditional sense—except for the Karelian women's organizations, these local civil society organizations are rather unlikely to impact institutional politics. Their more political, i.e. policy-advocacy, function manifests itself in the efforts of the organizations studied to negotiate and create new identities and to defend those identities and related interests as well as in their efforts to bring and politicize sensitive issues to the public (see also Kulmala 2011.) As shown, in Sortavala, for instance, the human dignity of the mentally disabled, other categories of the disabled, and women suffering from violence have been politicized. Also, the im-

³⁴ See Marshall's (1950) classical formulation of citizenship with civil, political, and social rights.

portance of civil society organizations and the need for them (i.e. their functions) in general have been placed on the agenda by several of the organizations studied. To me as a researcher, these activities represent something political, by which I understand actions through which new or sensitive issues are made visible and public. These organizations negotiate the boundaries of the private and the public, an activity I consider to be political (Sperling et al. 2001). Nevertheless, it seems that in most of the cases this policy-advocacy function is more a side product of their service-oriented activities than an explicitly articulated aim. Usually, the activists see their organizations as apolitical. However, they understand the political very narrowly as related to party politics. I, as a (feminist) researcher, interpret their efforts as political.

To return to the question of relations between the state and civil society organizations: My study shows that these relations take many forms—from confrontation or separate existence to very close collaboration and even completely blurred boundaries. I argue that cooperation as such does not necessarily take co-opted forms. Rather than civil society organizations being co-opted by the authorities, this relationship seems to be one of interdependence (cf. Thomson 2006). Some moral support from the authorities is necessary for civil society organizations to operate. Civil society organizations, for their part, bring extra resources to local settings. The cash-strapped local administrations are, in fact, dependent on the help of these organizations, which play a complementary role in addressing many social problems and providing relevant services. On the other hand, local officials participate in the work of civil society organizations: they are often recruited and invited to cooperate based on their relevant professional positions. In fact, public-sector municipal employees seem to be the most active members of social organizations. These people bring their expertise, power, and resources into the picture, and these qualifications largely facilitate voluntary activities.

Thus, these overlaps at the individual level naturally facilitate contacts and collaboration instead of confrontation and conflict. For instance, in the Nordic countries, similar overlaps are purposefully built in order to create a channel of influence among decision-makers. Furthermore, these overlaps evidently blur boundaries of the public and voluntary sectors. Sometimes it is impossible to draw clear-cut boundaries between the public, i.e. local state, and voluntary, i.e. civil society, sectors, since solutions to local social problems are sought by mixing state and non-state efforts and resources. Such overlaps are to be found in social organizations, but not in membership organizations, which often have a self-help character and whose members often belong to the groups that they represent. However, when confronting the local authorities, these organizations rely on regional-level institutionalized collaboration mechanisms of the state and civil society, of which Karelia has many. In the case discussed above, instead of controlling or co-opting civil society, these collaborative bodies functioned to benefit the interests of civil society.

In fact, according to my findings, civil society organizations have the most influence in situations when they collaborate closely with the local authorities and, furthermore, when the roles of the state and civil society actors overlap. This complicates the frequently-made sharp distinction between the state and civil society as sepa-

rate from each other. In a nutshell, my research suggests that the sharp divisions often presented in the scholarly literature between the state and civil society or between policy-advocacy and service-oriented organizations are too simplistic, too narrow in scope. Why then does the situation in my study look different from that found in many previous studies?

LOCAL-REGIONAL POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE EXPLAINING LOCAL SOLUTIONS?³⁵

As several scholars have demonstrated, one can find considerable variations between Russian regions (e.g. Sundstrom 2006; Richter 2009; also Liikanen 2008). In Russian Karelia, attitudes toward civil society tend to be favorable and participatory. Fewer conflicts between the authorities and civil society organizations appear to have occurred compared with some other regions of Russia; for instance, the recent changes in NGO legislation (see e.g. Evans 2006a; Kulmala 2008a), have been implemented more softly (also Belokurova 2008; Dzhibladzhe 2008). Particularly in the 2000s, under the regime of the previous Head of the Republic, Sergei Katanandov, the last one elected by popular vote³⁶, the importance of civil society and constructive collaboration between different levels of government, civil society, and business were mentioned in several official policy documents.³⁷ In addition, many official structures and bodies for collaboration between the government and civil society have been established.³⁸ These bodies also distribute project-based funds to civil

³⁵ "Opportunity structure" refers to exogenous (e.g. state-imposed) constraints placed on civil society in its expression of social demands (Tarrow 1998). By focusing on the local political opportunity structure, I propose to divert attention from the national level to opportunities at the local and regional levels—in this case, to the Karelian Republic (Sundstrom 2006).

³⁶ Katanandov served as Head of the Republic in 1998–2010. He was elected by popular vote, unlike his successor Andrei Nelidov, who was appointed by the president, as in the other subjects of the Russian Federation. Nelidov started his term in June 2010. My empirical data are exclusively from the previous period. In the future, it would be very interesting to study the situation under Nelidov and make comparisons with the Katanandov regime.

³⁷ Republic-level documents such as the *Conception of the Development of the Region* and the *Strategy for the Socio-Economic Development of the Region* emphasize the importance of involving civil society in the development of the whole region (for the Conception, see: <http://gov.karelia.ru/gov/Leader/Document/Concept2012/index.html>); for the Strategy <http://gov.karelia.ru/gov/Legislation/lawbase.html?lid=559>). In addition, a *Partnership Conception* was signed by representatives of the government, municipalities, business, and civil society. The Conception acknowledges the need for civil society to participate in the comprehensive socio-economic development of the region. As far as I know, the Constitution of the Republic is the only one in the Russian Federation that gives civil society organizations the right of legislative initiative (chapter 3, article 42). (also see Kulmala 2008a.)

³⁸ The former Head of the Republic, for instance, convened and chaired a Council for Promoting and Developing Civil Society and Human Rights as well as a Commission for Improving the Position of Women. Also, a Council of Non-Governmental Organizations operates within the Legislative Assembly of the Republic. This council was the first of its kind affiliated with the legislative body in Russia. Many Karelian ministries also have various bodies for cooperating with civil society organizations, or departments and officials for working with them.

society. The Karelian Ministry of Culture and Public Relations maintains an NGO portal³⁹ and annually organizes a festival of non-profit organizations to promote networking among Karelian civil society organizations. (More in Kulmala 2008a; forthcoming; see also Kulmala 2011). This is an interesting fact, again, compared to studies that indicate that there are no horizontal links between Russian civil society organizations.

As noted, the above-presented case of the Association of the Disabled shows that bodies for collaboration between the state and civil society might benefit the interests of civil society, instead of controlling and co-opting it (cf. Evans 2008a; 2008b; Richter 2009). The Karelian civil society organizations can use these bodies and the emphasis on civil society as a resource for their work. However, the considerable authority wielded by these bodies and by regional and national-level politicians vis-à-vis the local-level governance supports the findings of studies indicating that the municipal level is dependent on the upper levels of government (e.g. Gel'man 2007; Kulmala and Tekoniemi 2007; Lankina 2002). The local administration was forced to withdraw from its hostile actions toward the local civil society organizations because representatives of the upper-level government considered these actions inappropriate.

Nevertheless, I think that the Sortavala case also shows that much can be done by local residents, if only the local and regional leadership are willing to contribute. These local solutions need to comply with national legislation; but as long as they do, much can be done. For example, the establishment of the crisis department for women suffering from domestic violence was neither contrary to the federal laws nor obligatory according to those laws. Neither were the services provided to the mentally disabled by the Social Service Center. Thus the Sortavala case also illustrates the scope for local solutions in contrast to general assumptions about the recentralization of power and the statist turn under Putin (e.g. Cook 2011; Evans 2006a; Gel'man 2007; Richter 2009), according to which Moscow controls all the levels of governments throughout Russia. My study, in contrast, shows the importance of local-level leaders' support in order for civil society organizations to be more influential in these local solutions. For instance, as mentioned, the Association of the Disabled had a greater say concerning public services for the disabled when it had a good rapport with the local authorities. Based on the cases presented, I would argue that civil society organizations have the most influence when the roles of the state and civil society actors overlap. These overlaps among the active participants do not concern membership organizations, which consequently seem to have less influence on the local social solutions. These findings concerning the overlaps and benefits of cooperation challenge the predominant liberal understanding of the separation and opposition of the state and civil society.

Even though my primary data comes from the Sortavala district, I have observed similar practices of combining the efforts of the local state and civil society in other Karelian municipal districts. No doubt, Karelia's and Sortavala's

³⁹ www.npo.karelia.ru

location on the border of Finland and the EU has promoted civil society development within the region. Interestingly, as noted, while the emphasis of American funding has been more on independent civic activism (Belokurova and Iargomskaia 2005; see also Sundstrom 2006), characteristic of the liberal design of civil society, the Finnish funding that is predominant in Karelia has emphasized the close collaboration between civil society and the state that is characteristic of the Nordic model of state-society relations. Obviously, this Finnish (Nordic) model has been imported through joint projects. A similar emphasis can be seen in the efforts of other Nordic actors in the Russian North (e.g. Saarinen et al. 2003; Liapounova and Drachova 2004). At present, this similar tendency of collaborative relations occurs in the projects designed by the locals. (Also see Kulmala 2011.)

Interestingly enough, against the assumptions of previous studies (see e.g. Henry 2006; Salmenniemi 2008a), persuading authorities to cooperate is not done solely through one's "own people" (*svoi liudi*) and personal contacts. At the local level, contacts with relevant municipal officials wielding decision-making power are sought by these organizations; in other words, people are recruited on the basis of their professional status (see also Kulmala 2010a). In addition, at the regional level, Sortavala civil society organizations attempt to include government officials in general, as the following statement by an activist shows. This statement also reflects Karelia's status as a special case:

And today, when a new minister comes, you know, I think I'm not revealing any big secret, that they all are non-local [non-Karelian], they have all come from elsewhere. FSB people: not local, the prosecutor: not local, and the minister of the interior: not local. He came from Omsk, and when the staff of the Ministry of the Interior told him that they work with civil society organizations, that they work with health care institutions, that there exists a council of civil society organizations, that there exists a Commission [for Improving the Position of Women]. He said: "What's that!; What are these civil society organizations?; We work with very serious things, why are you growing these independent initiatives?" And it required some strength from our staff [the staff of the Ministry] to explain that we, geographically, the Karelian Republic is located close to Finland, and we look for experience from the Scandinavian countries, we look to the Finnish experience, and nowadays we border on the European Union.⁴⁰

Do my findings illustrate that Karelia is a special case, or do my results apply to Russia in general? Without doubt, the Finnish influence in Karelia cannot be ignored: it has had a major role in the development of Karelian civil society in general and on the dialog between the authorities and civil society, in particular.

However, I would propose that blurring boundaries of the state and civil society could be a more general tendency, at least in the Russian small-town setting. Barring a few exceptions (e.g. Kay 2011; Wegren 2006; White 2004), Russian small towns or

⁴⁰ A 54-year-old female activist; my translation from Russian.

villages, and particularly their civil society development, have not been at the center of academic research in Russian Studies. However, I consider small municipalities important, since some forty per cent of Russians live in small towns or villages (RSE 2006). In fact, ongoing studies of these communities in other parts of Russia seem to indicate a similar blurring of state and non-state activities (Kay 2011; Sätre 2011), as do my shorter visits to the countryside in other parts of Russia. Thus, perhaps, it is reasonable to suggest that a wider set of comparisons concerning Russia would be worthwhile. These comparisons would include comparative studies among regions of Russia at the municipal levels and between provincial and metropolitan Russia instead of—or at least in addition to—comparisons between Western countries and Russia, or the Russian federal and regional-municipal levels. As Valerie Sperling (1999) has noted, most foreign funding has been transferred to civil society organizations in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, which consequently most resemble Western organizations. Comparisons of Russian municipal-provincial level activities and the corresponding levels in other countries would also make sense. State-society models, developed from national-level analyses, are not applicable as such to lower-level contexts in any country.

Furthermore, I would assume that the evident Soviet legacy in current civil society activism cannot be peculiar to Karelia. As noted above, most activists in Sortavala were active already in Soviet times—often in the official Soviet organizations, such as youth organizations or women’s councils. Naturally their practices—and, importantly, also their resources—derive from these experiences. (Also Henry 2006; 2010). Thus, I suggest that this Soviet legacy is not necessarily a burden, but rather a resource for the current civil society activities. Moreover, this Soviet legacy makes me wonder if we need to re-evaluate the perception of total Soviet control of the “voluntary” organizations at that time, in favor of a scenario that incorporates local solutions as well. We may also need to re-evaluate the importance of these Soviet organizations to the activists themselves and to ordinary people’s lives. (Also see Evans 2006a; Kulmala 2010a; 2011; Sundstrom 2006).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Returning to state-society models and to previous studies concerning a Russian model, my research in Karelia shows that the picture of state-society relations is ambiguous; local-regional practices prove the plurality and mixing of models. A complex set of interrelations exists between civil society and the state. This set also includes some elements of the Nordic regime, at least in Karelia. The relationship between the authorities and civil society takes many forms and depends on many questions, such as the level of government and the organization’s field of activities, but also on the concrete issues and people who engage in these interrelations. Also, the blurring boundaries of the state and voluntary sectors and overlapping roles of the officials and activists seem to have a positive effect on the ability of the civil society organizations to exercise influence. This questions the liberal understanding

of the division between the state and civil society, as well as statist views about the co-optation of civil society.

Problems regarding the applicability of the ideal-type Western models concern more than just Russia. Undoubtedly, when looking at the local and concrete level of activities and interrelations, one can find diversity and plurality in any country. In this sense, these models are to be examined critically. However, there is no need to completely reject these models; they can be used as a tool to compare developments in Russia to other countries. However, it is necessary to identify existing elements in relation to the different models. I believe, for instance, that my point of departure from a more complex set of state-society models makes me open to different definitions of civic activities and state-society relations, even forms that might seem paradoxical to a Western understanding, such as the Soviet legacy carried over into Russian civil society activism. Thus, we need to interpret our findings in their own context in order to bring them to broader comparisons.

Nevertheless, all of the presented theoretical models are based on an understanding of society as separate sectors—although the possible overlap of these sectors varies among the different models or regimes. I would tend to understand society in relational terms rather than as a unitary or completely separate sphere from those other spheres (Baiocchi et al. 2008). I find Van Til's (2000) understanding of society as spaces very inspiring for my study in terms of theorizing civil society in contemporary Russia. Such an approach leads us away from understanding society as sectors separate from each other to understanding it as spaces that are dependent on one another. According to Van Til, civil society is located within the interstices of society's politics, economic, and culture. Included in this space are voluntary and nonprofit organizations that advocate for social change and justice, that provide services to vulnerable groups, and that articulate concerns for community and quality of life, for instance. In Van Til's definition: "Civil society exists where people create and/or find spaces to come together to meet with each other, share feelings, thoughts, and observations, and then follow those considerations with action, when they should so choose." It is a space where whole persons come together to reflect and act upon what they need as members of a broader community and world. It is not that important where, in terms of traditional sectors, these people are located, but "how it comes that people decide to congregate there to do their work." This space exists within organizations of any time, as well as in the interstices between them. Thus, this space "is not independent from society's major institutions: government at all levels, businesses large and small, nonprofit organizations directed towards member or public benefit, schools, religious organizations, families, communities, neighborhoods, and the like" (Van Til 2000:206–208).

Finally, moving away from conventional "sectoral thinking" prompts me to investigate related activities and thus theorize the boundaries of the state and civil society I studied—boundaries which apparently blur—in their own daily context, for which my choice of ethnographic methods has been an essential facilitator. I claim that, methodologically, an ethnographic approach, which allows me to zoom to local practices of interaction between civil society and the state in their daily routines,

helps us to see a more nuanced picture than analyses of the federal level would suggest. Such an approach also allows me to understand the nature of these relations. My focus has been, in addition to the local setting, explicitly on the boundaries of these two “sectors” and their interaction in practice, whereas many studies of Russian civil society have concentrated only on civil society actors and their statements about their relationship with the authorities. With my methodological choices and systematic emphasis on the local setting and interaction practices, I believe that I have managed to uncover some tendencies that are not seen without going deeply into the local context (see also Kulmala 2011).

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